



The longest-running
science fiction
television series
in the world
conquers America

By CLARE BLAIR

They said it was too British,
too special, and certain to
flop in the United States.

Dr. Who had been running con-
tinuously on BBC-TV, Great
Britain's government-owned tele-
vision network—and eventually in
30 other countries—since its debut
in 1963. But it has never clicked
on this side of the Atlantic.

The Public Broadcasting System
(PBS) picked up the show in the
early 1970s and tried it out on

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Left, Dr. Who slips into the TARDIS, his intergalactic spaceship.
Top, he gets ready for return to his home planet of Gallifrey.
Bottom, one of the fascinating alien creatures concocted for series.

stations in Los Angeles, Chicago and Philadelphia, among others. For reasons still not understood, the popular program failed to attract a fair number of viewers, and the tapes were quickly shipped back to London. The fault, it appears, lay not in the "foreignness" and quality of **Dr. Who**, but in the publicly-funded network's miniscule advertising budget. SF fans and fantasy buffs simply did not know the program was on.

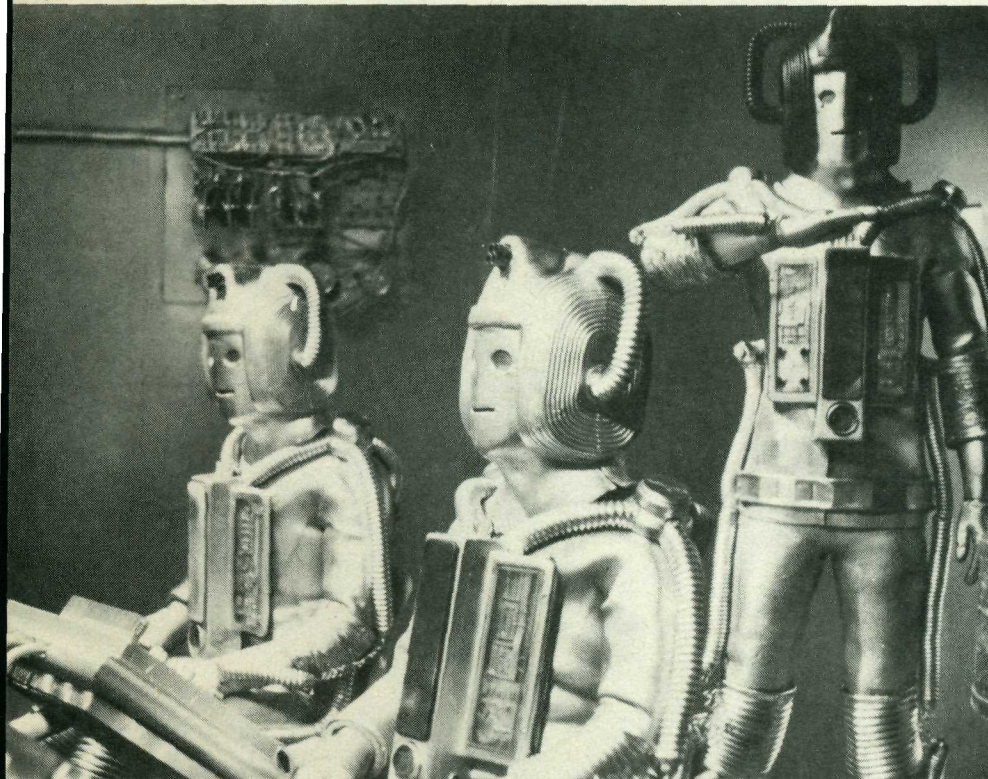
Then along came **Star Wars** and the media rush to cash in on a moderately lucrative genre turned overnight into a mass-market phenomenon. Time-Life Television took another look and decided to give the series another chance, this time on commercial television with a substantial advertising and public

relations budget.

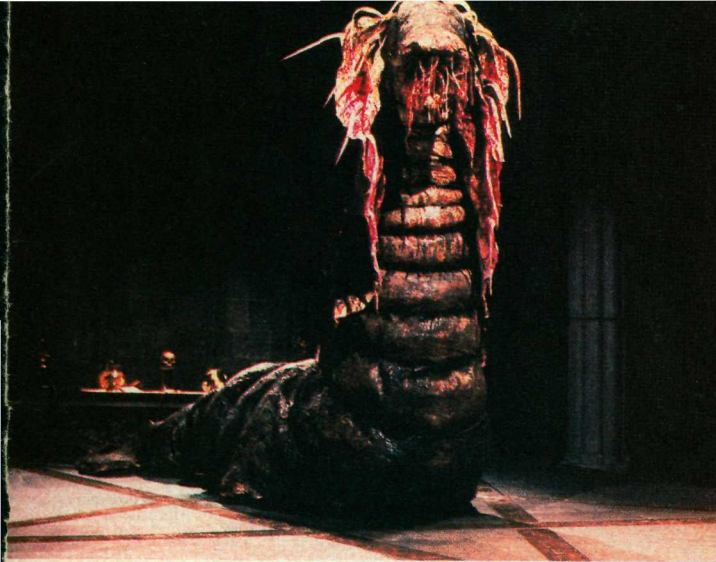
The mythical Time Lord turned up on independent American TV stations in October of 1978, with an appropriate amount of fanfare. An immediate hit, the Time-Life package includes 23 different mini-series composed of 98 half-hour episodes – approximately two years' worth of shows. Actually seasons number 11 and 12 of **Doctor Who**, which is in its 16th season back in England, the episodes mark the first appearance of actor Tom Baker in the role of the galactic-problem-solving Doctor. His first incarnation was as actor William Hartnell, a genial father figure, followed by Patrick Troughton, who was given to whimsical comedy, and John Pertwee, stern and serious.

Born with two hearts and a

body temperature of 60° Fahrenheit, Doctor Who roams through the galaxy in his strange spaceship, the TARDIS (Time and Relative Dimensions in Space). From outside, the craft is a duplicate of a London police box, once a familiar feature of the cityscape, which is no longer in use. In 1963, however, the city was dotted with them. When a call came for help, a red bulb on top would light up, and the bobby on the beat would go inside and answer the telephone. The device was phased out in the late 1960s in favor of walkie-talkies. "We used the box because it was familiar to viewers," says a production spokesman. "It's strange that a new generation of viewers who have never seen one now



Top left, Cybermen, silver giants once humanoid in form, gained immortality by science of cybernetics—replacing life with machine functions; left, Doctor Who examines mysterious substance; above, Auton, one of several designs of sinister live weapons, that resemble window dummies; opposite page, top, pot-shaped Daleks, Doctor Who's archenemy and menace to society; bottom, K-9, a dog-like computer that talks and wags its tail.



Left, Silurian survivor of lost reptilian age; right, another long-extinct denizen of Earth's past; below, Zygon monsters, who live under Loch Ness.

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