

WHO! HUH? WHO! WHAT? DR. WHO!

If you are a fan of science fiction television programming, you have probably heard about *Doctor Who*—the longest running SF oriented series in the history of the medium. If you are a discriminating SF fan who lives in a market that carried *Doctor Who* sometime early in the past season and you happened to catch a few shows, you might be wondering what the hoopla was all about.

First, some background information. *Doctor Who* was first broadcast November 23, 1963, has continued uninterrupted in England through the 1978-79 television season; a new season is being prepared now.

This program has thrived in spite of Doctor Who himself quitting the series three times (indeed, there have been four Doctor Whos—or perhaps more appropriately, Doctors Who). The supporting cast has gone through countless changes. Two of the early *Doctor Who* multi-part serials were adapted into movie format and a different actor had the part of the venerable Doctor.

As far as most British fans are con-

cerned, *Doctor Who* is right up there with *Flash Gordon* and *Buck Rogers*, far surpassing such short-lived latter-day heroes as Mr. Spock and Commander Adama. Doctor Who and his prime adversaries, the Daleks, are big bucks where toy merchandising and licensing are concerned, outstripping such well-known characters as *Superman* and *Spider-Man*.

These facts must confuse U.S. enthusiasts who were rather bored by the eight dozen episodes syndicated by Time-Life television in this country. The show did not make it here in the States, and only a bare handful of stations that began running *Doctor Who* last September continued to do so nine months later.

Some would-be enthusiasts were a bit luckier—in 1975 Time-Life Television syndicated a number of earlier *Doctor Who* serials to a handful of Public Broadcast System affiliates—these programs were from the 1970-72 period and featured the third man to play the part of the Doctor, Jon Pertwee. The

OH!!!



Three of the Daleks, from *Dr. Who* and the Daleks, looking like R2D2 forerunners.

Who is Dr. Who, anyway? Where did he come from? Why is he here? And when is he going to become more than a cult figure?

The Doctor is scientifically advanced and employs various super-scientific devices generally found in the TARDIS to help facilitate the plot. He does more than just push buttons—he thinks through problems and has a well-developed deductive ability. Situations often boil down to a contest of wills—the Doctor's versus the adversary's. He is fallible—he can and does make mistakes—and whereas he tries to avoid using force he certainly is not pacifistic. He will take a life if the fate of the world (or the universe) is at hand, although he will not like himself for it.

"The standards of the Doctor," Tom Baker notes, "are good over evil, good manners, and compassion." He is always willing to give his all—and for a Time Lord, his all can be his body and soul.

When the Doctor comes up against the ultimate menace, he might expend so much energy he literally wears out his body. When that happens, he undergoes a complete metamorphosis—his body changes into that of another person, and his personality adapts to fit its new "home."

Oddly enough, the Doctor wears out his body just about the same time the actor playing the part of Doctor Who decides to move on. When William Hartnell tired of the part after three and one-half seasons, the writers sent the Doctor off on an adventure with the Cybermen, the inhabitants of Mondas, the tenth planet from the sun. The Cyber-

notice of this paradox.

The TARDIS landed on Earth prior to the first adventure and for quite some time was able to transport the Doctor and his ever-changing horde of cohorts to various exotic locations but, due to a series of malfunctions initiated by the Time Lords, always returned the Doctor to Earth to live in exile. *The Silver Surfer* was another Marvel character who later fell upon this concept.

A crazed survivor of anti-matter contamination threatens all in *The Planet of Evil*.

Article by MIKE GOLD

more recent attempt featured Tom Baker's first shows, from 1974 on.

