

"There have been moments when I thought: 'Can I really give this up?'"

The new face of David Tennant

David Tennant exits centre stage in his spectacular final outing as the Doctor – now he's a little star-struck and queuing for auditions in Hollywood

Doctor Who

Christmas Day, New Year's Day BBC1, BBC HD

RAIN IS RELENTLESS on the roof of the industrial unit where the outgoing Time Lord is giving his farewell interview. Outside, the air is acrid with exhaust fumes from traffic on London's busiest flyover. Only a madman, you suggest, would leave all this for a new life in Los Angeles.

When David Tennant laughs, he folds right up, then uncreases himself, like an origami man. "It's pretty grim," he agrees, casting about the windowless office for something to contradict him, "but, you know, it's home."

A spectacular two-part *Doctor Who* Christmas special marks Tennant's departure from the world's most enduring sci-fi series, and spells the end for the tenth Doctor. But what next for 38-year-old Tennant, the church minister's son from Bathgate, West Lothian? For fans suffering premature withdrawal symptoms there are excited rumours of *Doctor Who - The Movie*.

There should be an audience: the regenerated series is now a global hit, sold to more than 40 countries. When Tennant and *Doctor Who* executive producers Russell T Davies and Julie Gardner attended a sci-fi convention to launch a series of specials in the US, they were mobbed by fans and Davies, writer of the series since 2004, and Gardner have already moved to LA. So, is there any truth in the rumours?

"Oh, you know what it's like," says Tennant, who has the gift of making a party line sound like a special confidence. "Someone at the BBC takes a meeting in Hollywood and it's reported all over the press that the movie is going to happen. I don't think there is a *Doctor Who* movie – and it's not like I'm hellbent on breaking into movies, in any case – but it's a nice notion."

Movie deal or not, Tennant is moving to

California. "It's not a tactical move," he insists. "It's not like you sit at home thinking, 'Next year, Hollywood!' But Russell and Julie are already out there, which I suppose makes it feel more possible, and Ashley Jensen [*Extras/Ugly Betty*] is another old friend who's very settled there."

"It seems British actors are more and more in vogue out there; look at Hugh Laurie – he's just about as big a star as you get in the States and he's made it in a role he would never have been given here. But I'm not really thinking, 'Well, they all did it, so I'll do it. There's no great plan. You just muddle along, and if an opportunity comes up, it would be silly not to take it.'"

THE OPPORTUNITY IN question is *Rex Is Not Your Lawyer*, an NBC "dramedy" about a dysfunctional Chicago defence barrister. The show is still at the pilot stage, and if the parallel with Laurie's dysfunctional medic in *House* is coincidental, it won't hurt.

"It's weird," says Tennant, "because in Britain you make a pilot behind closed doors. If it doesn't get picked up, there's a feeling that it's probably a stinker. In America, it works the other way around. Whole careers have been built on pilots. They make shed-loads of them. So there's no expectation they'll be picked up, and no stigma if they're not. Also,

HIS LORDSHIP

"The Doctor was always my hero," says David Tennant, as he prepares to surrender his dream acting role

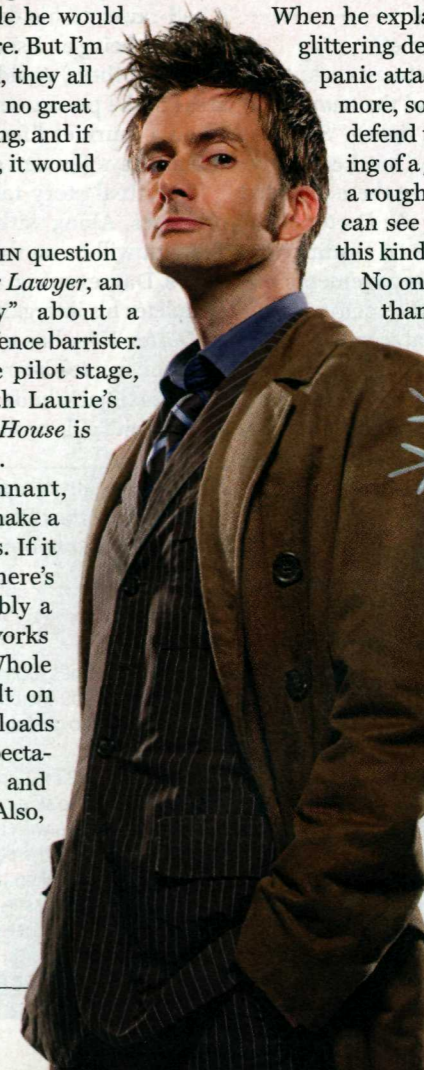
in Britain, the actor has the power, to some extent. Over there, you get a contract signed, then you wait to see if the head of studio likes you. I had to audition for Rex, which I suppose is a bit of a step down by British standards. But that's good. You don't want to get complacent."

