

Weekend Review

LYNN CROSBIE ON DONALD TRUMP'S AIR-BRUSHED BIOGRAPHY, R3

CARL WILSON ON TODAY'S CBC COUNTDOWN TO CANADA'S 50 BEST SONGS, R10

VISION TV REACHES OUT TO THE YOUNG, HIP AND FAITHFUL, R11

POLICE PUBLIC CALL BOX

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PULL TO OPEN

He's 900 years old, has two hearts and travels through space and time in a police phone box. Now, 16 years after he was yanked from the airwaves, the intrepid fighter of evildoers is revving up his sonic screwdriver and heading back to prime time. ELIZABETH RENZETTI reports on the triumphal return of

Dr. Who

SEE PAGE R5

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with ACTION

L.L.A. Charpentier



April 21, 23, 29, 30 @ 7:30 pm
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A Who's who of the doctor's signature looks



William Hartnell (1963-66):
Sowd, lots of grey hair
Patrick Troughton (1966-69):
Frock coat, checked trousers,
high white collar
Jon Pertwee (1970-74): Cape,
ruffled collar, tie (USA-85); Har-
po Maris, coat of many
colours
Sylvester McCoy (1986-89):
Question mark vest and umbrella
Paul McGann (1996): 19th cen-
tury
Christopher Eccleston (2005):
Leather jacket, cropped hair

COVER STORY

The sexiest Time Lord

BY ELIZABETH BENNETTI
CARDIFF, WALES

QUESTION: How many Doctor Who fans does it take to change a light bulb?
ANSWER: Four — one to change the bulb, and three others to say, "Nah, not as good as the last one."
Christopher Eccleston knows what he's getting himself into. He's a fan who has taken to the mission of the major, from character actor to superhero, and while the chances are it will be as sweet as sugar, there's no denying that he will perform a belly flop of epic proportions. In front of millions of people. Heard around the world.

Tonight, Eccleston will don the mantle of Dr. Who, the ninth actor to play the role on television. Who thought it'd say "don't scarf," but instead of trailing muffler, worn famously by Tom Baker in the 1970s, has been banished along with the floppy hats, curly beards and leather lapels, and other cheesy relics of the past. This Doctor, the BBC wants to know, is real. He wears a leather jacket. He's the most modern time traveller you've seen, and a bit of a sissy, even more blip to a 500-year-old Time Lord, but an eternity for obsessive fans of Cardiff Bay in Wales to the triumphal blast usually reserved for Royal weddings. The return of Doctor Who. That's something people are talking about, perhaps thanks to the BBC's indelible promotional efforts. The Royal wedding, by contrast, lacks the buzz even a hundred hennies.

In order to spread the good word, the BBC has invited hundreds of "opinion formers" to a hotel on the shores of Cardiff Bay in Wales to watch the first episode. Cardiff can check it out when the series launches on the CBC on April 5 at 8 p.m. The opinion they form appears to be a good one: They whoop and yell when seeing the first appearance show blows up, and the appearance of those villainous robots, which is a clip from an earlier episode, is greeted with a wave of applause. And for those who had childhood fights about whether Daleks can climb stairs. Oh, yes, they can.

In the screening, Eccleston, 41, sits nursing a pint, ready to concede that a taking on this beloved character is a position of privilege. But what audiences haven't seen is that he can do wit and whimsy quite delicately, as if he's not taking so seriously as he did Hamlet once before, he responds, deadpan, "Will, what was I unintentionally comic, apparently."

In the hands of writer and creative visionary Russell T. Davies, his incarnation of Doctor Who is funny, but not the least bit camp. He's a bit of a sissy, but mainly because he fits an alien from the planet Gallifrey. As Eccleston says, "I wanted the character to be a good person. If I could convince you he was an alien just with the performance..." This Dr. Who is also the latest Time Lord we've seen, although — how to put this delicately — it's not exactly been a crowded field.

The first Doctor Who episode, *An Unearthly Child*, aired on Nov. 23, 1963.
It was not, as rumour has it, delayed by the assassination a day earlier of John F. Kennedy, although it did go to air one minute late. And, well, the BBC's head of drama, Sydney Newman, complained about the episode's fluffed dialogue and the crabbiness of the Doctor



U.K. pop star Billie Piper as Rose Tyler and Christopher Eccleston as Dr. Who. The devotion of fans is a state of mind — or perhaps a state of suspended disbelief — that can be had for the outsider to fathom.

(played by William Hartnell), and insisted the pilot be reshoot.
Hartnell's Doctor was a cranky oldster, and as the character "evolved," he got progressively more approachable and more funky. Jon Pertwee's Time Lord was a Brian Jones-ish dandy; Tom Baker, a plummy-voiced oddball; and Sylvester McCoy, a curly-haired schoolboy.