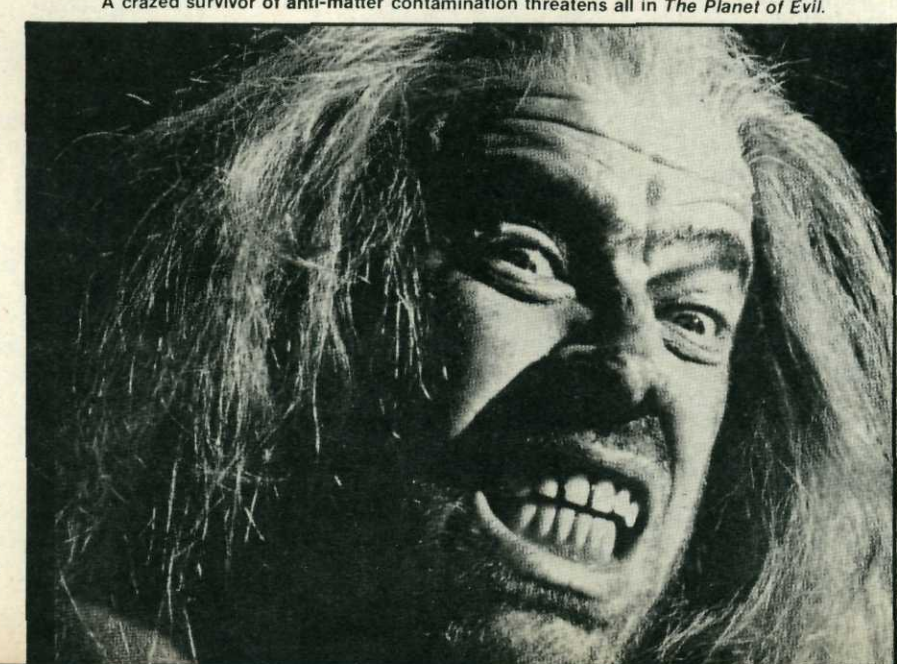
This is not to say Pertwee was the penultimate Doctor Who, or that Tom Baker is an inferior incarnation. Not at all. There is a whole world of *Doctor Who*—a world that cannot be taken lightly. In many ways, *Doctor Who* is the ultimate in television SF adventure entertainment. In order to understand the phenomenon, one must first understand who Doctor Who is.

First of all, that is not really his name. Doctor Who is a doctor, but we are incapable of pronouncing his real name—sort of an intergalactic version of "Who was that masked man?" or "that scientist—his name was Doctor—who???"

Doctor Who, as it came to be developed, is a Time Lord. These folks are a race of super-scientifically oriented humanoids. They watch over the universe, aiding various civilizations while preventing the galaxy from going

blooie. Doctor Who fell out of favor with his fellow Time Lords by overly interfering with those societies he was supposed to be monitoring. Time Lords merely observe, in a tradition popularized by the comic book characters *The Guardians of the Galaxy* and later adapted by Marvel Comics in the person of *The Watcher*. Like the four-color counterparts, the Time Lords do more than their share of interfering... so Doctor Who must have messed up something big.

To escape reprimand, Doctor Who swiped a TARDIS—literally. Time And Relative Dimensions In Space, a machine which was capable of transporting its inhabitants to any location in time or space. The TARDIS has the peculiar ability of warping space within itself as well—disguised as a typically British police call box, it is many times larger on the inside than it appears to be on the outside. Virtually every Earthling who ventures inside takes immediate



men take over the Earth of the late 1980's (see what we have to look forward to?) and the Doctor gives his all to defeat their invasion. Worn out, he enters the TARDIS and begins to change.

Where the abrasive and snide "first" Doctor once stood, the impish Moe Howard-looking Patrick Troughton now stood. Troughton was told to play the Doctor as a sort of Charlie Chaplin

when he suffered an early and tragic death, it took producers years before they attempted to recast the part—the Master obviously undergoing typical Time Lord metamorphoses. Even then Delgado was so popular that the new incarnations never caught on.

It was during this period that the Doctor was involved in his most amazing adventure—"The Three Doctors,"

petuous, the new Doctor took to wearing floppish hats and long scarves. He was more moralistic than the earlier three, once wondering whether he had the right to kill Daleks.

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type of character, and his heart-warming pixie-like approach to the character endured for three seasons.

Two of the most important aspects of the series were introduced at the end of Troughton's reign. A formidable military force, UNIT (United Nations Intelligence Taskforce) came to the aid of the Doctor during a later invasion of the Cybermen, and the ultra-military, ultra-British Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart was introduced to the series. When the Doctor later called upon the Time Lords for assistance in another matter, they helped out and, in the major origin explanation of the series, exiled him to Earth for stealing the TARDIS.