He may not be picking out tiles for the swimming pool just yet, but there's no mistaking Tennant's emotional investment in the project.

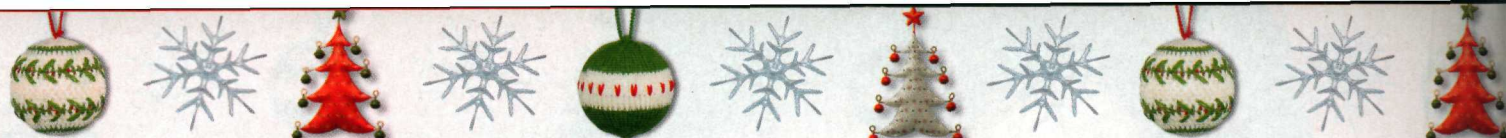
When he explains the plotline – "Rex is this glittering defence lawyer who starts having panic attacks and can't go into court any more, so he ends up coaching clients to defend themselves" – he might be talking of a good friend who's going through a rough patch. And, as he speaks, you can see just how good he would be at this kind of role.

No one does nervy intelligence better than Tennant – his Hamlet for the Royal Shakespeare Company last winter was all freshly played sensitivity and a huge hit (a TV version will air on Boxing Day on BBC2). If the Doctor famously has two hearts, Tennant has always seemed like an actor with soul to spare.

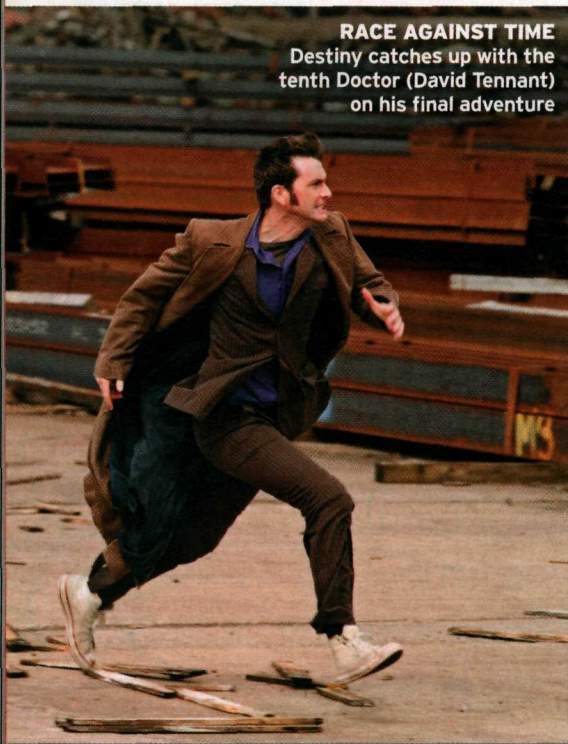
On the subject of his new NBC stable-mates, however, Tennant allows himself a brief moment of starry-eyed reflection: "I just heard Jeffrey Tambor is going to play Rex's therapist. Jeffrey Tambor from *The Larry Sanders Show*! And Larry Sanders is one ▽



JUDE EDGINGTON; MATT HOLYOAK



RACE AGAINST TIME
Destiny catches up with the tenth Doctor (David Tennant) on his final adventure



“Maybe if I had a murkier lifestyle, I’d have to be more careful”

◁ of my favourite shows of all time!”

He was more than a little star-struck, too, when he joined Stephen Fry and the team for a *QI* Christmas special (see panel, right). “Scary” is too grand a word,” he explains, “but I certainly felt slightly underqualified among these incredible rapier minds.” *Buzzcocks – the Doctor Who Special* (repeated 22 December), reading for *Bedtime Stories* on CBeebies, engagements on Radios 2 and 4 and a series of BBC idents add to what Tennant terms his “seasonal scorched earth policy”. It sounds rather final. “No, no,” he insists. “It’s not like I’m leaving for good. I’m just kind of bumbling on to the next part of the adventure.”

