It's "Doctor Who"—that's who—and up to 4,500 fans of the show will gather in Spokane.

By Tom Suen

For playing the third Doctor (now on that later) Pertwee is unlikely to show up. The director includes Katy Manning, Nicholas Courtney, Richard Franklin and John Levene, who played different companions in the show's long history of production by the BBC.

The show, incidentally, is the first live-action TV show to be filmed in the country. All at once, the Doctor has faced strangers (and cheaper-looking) creatures than this in his 23 years on BBC.

The Timelords' attractions certainly present what Lisa "Star Trek" but traditional science never resorts to cleverness in the series. Machines said to be extraordinarily high tech look like kitchen utensils used to sabo...

The show is extremely popular in the West, but not in the East. Interest varies with which PBS stations carry the synchronized show.

Bear in mind, don't get it. Spokane viewers have been hip to "Doctor Who" for more than three years, dating back to June 1983 when KSPS-TV began airing half-hour episodes of the show.

Because the program is more than more science fiction, it has won an following of fans around the world. On the anniversary of "Doctor Who" in 1983, more than 10,000 fans gathered in Chicago to celebrate a grand party.

The Spokane party will be nearly as large as the Chicago event, if not quite as well attended. From noon to five, people will enjoy all sorts of activities and entertainment. The event will be generated by a variety of shows and exhibits. Some of them will present a calendar performance at Saturday afternoon. The event will be centered around the show and will include not only autograph sessions and an awards banquet, but also picture-taking sessions.

The gathering will be held at the Spokane Civic Auditorium. The event will be open to the public. There will be free snacks and drinks, as well as a variety of activities for all ages. The event will conclude with a presentation of the show's latest episode.
Jamie Decker looks over a list of names of fellow Whovians.

Jamie Decker, the IEDWAS club president and TimeFest coordinator, says she plans to set aside enough money from the convention's receipts to underwrite the costs of running another year of "Doctor Who" on the channel established by the station to be about $70,000.

But for an event that's described as a public television benefit, KSPS's interest and support in TimeFest have been surprisingly modest, Decker says.

Decker claims she knows of no other "Doctor Who" club in the country that's held a convention as a benefit for a PBS station. She's a bit miffed at KSPS for waiting until last week before calling on airannouncements of the event.

The irony for her is that public TV stations in Tacoma and Salt Lake City have been carrying special features for viewers about the Spokane convention for more than a month.

Bill Stanley, program director at KSPS, says he intends to carry the show next year, if possible. A substantial amount of money provided by IEDWAS will ensure that "Doctor Who" will continue through 1987, he adds.

Stanley goes on to say he won't give away Whovians what they used to have — the old format of having half-hour episodes shown twice each night, then repeated on weekends.

"I think we may have spoiled them a bit back then when we showed it that often. When we cut back, it caused all kinds of headaches for us," Current station priorities will keep the Doctor off the evening PBS program lineup, he adds.

"But I want to keep the show (on the air). It fits our cornucopia idea of having something on the station for everyone," Station manager Claude Distler says KSPS gave some thought earlier this year to getting its fund-raising arm or special events committee involved in the event. But that didn't happen, for a couple of reasons.

The two chief reasons, says Patty Starkey at KSPS, was that the convention was considered an event belonging to another group.

"It wasn't one of our projects and we didn't feel it was something that required our assistance," Starkey says.

A second reason is "they never really asked us for our help," according to Starkey, the executive director of the station's fund-raising arm, the Friends of Seven.

Decker and another local fan, John Warden, both think the real reason goes back to earlier contacts between KSPS and area Whovians.

Warden, a 35-year-old insurance salesman, became a dedicated Whovian three years ago. He went to the station and explained that he wanted to bring actor Tom Baker — the best-known Doctor in the show's history — to help build interest in the show as well as help get a local fan club off the ground.

At that point the station asked viewers over the air to indicate their interest in helping bring Baker to Spokane.

But Warden couldn't get Baker anywhere near Spokane — he'd already left the show and was pursuing his acting career in England. Warden believes KSPS management felt a trace of egg on its face "for having stuck its head out" on a relatively obscure public promotion.

Decker will only add that she sees a diminishing effort at KSPS to get "Doctor Who" in time slots that are convenient for Spokane-area fans. In any event, she intends to speak softly and pull off a major success with TimeFest and use it to build greater demand for the show.

Decker is a homemaker who does occasional seastaging work to supplement her husband Ralph's income. Her chief occupation, she says, is serving as a volunteer. In 1983, she received a national award from the Public Broadcasting Service for being the outstanding PBS volunteer in the country.

She and her husband — who works as a technician at KSPS — have worked for several months preparing TimeFest.

"It's really gotten crazy here the past week, with people working at our house until midnight or later finishing details," she said.

The payoff for that effort may be astronomical. The net gross receipts, before all expenses are covered, may total $200,000.

Some of the remaining funds will likely be set aside for next year's KSPS "Doctor Who" costs. A portion, adds Decker, will be mailed to the PBS stations in Salt Lake and Tacoma that helped promote the event.

A percentage will be remunerated to those who've toiled on TimeFest, herself included. The rest of the earnings would be set aside for next year's TimeFest '87, which she's begun planning for the Sheraton and Convention Center next summer.

"I'm already looking into paying for airplane tickets for the people we want to fly in," Decker says.

TimeFest '86 begins Friday at the Sheraton and at the Riverpark Convention Center. Tickets are $45 for all three days, $17.50 for Friday and Saturday, $10 for Sunday only. Sunday's banquet is not included and costs an additional $10. For further information, call 325-6103."