Whereas the Doctor got to keep the TARDIS, he has worn out his body during the battle. Out of the Brigadier's sight, the Doctor once again changed—and where Patrick Troughton once stood now stood Jon Pertwee, at the beginning of his five-year reign as the Doctor. Pertwee handled the role in a *rather pompous manner, impatient, all-knowing and not the least bit humble.*

After re-establishing his identity, the Who became the scientific advisor to UNIT and was given an antique roadster for less-conspicuous travel. Doctor Who quickly christened the vehicle "Bessie" and was given license plates "WHO-1."

Many of the episodes following these transitional serials were found in the 1975 *Doctor Who* syndication package. In these episodes, the Doctor encountered the villain who was destined to rank second only to the Daleks as the most popular evil entity—the Master, played by Roger Delgado. The Master was a renegade Time Lord and had all the abilities and techniques possessed by the Doctor.

As all good science fiction adversaries are wont to do, the Master desired to conquer Earth as the first phase of his vengeance against the Time Lords, and only the Doctor stood in his way. In fact, the Doctor stood in his way over eight serials, for a total of 43 episodes. The Master was so popular he faced off against the Doctor in 25 consecutive episodes.

So strongly was Roger Delgado associated with the part of the Master that,

never syndicated in the United States. The producers wanted to start their 1972-73 season off with a bang, so they dreamed up a menace so terrible and so complicated the Doctor could not be powerful enough to handle it.

The Time Lords, already tied up in a massive job of saving the universe from an energy-draining black hole, deflected the remainder of their power into the Doctor's TARDIS, and suddenly the second Doctor stood alongside the third. Together they attempted to do battle with Omega, a Time Lord hero who was trapped in an anti-matter universe for thousands of years and who, in the process, went mad. Together the two Doctors, who constantly bickered, proved insufficient to the task, so the Time Lords sent along the mental image of the first Doctor to direct the overall efforts.

By this time, William Hartnell was extremely old—he died shortly after filming his part in "The Three Doctors"—and so his entire performance was filmed in one sitting as a sort of two-way video message to the other two Doctors. Seen in the TARDIS, the younger two were able to converse with the first and get his much needed assistance. Together they managed to defeat Omega by having his world go supernova—the Time Lords were able to tap the energy from the explosion and solve their own crisis. The second Doctor went back to his own time, and the exile imposed upon the third Doctor was lifted.

At the end of the following season—*Doctor Who's* eleventh year—the third Doctor decided to move on and so, after a massive battle on the Planet of the Spiders, the Doctor returned to Earth having absorbed a lethal amount of radiation. This time in full view of the Brigadier, the Doctor began his transformation. His features changed, and where Jon Pertwee laid wracked with fever, Tom Baker now appeared.

Followers of the *Doctor Who* series had to wait to the beginning of the next serial to discover the personality of the fourth Doctor. Baker was much younger than his three predecessors and he brought an energetic approach to the character. Eager, hyperactive and im-

Baker at first, as the show's producer and story editor left with Pertwee. After the transitional serial initiated during the previous reign was taped, the fourth Doctor, his UNIT assistant and the organization's medical chief left the Earth on a series of quests, and the show started getting into trouble.

After a six-part battle with the Daleks and a four-part return match with the Cybermen, the Doctor and his assistant stopped off on Earth just long enough to help out UNIT and return the medical officer to his post. From that point on through the next two and one-half seasons, a great many of the familiar hallmarks of the *Doctor Who* series were gone. Certainly, the Doctor battled typical menaces: monsters, aliens and your run-of-the-mill evil Time Lords. But all the interplay with UNIT built over the previous six years was gone. So too were the Cybermen, the Yeti, the Autons... even the Earth itself was gone. And the Daleks, too.

