The Doctor spans space, time and the world

A global audience will tune in to the 50th anniversary show of ‘Doctor Who.’

By Patrick Kevin Day

Matt Smith has traveled the distant past, the far future and the outer reaches of the universe as the iconic British science fiction character the Doctor.

But on Saturday, the boyish English actor will go to a rarefied space typically reserved for moon landings, the Olympics and epic sporting events like the Olympics. As part of a 50th anniversary celebration for the sci-fi show, Smith will be broadcast around the globe in a special TV movie: “Doctor Who: The Day of the Doctor.”

The BBC is taking the golden anniversary celebration to unprecedented levels for a scripted television show. The movie, which also stars David Tennant, Jenna Coleman and Billie Piper, will truly be a global event Saturday as it will air in 78 countries at the same time. In the United States, the special will be shown on BBC America, but it will also be screened in movie theaters as well — also at the same time.

The cult hit about a time-and-space traversing alien Time Lord and his series of human companions originally premiered in England on Nov. 23, 1963 — indeed, its first episode was overshadowed by the JFK assassination. Since then, the series has been recognized by the Guinness World Record as being the longest-running science fiction TV series.

Saturday’s “Doctor Who” broadcast, however, will mark the final chapters for Smith’s time in the legendary role. He’ll have one more appearance as the Doctor, a role he’s had since 2009. In the show’s annual Christmas special next month, Smith will “regenerate” and pass the baton to a new Doctor, this one played by “The Thirteenth Doctor” star Peter Capaldi.

“I’m going to miss it so much,” said Smith in an interview. [See “Who,” D8]

A fun TARDIS trip back to the early days

Robert Lloyd
Television Critic

Had it come even a few years into its 21st century rebirth, the 50th anniversary of “Doctor Who,” the BBC series about a space-time-traveling alien and the humans hecorrals into keeping him company, would not be the world event it is now. But event it is: Saturday’s “The Day of the Doctor,” in which beloved Tenth Doctor David Tennant will join beloved and current Eleventh Doctor Matt Smith, will air simultaneously in more than 76 countries (BBC America in the United States), with special theatrical showings in many.

It is the Olympic Games opening ceremony of science fiction.

As an appetizer to this main course, and a primer for latecomers, we are first being offered “An Adventure in Space and Time,” a TV movie about the creation of the series and its first star, William Hartnell (David Bradley). Thanks to a neat narrative trick, the show has survived the first Doctor’s retirement by 47 years. It premieres here Friday on BBC America, and anyone who loves the series will want to see it.

As a story about how the past became the present (which makes us, in relation to its characters, people of the future), it is very much in line with its subject, and has been made with much of the same mix of enchantment and suspense.

Writer Mark Gatiss has also penned episodes of [See “Adventure,” D8]
Birth of the Whoniverse

[Adventures from Dr. Who]"Inside the TARDIS with a young girl, Sherry, who is in the car with her parents and is quite tall for her age. She is wearing a blue dress and has a flower in her hair. She is looking up at the sky and smiling.

"It's like being in the Beatles!"

JINNA COLEMAN, with Matt Smith, was surprised by the show's popularity.

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