As he prepares to hand in his sonic screwdriver, the tenth Doctor is in sentimental mood. “It has

been a real dream time of life,” he says of his four-year tenure in the role. “The Doctor was always my hero. It was watching *Doctor Who* as a child that made me want to be an actor. So there have been moments when I thought: ‘Can I really give this up?’ In the end, I just had to force myself to take a deep breath and jump.”

HE SOUNDS SURPRISED, still, by his decision, but it may just be his manner. Tennant often appears to be in a state of hyper-awareness, as if he’d just suffered a mild electric shock. Certainly, he never guessed quite how far the Tardis would take him. Pre-*Who*, his career was on a creditable upward curve, with stints at the RSC and breakthrough TV roles in *Blackpool* and *Casanova*. Now, he’s one of the best-known faces in Britain.

“With *Doctor Who*, there’s a level of attention and enthusiasm for the programme you can’t imagine,” he points out. “It’s something you just have to swallow down.” He’s more pleased than put out, however, by the Doctor’s special influence on young fans. “There’s something about the kind of imagination the show fosters that I’m proud to be part of. The stories take you, emotionally and ethically, to interesting areas, and I think it’s brilliant that a Saturday-night TV programme should have that ambition.

“I haven’t personally felt a weight of responsibility, but obviously it would be deeply shocking if the Doctor were to be caught doing something awful in his private life. Tom Baker was famously a hell-raiser in his day, and I don’t remember that ever being an issue.” But it’s a different world now. And there would be an appetite in certain areas of the press to make it an issue. “Maybe if I had a murkier lifestyle, I’d have to be more careful,” says Tennant cheerfully.

“The final story takes my breath away,” he promises. Along with the rest of the country, Tennant will be on the edge of his seat on New Year’s Day evening as the tenth Time Lord completes his intergalactic tour of duty.

“*Doctor Who* has meant so much to me,” he says. You can tell he means it, because he’s doing the human jack-knife thing again. “It’s great to sign off with a flourish.” *E Jane Dickson*

➤ *More Doctor Who features radiotimes.com/doctor-who, plus David Tennant photo gallery at radiotimes.com/david-tennant*

EXCLUSIVE DOCTOR WHO POSTER

To mark the end of David Tennant’s four-year tenure as the Time Lord, we’re giving you the chance to buy a giant, double-sided *Doctor Who* poster with two exclusive images (see left).

The poster is A1 (84 x 59.4cm/33 x 23in) and features the Doctor on one side and Rose, Martha and Donna with the Doctor on the reverse. To get the poster, simply cut out and keep Token 1 (left) and get Token 2 in the next issue of *RT* (on sale 24 December). The poster costs £2.99 and is supplied in a tube. You’ll find full details of how to order it in the next issue of *RT*.



LIKE DAVID TENNANT? YOU’LL BE BUSY...

CBeebies Bedtime Story

from Monday 21 December **CBeebies**

Toddlers are sent to bed with a glow as David reads wintry tales, including *The Christmas Bear*.

QI Christmas Eve **BBC1**

Tennant’s sonic screwdriver is no defence against the barrage of *bons mots* from Fry and co.

Catherine Tate: Nan’s Christmas Carol

Christmas Day **BBC1**

Look out for a guest spot from you know Who.

Doctor Who Confidential

Christmas Day, New Year’s Day **BBC3**

Trailing the actor at work as his Time Lord tenure concludes.

David Tennant and Catherine Tate

Boxing Day **Radio 2**

Sitting in for Jonathan Ross – let’s hope they find their feet this time.

Desert Island Discs *Sunday 27 December, repeated New Year’s Day* **Radio 4**

Forget Time Lords and Hamlet. This lets Tennant be himself And, goodness, doesn’t he enjoy it?

Alan Carr: Chatty Man New Year Special

Tuesday 29 December **C4**

The irrepressible Carr welcomes Tennant, Catherine Tate and Spandau Ballet.

Who on Who? *Tuesday 29 December* **Radio 2**

Tennant talks to *Who* supremo Russell T Davies.

Hamlet *Boxing Day* **BBC2**

The sell-out RSC production is slickly re-worked for television with a shrewd but heartfelt performance from Tennant.