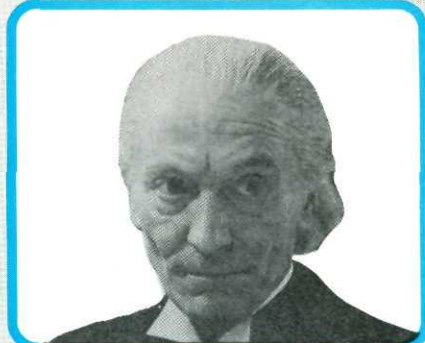
If *Doctor Who* is a phenomenon, then the Daleks are a phenomenon as well. Introduced in the second serial of the series ("The Dead Planet," seven shows that followed the initial "An Unearthly Child" four-parter), the Daleks are creatures from the planet Sharo who have lost the use of their bodies and limbs—they must occupy an extremely cheap-looking robotic shell not unlike a modernistic vacuum cleaner. Initially around to take over their planet from the humanoid Thals, the Daleks quickly graduated to all forms of evil. They invaded the Earth in an attempt to turn its inhabitants into robots, they even teamed up with the Master in an attempt to destroy or take over the Earth, or at least the Doctor.

The Daleks appeared in 11 serials—65 episodes in all. The first two were adapted into feature-length movies—*Doctor Who and the Daleks*, released in 1965, and *Daleks—Invasion Earth 2150 A.D.*, released in 1966. Both these movies starred Peter Cushing as the Doctor. Terry Nation, the British writer who was script editor on *The Avengers* and *The Persuaders* and who created the villainous monsters, has earned a considerable amount of money from

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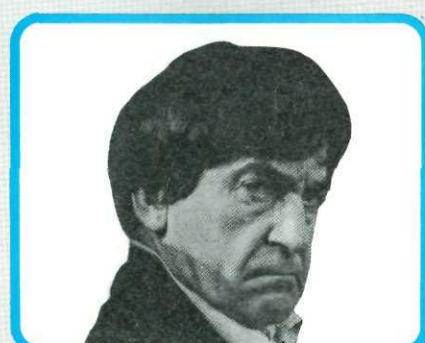
Jon Pertwee



William Hartnell



Tom Baker



Patrick Troughton

DR. WHO

(Continued from Page 38)

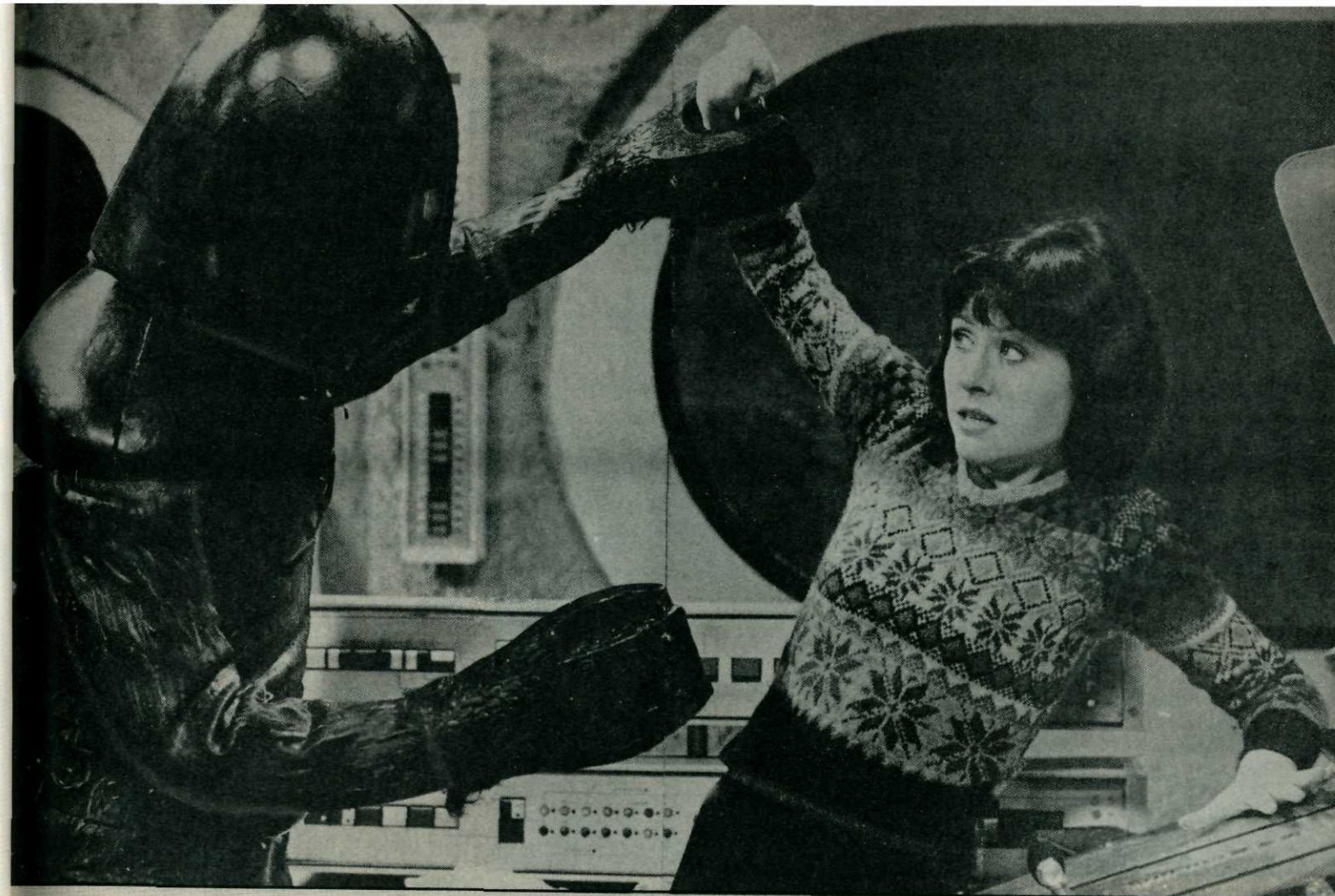
their popularity: in 1977, almost three years after their final television appearance, the Daleks were still among the top four British television merchandising properties.

