



Jon Pertwee's first encounter with the deadly Daleks was in 1972

The latest Doctor Who is Sylvester McCoy here with Sophie Aldred



25 YEARS OF DOCTOR WHO

by TIMOTHY ROBINS and PAUL MOUNT

November 23rd marks the 25th anniversary of TV's *Doctor Who* making it the longest-running science-fiction series in the world. The programme's twenty-five years have spanned 151 stories comprised of 680 episodes. During this time, the series has become a national institution and an international success...

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In *The Five Doctors* (1985) Peter Davison met three of his previous regenerations with Richard Hurndal replacing the late William Hartnell, the first Doctor Who

ACCORDING to BBC figures, *Doctor Who* is watched by 110 million viewers in nearly 70 countries. But it is not only overseas sales of episodes that have helped make the series one of BBC Enterprises' top money spinners. It has also spawned a mountain of merchandise including over 125 novelisations of its stories, a monthly magazine, model kits, video cassettes and a chart topping disco record. In the mid-Sixties the Doctor even reached the big screen in two films starring Peter Cushing and there are plans for a major new film scheduled for production next year.

In many ways the *Doctor Who* of today is very different from the *Doctor Who* of 1963. The Doctor himself has undergone six 'regenerations' to be played by William Hartnell, Patrick Troughton, Jon Pertwee, Tom Baker, Peter Davison, Colin Baker and Sylvester McCoy. Not only has the Doctor changed but so have his travelling companions. There have been 26 to date and their ranks have included one-time *Blue Peter* presenter Peter Purvis, Frazer Hines of *Emmerdale Farm* fame, Louise Jameson and multi-talented Bonnie Langford.

Behind-the-scenes, changes in the production team have been reflected in differences in the series' pace and style. The Doctor's adventures have ranged from historical drama to gothic

romance and from *Star Wars* space opera to outrageous comedy. In fact, the only constant feature of the series has been the Doctor's time machine, the Tardis - an acronym for Time And Relative Dimensions In Space. Although its larger-than-the-outside interior has undergone a number of refits, its exterior, on the whole, has remained shaped like a blue, London police box.

Doctor Who began as a new kind of programme from a new kind of BBC. In the early Sixties, Director General, Hugh Greene, was re-arming the corporation, with drama series like *Z Cars* and comedies like *Steptoe And Son*, to do battle with ITV, the young pretender to television's throne.

Doctor Who was created by Sydney Newman, a flamboyant Canadian who was brought in to help reorganise the BBC's drama department. Newman modelled *Doctor Who* on H.G. Wells' 'The Time Machine', replacing Wells' nameless traveller with an equally mysterious wanderer known only as the Doctor. As developed by producer Verity Lambert and script editor David Whitaker, the series was to be a mixture of adventure and excitement with a bit of education thrown in for good measure.

Doctor Who not only stretched writers' imagination, it also pushed at the frontiers of television technology. Its distinctive title sequence of swirling clouds was produced by camera



The fourth Doctor Who - Tom Baker

feedback and its equally distinctive theme music, of white noise and electronic warbles, was the product of the BBC's Radiophonic Workshop at its most experimental.

The role of the Doctor was first played by veteran actor William Hartnell who portrayed the Doctor as a crotchety, irascible old man. When his grand-daughter, Susan (Carole Anne Ford), was followed to the Tardis by two of her school teachers, Ian (William Russell) and Barbara (Jaqueline Hill), he kidnaps them back to the dawn of time in a fit of pique.

Although this first adventure attracted a favourable response from press and

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Continued

public alike, it was the second story which helped guarantee the series longevity. *The Dead Planet* introduced viewers to the alien creatures known as the Daleks. Created by writer Terry Nation and with a pepperpot design by Raymond P Cusick, these metallic monsters sparked a wave of Dalekmania as they infested the imagination of children across the country.

By 1966, the pressures of the series virtually year-long production schedule, coupled with increasing ill health, forced Hartnell to relinquish his role. Rather than cancel the series, the BBC recast the part of the Doctor. Viewers were introduced to the concept now known as regeneration which was presented as a metamorphosis not unlike a butterfly emerging from a chrysalis. In this case, the butterfly was played by the puckish Patrick Troughton.