As the actor changed, almost everything else about the show remained constant: The Doctor travelled through time and space in the Tardis — a police phone box on the outside, a whole lot more within — fighting monsters and evildoers while accompanied by one of his companions, often female, always gormless. The writing was clever — Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* was for a time a scriptwriter — and that made up for the terrifying mummies made from constructed with a glue gun and a box of macaroni.

The devotion of Doctor Who fans is a state of mind — or perhaps a state of suspended disbelief — that can be had for the outsider to fathom. Did they really enjoy the monster who they were in hand caught? Did they see his hair, every thing?
"And yet, somehow, it scared the kids. One of the most charming things about the collective nostalgia around Doctor Who is the oft-repeated 'behind the sold' remark. As soon as the familiar theme music kicked in, kids could be found, big-eyed, watching it from behind the sofa while parents reared in arm-chairs. It was a family experience — of course, there was nothing else on TV in its pants-wetting frightening-10-on-5," says Loosely. There would be discussions in the House of Commons, he says, about whether

children should watch a show. Britain's moral watchdog, Mark Whitehouse, thumped and railed against it.
While the show was never as popular abroad as in Britain, it does have stalwart fans in Europe and North America, perhaps due, in Loosely's opinion, to a particularly English sensibility. "Americans, all things being equal, like to see an American collector offered 'a silly amount of money' above her head in a glass case a gun from the episode *Glance of Ice* in 1965. If your eight-year-old had made it in art class, you'd par him on the head and tell him it was a job well done."

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Who and canned the show for good in 1985. A two-hour telefilm starring Paul McGann appeared in 1996.
As one commentator said recently, "There was a list of a bad model about it at the BBC. It was just too quaint, too backward-looking, too ridiculous — and, in the end, too recognizable a brand not to be resurrected. However, there were complicated rights issues to be worked out, everyone seemed to own a small piece of the pie. 'You have a Dalek story,' says Campbell. 'You have to get the rights from the estate of the robots' creator Terry Nation.'
The show found a saviour in Louise Heggesson, the former BBC executive who commissioned the new series. And Heggesson knew exactly whose vision she wanted to propel the Tardis into the 21st century. One day, she walked past the office of Russell T. Davies, one of the younger boys of British TV. He said, "Doctor Who? Russell. We're doing it."
♦ ♦ ♦

This is, in many ways, Davies' moment. Doctor Who's writer and executive producer is beaming, seated at the hotel in Cardiff after the screening of his baby. Brallo, he should be in front of the cameras, not behind them. He's afraid of the Doctor, will readily get to one of his two hearts — whether there will be any romantic action between the Time Lord and his new companion, Rose Tyler, played by British pop star Billie Piper.

They're about to be in a state of tension for 13 weeks," he says, and stops, pulls a face. "The men I've met. This is, in many ways, Davies' moment. Doctor Who's writer and executive producer is beaming, seated at the hotel in Cardiff after the screening of his baby. Brallo, he should be in front of the cameras, not behind them. He's afraid of the Doctor, will readily get to one of his two hearts — whether there will be any romantic action between the Time Lord and his new companion, Rose Tyler, played by British pop star Billie Piper.

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home here greedy land

THEATRE

Death and Taxes
Written and directed by Guy Spring
Starring Eric Davis and Andreas Apergis
At the Sadye Bronfman Centre for the Arts in Montreal
Rating: ★★

REVIEWED BY MATTHEW HAYES

If Montreal director and playwright Guy Spring latest work has a single most thing working in its favour, it is the current newspaper headlines, which accent the show because of the unfolding Gottery inquiries: the swash of misappreciated dollars, cryovers and the potential for rampant government corruption seem to be on just about everyone's mind, especially in Canada.
In *Death and Taxes*, we witness Canada's apparent fall from grace, from the power of the 1980s to the bitter 1990s. It's the worst setback ever faced by a ruling party. Using multimedia quite effectively throughout, Spring flashes images of a nation's TV news screens on stage, accompanied by pop tunes of the day.
Long gone is that innocence, through a point of fascination for introspective American playwrights and filmmakers, the central Guy Spring's plot. His protagonist is Nathan Carter, who follows the path of greed and, as a result, goes to hell in a handbasket.

As a corporate tax lawyer, Carter has all manner of big-business types escape their fiscal commitment to the state. Why pay taxes when you can use a loophole? There's nothing wrong with making money. Carter tells anyone who doubts of greed and, as a result, goes to hell in a handbasket.

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Death and Taxes continues at the Sadye Bronfman Centre for the Arts until April 10 (514-739-7944).