Whereas *Doctor Who* is inexpensively done—and often looks it—one should not mistake *Doctor Who* for a children's show, certainly not in the strictest sense. According to the BBC, for every six children who watch the program, there are four adults. Adolescents who were watching *Doctor Who* in the early 60's now watch the program with their children. The show has kept faithful to its sense of continuity, and ideas that worked years ago are alluded to in current episodes. It was a mistake to ignore these elements, and the series in its most recent season has gone back to much of its original charm. The producers let the 100th serial go by last year without note, and they heard about it from their viewers. The Daleks, at least, will return in a serial being prepared for the 1979-80 season.

The show has generated the same type of print exposure as has *Star Trek*. No less than 46 *Doctor Who* novels have appeared—all adaptations of previously broadcast serials. There also have been several *Doctor Who* monster books and the bible for the first 12 years, *The Making of Doctor Who*, was also released. This latter book carries a description of all the characters, including the first eighteen friends, companions and assistants, not all of whom were from Earth—or from Earth's present. It also carries a listing of all episodes broadcast during this period.

Doctor Who is a property that is peculiar to television. The effects are either computer-generated, superimposed, chroma-keyed (where one color is electronically eliminated from the video input and another image is broadcast in its place) or some combination of the three. Until recently, *Doctor Who* was produced by the system adopted by the BBC and later satirized by Monty Python where all interiors were put on tape and all exteriors were filmed and later transferred to tape. A disturbing quality to North Americans, this technique was abandoned when the BBC bought a number of mini-cams—extremely lightweight portable video cameras popular with American news crews.

