

The Daleks return with campaign to take over world of hi-tech toys

By Adam Sherwin
Media Reporter

THIS time there is no escape behind the sofa. Daleks from the makers of the best-selling Robosapien toy will lead a wave of Doctor Who merchandise.

In March, Christopher Eccleston becomes the ninth Doctor to emerge from the Tar-

"The £30 Dalek will shout "intruder alert" if Mum tries to open the bedroom door"

dis when the science fiction series returns to BBC One after 15 years.

But the regenerated Doctor Who is also a big weapon for the BBC's commercial department and the battle for the 2005 Christmas market has already begun.

Character Options, the toy and digital cameras company, has signed a licensing deal with BBC Worldwide to make products to tie in with the series.

Character sold two million of its Robosapien programmable toy robots last Christmas. The company has made licensed products for *Spider-Man 2* and *The Lord of the Rings* and now the new Doctor Who is getting the Hollywood treatment, with toys to match.

Radio-controlled Dalek guards will top the range. Jon Diver, of Character Options, said: "The Dalek's infra-red eyes can detect when someone enters a room. It will shout 'intruder alert' if Mum tries to open the bedroom door."

Expected to retail for £30, evil-minded children can direct the Daleks to chase parents around the living room from a radio-controlled distance.

Character will also produce the Doctor's sonic screwdriver, a design still under wraps, as well as vehicles from the new series and talking mugs.

Richard Hollis, of BBC Worldwide, said: "We wanted a partner which had an innovative record with technological and robotic toys."

Doctor Who will battle Character's own Robosapien V2 in the crowded Christmas toys-boys market.

Merchandising is no longer an afterthought for the BBC. The Character team was shown the scripts and will visit Doctor Who's designers and special effects teams on set to work up ideas for new products.

BBC Worldwide has a duty to exploit the corporation's commercial opportunities and returns the profits as funds for programme-making.

It was Doctor Who that started the whole merchandising phenomenon. Mr Hollis said: "The BBC licensing division was created only because of the popularity of the Daleks in 1964."

The BBC is signing deals with companies to produce merchandise aimed at boys discov-

ering the show for the first time and at the fans who grew up with the cult series.

There will be Cyberman biscuit jars, a PlayStation game and Doctor Who clocks and watches linked to the show's theme of time travel.

Penguin will publish children's books and audiobooks and DVD sales could top one million for one of British tele-

vision's most internationally renowned brands.

There will also be action figures of a leather-jacketed Eccleston and his new assistant, Rose, played by Billie Piper. The BBC sought a trademark application for a new crescent-shaped Doctor Who logo, as soon as plans for the series were announced.

The 13-part series will be

broadcast on Saturday evenings from March. Guest stars include Simon Callow, who plays Charles Dickens, and T. Davies, the writer of *Doctor Who*.

As for the Daleks, they will be up against Ant and Dec. You cannot be boring. You cannot sit still with it. It has got to be emotional and it has got to be fun at the same time.

T2



► Male middle-age crisis: you're only Jung once

PAGES 4, 5



Daleks are destined to rule toy shops across the galaxy

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EX-TER-MIN-ATE, EX-TER-MIN-ATE

■ Made of four castors round a rim, the machines were extremely flimsy and during filming would topple over when hitting the slightest object.

■ Their creator, Terry Nation, encouraged the myth that he made up the name after seeing the letters DAL-LEK on a set of encyclopaedias.

■ They were engineered by their creator Davros on the planet of Skaro as beings of ruthless logic and were allergic to anti-radiation tablets.

■ One-time Doctor Who actor Colin Baker regarded them as a "pain in the neck" to work with, although admitted to being scared when in a room alone with one.

■ Despite a series of defeats by the Doctor over the course of several series, the Time Lords still predicted the Daleks would become the dominant lifeform in the cosmos.