



"It's sort of scientifically impossible to get bored with him," says showrunner Steven Moffat. "He gets a real shake-up every few years. We've had 11 Doctors in the time they've had, what, six James Bonds?"

# DOCTOR WHO IS No.1

**It's official:** *Doctor Who* is cool. Mainstream, even. And for the first time in the show's 49-year history, it's on the cover of TV GUIDE MAGAZINE. What took so long? Turns out it just needed a little help from its fans. BY AUBRY D'ARMINIO

HORDES OF WHOVIANS, as they're called, voted for the British sci-fi series to win our third Fan Favorites cover poll—galvanizing support through countless blog posts, message-board comments and tweets. The consensus was it's about time *Doctor Who* (beloved back home in the U.K.) got the props it deserves in the States. And that the fans love Matt Smith, who currently plays the show's titular time and space traveler known only as the Doctor ("Doctor *who*?" Get it?). "That's amazing!" Smith shouts on the road to a shoot in Wales, before turning serious. "Thank you to everyone who voted, because this is a huge, huge accolade. Fans mustn't underestimate their role in the emergence of the show in America." He's

not kidding. *Who's* had a long, strange trip on the way to the exciting place it's in now.

Let's go back in time, shall we? *Doctor Who* debuted in Britain on November 23, 1963, the day after the Kennedy assassination. The First Doctor, played by wizened William Hartnell with Einstein-esque hair and a frock coat, barked pedantically at his three companions (two schoolteachers and his granddaughter) while holding his lapels.

Together they traversed the universe battling baddies in the Doctor's signature ride, the TARDIS, which could theoretically change shape to

blend into its surroundings but was stuck as a 1950s-era British police call box. Five episodes in, the Doctor faced the Daleks, who would become his most long-standing foes, extraterrestrials resembling big metal pepper pots with one plunger-like hand and a goal that doubled as their favorite word: "Exterminate!"

When Hartnell's declining health forced him off the series, *Who's* writers introduced their concept of "regeneration," which allowed the Doctor, a member of a human-looking alien race called the Time Lords, to transform into a different being. So in 1966, Hartnell's Doctor collapsed and woke up a newer, younger man, portrayed by mop-topped Patrick Troughton. "I remember realizing that somebody else was playing the Doctor and complaining to my dad that that wasn't the Doctor," recalls current executive producer Steven Moffat, who'd been watching the series since it began—when he was just 2 years old. "It was seeing that show that made me want to know what went on behind the scenes."

Troughton turned into the dashing Third Doctor (Jon Pertwee, the first to appear in color), who in turn became the utterly bananas Fourth Doctor (Tom Baker, in an impossibly long striped scarf) and so on. The one constant besides the TARDIS and the inevitable traveling companions: The Doctor was open-minded and tolerant. And crackers. "Essentially the show is about a madman fighting aliens with a plunger, a toaster and some orangutan fur who saves the world by default or mistake and [is] cleverer than everyone else," Smith says. "That's got a universal appeal, I suppose."

Time-Life Television counted on that when they began syndicating the Pertwee years Stateside in 1972, though the show didn't find a more permanent American home until PBS picked up Baker's episodes in 1978—where it played as a cult series. By 1985, *Who* was shedding much of its

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"They're drawn to each other, but they are also wary of each other at the same time," says Coleman about Clara and the Doctor. "There's a big mystery about her that he can't quite figure out."

U.K. audience, and the BBC put the show on hiatus in 1989.

Whovians waited seven years for a poorly received TV-movie, and then...nothing. "There was a sense of defending *Doctor Who*. It was the underdog," says Matt Hills, author of *Fan Cultures* and *Triumph of the Time Lords*. "The show wasn't something you could talk about," says Lynne M. Thomas, coeditor of the anthology *Chicks Dig Time Lords*. "People would tilt their heads and be like, 'What's that? *Star Trek*?'"

Then, in 2005, the BBC resurrected *Doctor Who* full tilt, with diehard fan Russell T Davies (who had created *Queer as Folk*) at the controls. Leather-jacketed Ninth Doctor Christopher Eccleston brought acting cred and the catchphrase "Fantastic!" while his teenage companion Rose, played by pop star Billie Piper, attracted the kiddies. Their occasional partner, lusty swinger (men, women, aliens...) Captain Jack Harkness

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(John Barrowman; see page 32), added a modern edge. "Fans-turned-show-runners want the show to be the very best it can," says Hills. "They remember when it wasn't as brilliant as it should have been, and they strive not to repeat past mistakes."