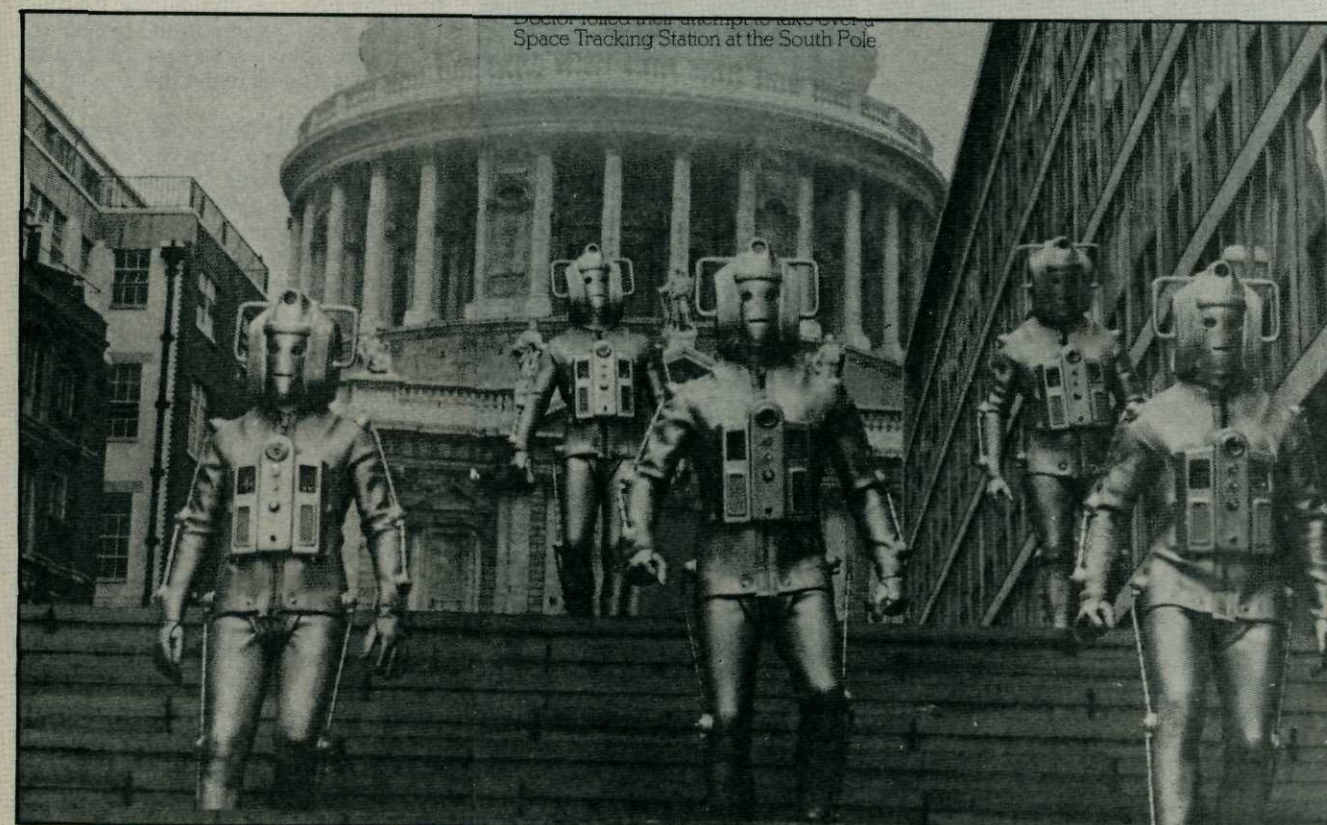
Much of the charm of the show is in the horrible monsters and aliens—out-



