

Everything depends on your place in time and space. You're either fair of "the Doctor" or you're not. If you appreciate the intricacies of the world according to "Doctor Who," then Aug. 12-13 are three of the biggest days of the year.

Organizers call the event "Doctorcon '86 and the 'Viewers'—followers of the cult TV show "Doctor Who"—this is Spokane's big day. It's a serious, serious event.

For the uninitiated, it'll be a swarm of merchandise, chatterbox and video featuring strange characters talking about time travel and saving the universe from diabolical creatures.

For the true believers, it'll be an out-of-this-world experience.

Objectively speaking (as the Doctor himself would say), Timefall '01 is nothing more than a long and glorified science-fiction fantasy.

But don't say that to a true Whovian, who would regard a "Star Trek" gathering as more child's play.

"Dancer Wh" dancers from far and near — some coming from the East Coast and Alaska — will arrive at the Shoshone-Spokane and the Riverbank Convention Center to celebrate their annual Sun Lord.

If the organizers of the event — the Inland Empire Doctor Who Appreciation Society (IHDWAS) — is right, there'll be 3,000-4,000 people here during the convention, many of them paying \$45 apiece.

That's a lot of people, according to Ron Katz, president of the national "Decide Who" Fax Club in Denver, Colo. For a first-time venture by a relatively new organization, Spokane's TimeFest '88 is a tremendously successful.

"I'm a little frightened for them. This is a big effort and if you've never done this before, all sorts of things can go wrong," says Katz.

Take himself with him on hand to see how

Thelwell's '84 coupe off. He'll present a merchandise booth and a "Doctor Who" photo and graffiti display for convention goers.

Katz gives credit to Spokane's 250-member "Spoke" fan group for thinking big. Events like this are major sources of interest in the 23-year-old

British-made TV serial, which can be seen Saturday nights at 10 on KUPV-TV in Spokane. Katz says interest in the show continues to grow, with many

The idea of having his connections has allowed

down a bit in past years, but I'd say there are probably 10 or so major conventions for Doctor Who fans in the country. If this draws as many people as they think, it'll be one of the top 10," Katz

The Timefest attractions certainly present what looks like an off-and-on TV program. The

words of gusto are not household words, but to Wharriors, they are worth getting excited about.



Forbes is unlikely to show up. The "defectors" include Katy Manning, Nicholas Courtney, Richard Franklin and John Levene, who played different "companions" during the show's long history of production by the BBC.

The show is, incidentally, the longest-running TV show still in production in the world.

Also scheduled are Terrance Dick, one of the show's chief writers, and John Mathias Turner, the show's current producer. Don't forget Anthony Ainley, who played the Master, one of the show's

heard of them? Most of us haven't. Most

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

fiction. It has won an immense following of fans around the world. On the 100th anniversary of "Doctor Who" in 1983, more than 10,000 fans gathered in Chicago to throw a grand party.

The Spokane version will be nearly as long as the Chicago one, if not well attended. Even so, is there enough going on in all three days of activity? Will there be a lot of new ideas or new men?

Some of the names of several stars of motion pictures "Doctor Who" episode. The celebs will take part in question-and-answer sessions. Some of them will present a cabaret performance Saturday night, right before the costume ball and contest. There will be autograph sessions and an awards banquet will conclude the calendar.

Mostly the gathered fans will talk. "There'll be a lot of people who don't socialize a lot or go to many parties," says Katz.

"Many of these people spend most of their time watching TV or reading books, let's admit it. This will be one party where they find people who are interested in the same thing. And once they get started, it's hard to stop them."

But the interest in "Darker Who" is broader than one would imagine, he insists. Its appeal ranges from 7-year-olds to senior citizens, he says, and from dry laboratory to midtown psychiatrists.

What they'll talk about, naturally, is the show, which over 25 years has established and enriched enough lore, rituals and additions to fill several volumes of trivia.

To an outsider, many of the minute details make no sense. An initial problem is explaining why there are six Doctors with the same name over the

history of the show, and why they all look different from each other. The Doctor, who hails from the planet Gallifrey, has two hearts, you understand.

And his unique alien biology allows him to "regenerate" from time to time, enabling another actor to take over the show.

One needs to know also that the Doctor looks like
a hell he's really a Time Lord. **brassy, grinning**

to a vehicle he calls the **TARDIS**.

The space-traveling scenes like "Star Trek," but the appeal of the show is hardly traditional science fiction. The Doctor almost never resorts to

violence, relying on wit and cleverness in
overcoming his foes, who range from awful
Cyborgs to mutant machine-Gings called **Debots**

The camp appeal of "Doctor Who" also derives from the remarkably cheap special effects used in

the series. Machines said to be extraordinarily high tech look like kitchen utensils taped to spare bicycle parts. The show's producers rely on actors

"I think the reason it's popular," says Spokane Whovian Clay Breshnars, "is its appeal to all sorts

computer instructor at EWU is a member of Radio Free California, a Spokane-based "Lewter 88.3" fan-

club that formed after disgruntled members of LEDWAS wanted to pursue their own interests.

You have the lure of the science fiction, but you also have the comedy. This is a British show and its humor is offbeat and oddball. It's unique and

something you don't see on American TV," Breshears adds.

PLEASE SEE DOCTOR WHO: ETC

Another Spokane die-hard Whovian, Lawrence Softich, says the appeal of the show is its weirdness. "I have to say the show is weird, since the main character is always getting into a machine which looks like a large spaceship inside but outside looks like a British police box. And when he does use it, it never works right, so he always ends up somewhere else than where he planned."

The interest around Spokane is high, but nothing like the avid fan following the show has in Alberta and British Columbia. Canadians act like "Doctor Who" is the next best thing to hockey. When KSPS-TV holds pledge drives, the largest response it receives comes during "Doctor Who" episodes, and most of the money pours in from Calgary and cities in eastern British Columbia.

KSPS, on the Saturday evening of the convention, will offer two Jon Pertwee "Doctor Who" episodes to observe the occasion. That will also be during the station's summer pledge drive, and guests from the convention will go to the KSPS studio to make money pitches for Channel 7.

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 — estimated 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 '86 are 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 carrying on-air announcements of the event.

The irony for her is that public TV stations in Tacoma and Salt Lake City have been carrying notices 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 area Whovians what they used to have — the old format of having the 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 out of 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-



Staff photo by Shawn Jacobson

Jamie Decker looks over a list of names of fellow Whovians.

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 keep "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 seamstress work to supplement her husband Ralph's income. Her chief occupation, she says, is serving as a volunteer. In 1985, 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 remunerate 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 325-9103.