It’s the ghost of Christmas past
...present and future as Scrooge faces Dr Who
Now Dr Who is the

David Stephenson talks to the all-star cast of Britain's favourite festive family television extravaganza, and asks writer Steven Moffat show was revived, and the episode, A Christmas Carol, is unashamedly seasonal: it's very loosely based on the Charles Dickens' classic with its very own Scrooge (Sir Michael Gambon), the Time Lord wears a Santa hat and slides down the chimney and débutante actor and singer Katherine Jenkins performs a new and evocative Christmas

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spirit of Christmas
carol, composed by Murray Gold. Oh, and there’s also a shark, a rather large one, which will drive the children behind the sofa. A shark in Doctor Who? As one younger member of the audience at the screening observed: “There wasn’t an alien in that episode.” Well, apart from the Doctor himself.
The story is set on Christmas Eve when Amy (Karen Gillan) and Rory (Arthur Darvill), celebrate their honeymoon, find themselves trapped on a stricken space liner which is plummeting through chunks of thick, icy fog to the surface of a planet below. There we find Gambon’s evil Kazran Sardick, a rich but lonely old miser who rules Sardicktown and is the only man who can save the ship. Enter Matt Smith’s Doctor who must “rescue Kazran’s soul” and show him that life is worth living by taking him back to his childhood. (Laurence Beilcher plays the young Kazran). This isn’t easy, especially when the Doctor needs to overcome a killer shark. It really is a “Jaws meets Dickens” has creator Steven Moffat gone completely bonkers? It’s what the show is all about, he says. “We knew the writing of Doctor Who is about a man who lives in a telephone box and saves the universe in a box tie, so how do we go some to up that. So if you’re going to do a Christmas special for Christmas Day, based on the fact that the Doctor has had a selection box for breakfast, and are probably drunk, you have to move it on a bit. Actually it’s a normal episode of Doctor Who wouldn’t be enough at that point.”
Moffat wrote the episode in a Los Angeles hotel. “It really is the dullest place on earth, not nuts at all, so that shouldn’t have influenced it really. And because it was so hot, I had to turn up the air conditioning and listen to a lot of Christmas carols. Christmas specials have to be emotional. You have to laugh and cry. The original Christmas Carol story is sort of the whole package.”
Katherine Jenkins, at the centre of a love story in the special, was nervous about watching her first performance. “My heart was almost thumping out of my chest. It was a bit like turning up on the set on the first day, which was pretty nerve wracking, too. “It was amazing but very frightening.” Even scarier, she suggests, than singing for the Pope.
“You know, I’m nervous when I cannot speak. I’m the chattiest person goes. I spent entire days on set being very quiet. But I shouldn’t have worried because everyone in the Doctor Who family made me so welcome. They made me feel that it was something that I could do.”
Speaking about her costuming, she says: “My character comes from a family with really no money so I dress very simply. It’s a white cotton and lace dress with woollen sleeves and I also wear boots. It looks like many layers of Victorian underwear!”
Matt Smith, the 11th Time Lord, is complimentary about her performance. “I think you’ll never forget, for a moment that she hadn’t acted before. She was very diligent, too, accessing real emotion, and I’m convinced that she will go on to act in other things.”
Moffat jokes: “Forget the Pope; she could get a part in Casualty!”
But would they all thank Jenkins? “I have to admit they did use a bit of balm in my eyes to start them, but generally I’m a real cry baby. Once I got going I quite enjoyed having a good old sob! And I cried a lot."
This time last year Matt Smith was sitting at home with his family watching David Tennant as Doctor Who, knowing he had the role and had already filmed scenes. “I watched it with Mum and Dad. Yes, it was all a bit odd, I’m thinking, I’m going to turn into Doctor Who, but while I’m watching it, I’m thinking, ‘Please don’t hate me!’”
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Review

You could be forgiven for thinking nostalgia is the new reality TV, such is the lure of the festive schedule. It’s not difficult to conclude that the new role for commissioning editors is, what is old is new again.
Putting aside the wave of well-worn films and comedy shows, there is a distinct air of familiarity to our schedules. Doctor Who, of course, is a revival. This is the fourth Christmas special since its return. Estonian scion and Billie Piper appeared together on our screens in 2005.
Next up are the memorable Christmas names of Eric & Ernie, which resonate at this time of year. Morecambe And Wise, the early years, are realised in a new one-off drama for the BBC, with Victoria Wood as Eric’s mother and Vic Reeves as his father. Putting the ultimate revival arrives in the form of Upstairs Downstairs, the Seventies series from ITV, which made stars of Jean Marsh and Gordon Jackson. The new three-part series updates the original from 1933 to 1935, when it finished. There were 68 memorable episodes.
The character of Rose Buck returns, this time promoted to the housekeeper, but other memories are largely erased in this remake. Yes, we may well ask, ‘Where are the new projecting’? Or you may conclude that nostalgia is perfect for this time of year.

For your full Christmas TV listings, see S Magazine.

TIME TRAVELLER: Laurence Beilcher as the young Kazran “Scrooge character”, played by Michael Gambon, left, watched by Dr Who Matt Smith