The new *Who* was a hit and Syfy brought it Stateside a year later. BBC America took over in 2009, just as Tenth Doctor David Tennant was finishing his run. "*Doctor Who* conventions went from 800 people—the same 800 people for years—to suddenly exploding to 3,000 people," recalls Thomas. "It was wonderful."

On January 1, 2010, Tennant's Doctor blew up, and out of the flames came Smith, the franchise's most popular Time Lord—despite the tweed suit and the motto

"Bow ties are cool." He landed on BBC America that April, with companions Amy (Karen Gillan) and Rory (Arthur Darvill) and new showrunner Moffat (who'd been on the writing team since Eccleston's run). The season premiere was the network's highest rated telecast ever, attracting 1.2 million viewers. Starting with the 2010 Christmas special, BBC America began airing the show on the same day as in the U.K., which cut down on pirating and helped drive the next season's opening numbers even higher (1.3 million). Then there were the downloads: *Doctor Who* was the top TV purchase of 2011 on iTunes, beating *Modern Family* and *Dexter*.

Fans crammed a Tumblr-sponsored *Doctor Who* event at this year's Comic-Con that wasn't even

scheduled to include the stars. "They began lining up at 4:30am just to meet other fans," says BBC America general manager Perry Simon. "Matt, Karen and Arthur were making a surprise appearance, but the fans didn't know that!" Adds Smith: "It sounded like a football stadium."

"It's a real, proper love" the fans have, says Jenna-Louise Coleman, who plays the Doctor's latest companion, Governess Clara Oswald. Coleman actually debuted in this fall's premiere as Oswin Oswald, a brainiac techie trapped inside a Dalek. How one woman becomes the other will presumably be answered in the December 25 Christmas episode, which is set in Victorian London. The Doctor's been sulking there since losing Amy and Rory to the Weeping Angels (his new greatest foe) in the fall finale.

Old friends serpent lady Madame Vastra (Neve McIntosh), her butt-kicking lady's maid Jenny (Catrin Stewart) and stumpy alien Commander Strax (Dan Starkey) will help him save the city from the villainous Doctor Simeon (Richard E. Grant) and his hordes of evil snowmen that feed on human fear, including Clara's.

Not that she has too much to worry about. "She is absolutely the Doctor's equal," says executive producer Caroline Skinner, "and as feisty as he is." Says Coleman, "She's delicious, fun, flirtatious and very wry."

When the season resumes this spring, Clara and the Doctor will embark on eight new adventures that Moffat assures will be wild—and wildly different. "All big, movie-poster ideas," he says. The Cybermen (see "Doctor's Manual," below) will return with a different design in an episode penned by graphic novelist Neil Gaiman. Then comes a new documentary, *An Adventure in Space and Time*, for the show's 50th anniversary. As for the actual celebration, "We've got huge plans," hints Moffat, "but I'm not telling you what they are." Not even the fans?

"The best thing you can do for your fans is to keep your show on the air," he says. "What the fans most want is what we're getting right now: *Doctor Who* is a huge mainstream hit, not the totally obscure thing that only the initiated can understand." And for *Doctor* devotees, that's *absolutely fantastic*.

## DOCTOR'S MANUAL

Matt Smith explains *Who's* who and what's what

### ▼ TARDIS (AKA THE DOCTOR'S RIDE)

"It stands for Time and Relative Dimension in Space. It looks like a blue police telephone box, which were infamous in England. It's bigger on the inside than on the outside. And it is a living organic being that can travel anywhere."



### ► DALEKS

"Psychopathic aliens in tanks. They fly; they have suckers that can suck your soul and your mind. They are the definition of evil in the Doctor's world."



### TIME WAR

"The Great War between the Time Lords and the Daleks, during which the Doctor had to wipe out his own people; he is now the last of the Time Lords."

### CYBERMEN

"The race of emotionless warriors from the future who convert human parts into silvery metallic people and want to take over the world."

### PSYCHIC PAPER

"It's a piece of paper, like a little wallet, in the Doctor's left pocket. When he presents it to you, it will tell you whatever he wants it to tell you. For instance, if I were to present it to you and I wanted you to

believe that I was the editor of TV GUIDE MAGAZINE, that's what it would make you believe."

### SONIC SCREWDRIVER (AKA THE DOCTOR'S WEAPON)

"A screwdriver that emits sonic waves that can manipulate anything into any shape. It's very good on locks, but it doesn't work on wood, sadly."

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