Troughton, with his Beatle-style haircut, played the Doctor as a cross between a Chaplinesque tramp and a naughty school boy. He was joined on his travels by such youthful companions as Highlander Jamie (Frazer Hines), Victoria (Deborah Watling) and child genius Zoe (Wendy Padbury).

The series itself also underwent something of a rejuvenation introducing such memorable monsters as the Cybermen (first seen in Hartnell's last story), the Ice Warriors, the Yeti and the Quarks. The last of Troughton's three seasons saw the arrival of UNIT – the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce – set up to combat alien threats to earth.

1970 saw *Doctor Who* faced with cancellation. Thought to be dated and childish, it was told to grow up or get out. The production team decided to combine many of the elements that had proved popular in Troughton's final season. The Doctor, now played by Jon Pertwee was given an adult job, as scientific advisor to UNIT, and a



The second Doctor Who
Patrick Troughton

straight laced assistant, Liz Shaw (Caroline John), to be followed later by would-be-spy Jo Grant (Katy Manning).

Dressed in swirling cape, velvet jacket and frilled shirt, Pertwee's Doctor was very much the English dandy. He played the role as a man of action, an alien James Bond, adept at Venusian Akido, handy with his multi-purpose sonic screwdriver, he rode into battle aboard his souped-up super car WHO 1 (affectionately known as 'Bessie'). Fighting alongside Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart (Nicholas Courtney), the Doctor defended the earth from a variety of menaces often spearheaded by the Master (Roger Delgado), an evil renegade Time Lord.

1975 introduced viewers to a new *Who* the irrepressible Tom Baker, the most popular Doctor of all. Baker appeared, in stark contrast to Pertwee, as an enigmatic, bohemian character in a long, multi-coloured scarf and a floppy fedora. Portraying the Doctor as an Oscar Wilde among Time Lords, Baker's characterisation found favour among student audiences who helped swell the ranks of the newly formed Doctor Who Fan Club and, later, the Doctor Who Appreciation Society. Baker also captured a growing audience across the Atlantic, giving the series its first taste of American success and developing a wide spread cult following to rival the US's own *Star Trek*.

After a record breaking, seven-year stint, Baker bowed out of the series to be replaced by Peter Davison, previously best known for his role as a vet in *All Creatures Great And Small*. Davison was entrusted with restoring *Doctor Who's* by now flagging ratings. The series was moved to a twice-weekly time slot.

In his pastel shaded, Edwardian cricket costume, Davison played a more vulnerable Doctor often relying for help from companions like air hostess Tegan (Janet Fielding), young mathematician Adric (Matthew Waterhouse) and botany student Peri (Nicola Bryant).

Davison, not wishing to outstay his welcome, chose to leave the series after just three brief seasons. However, his replacement's stay was to prove even shorter.

In 1984, actor Colin Baker donned the mantle of the Doctor. Baker's portrayal – like his multi-coloured, patchwork coat – could best be described as loud and tasteless. Baker himself admitted, "I wanted to be brave and make the Doctor not instantly accessible".

Today's Doctor is played by National Theatre actor and children's show favourite Sylvester McCoy. Alongside him, companion Melanie (known as 'Mel') Bush played by the energetic Bonnie Langford.

It must be said that whatever pleasures viewers derive from *Doctor Who* today, they are somewhat different from the time when the series was watched from behind the sofa, between the crack in the door or through the key hole by a nation of terrified school children. But, as this year's colourful anniversary season proves, it is *Doctor Who's* flexibility of format that has helped ensure its continued survival. With the Daleks, Cybermen and the Master all proving equally enduring, who's for the next 25 years?

DOCTOR WHO ON VIDEO

★ If you want to catch up with *Doctor Who's* past, the following are available from BBC Video

PATRICK TROUGHTON
THE SEEDS OF DEATH

JON PERTWEE
SPEARHEAD FROM SPACE
THE DAY OF THE DALEKS
DEATH TO THE DALEKS

TOM BAKER
REVENGE OF THE CYBERMEN
TERROR OF THE ZYGONS
THE PYRAMIDS OF MARS
THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS
THE ROBOTS OF DEATH
THE TALONS OF WENG-CHIANG

PETER DAVISON
THE FIVE DOCTORS

Jon Pertwee with assistant Liz Shaw played by Caroline John in *Spearhead From Space*