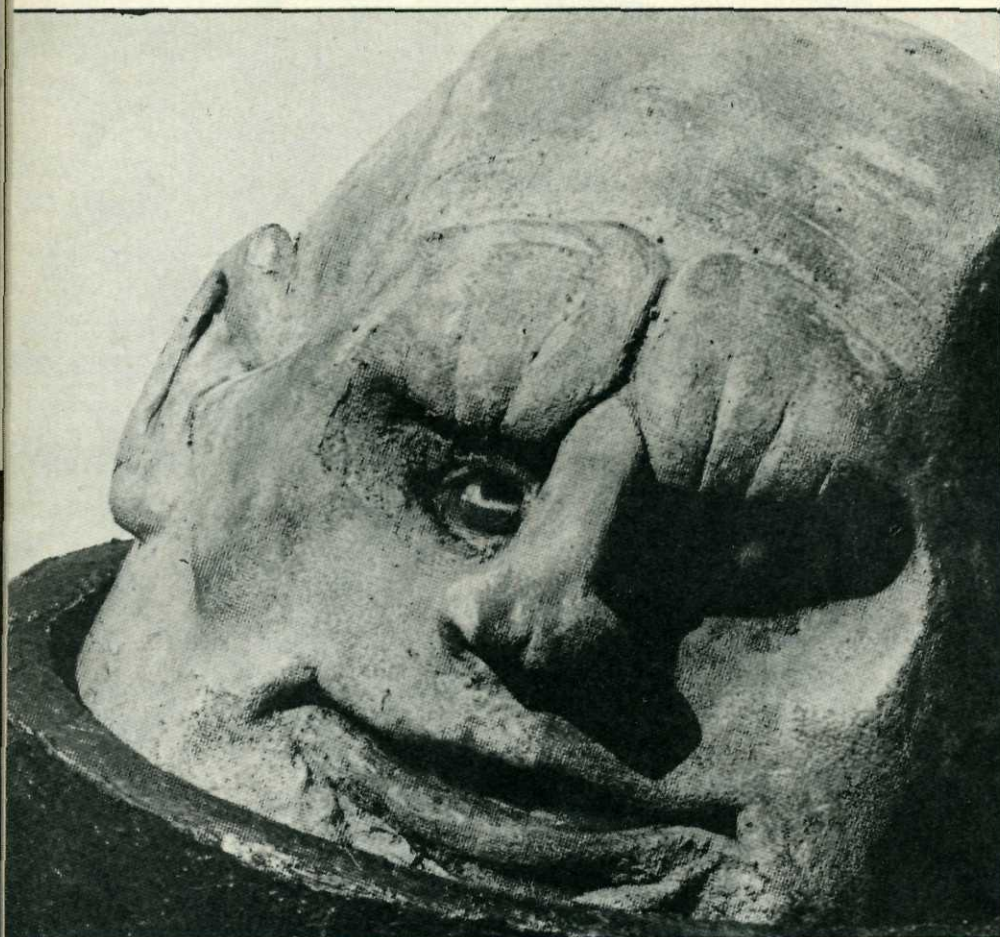
Sarah Jane Smith (above), the Doctor's assistant fights one of *The Ice Warriors*. *The Cybermen* (below), more metal than flesh after replacements of organs and limbs with steel and plastic, battled Dr. Who.



One of *The Daemons*, Azal, whom the good Doctor convinced not to destroy Earth.



Doctor foiled their attempt to take over a Space Tracking Station at the South Pole.



One of the war-like and savage Sontarans (above), with whom Dr. Who has already had two close encounters. The Zygons (below) living in Loch Ness with the Skrasen, a beast from their home world (the monster, get it?) was finally destroyed by Dr. Who before they conquered the Earth.



worldly creatures literally invented from make-up, masks and costuming. The producers would spend weeks creating masks and costumes which might, ultimately, appear on the screen for a few seconds. Not all the monsters succeed—the show has been known to superimpose blow-ups of rather commonplace objects—but most are usually quite effective.

Overall, one strongly suspects an entire season of *Doctor Who* costs far less than your average episode of, say, *Battlestar Galactica*. Its cheapness is not offensive; it even adds to the fun much in the same way *Dark Shadow's* cheapness was enjoyed by millions of fans.

The program has mastered the art of video fantasy—one cannot deny its success when it has been around for 16 years. It is complicated and exhaustive—the show has eaten up four stars, over a dozen co-stars, and no less than eight producers.

If *Doctor Who* is a child of television, it is certainly exclusive to the domain of television. The two *Doctor Who* movies released in the mid-60's were barely successful, and one recent movie project was aborted on the drawing board.

In late '76, Tom Baker acquired the film rights to the Doctor for a two-year period. He wrote a screenplan—Baker is the type who fights with directors and writers for his interpretation of the character—and scouted his own locations. After he failed to get sufficient backing from the financial community, he proceeded to sell shares in the project to fans at five pounds a share, hoping to sell 10,000 shares to get the project off the ground.

Unfortunately, Baker did not get his 10,000 shares sold. This was to provide 10% of the projected \$1 million budget; \$1 million at a time when other SF movies were routinely budgeted at 12 to 25 times that amount. Cheapness can work well on the small screen if it is done right—it is usually an embarrassment on the big screen.

It is too bad Time-Life Television took some of the least effective *Doctor Who* episodes in its major American push. The current Tom Baker episodes never made it to these shores; his earliest shows were well done, and it would have been interesting to see more of the same.

But *Doctor Who* is still running in England, and the Jon Pertwee episodes—including "The Three Doctors" and the other serials not broadcast on PBS in the States—are still being rerun from time to time on various Canadian stations.

Doctor Who's reputation in England is well-deserved. It is a shame American science fiction fans have not been given the opportunity to enjoy the program properly. ■