

# New *Doctor Who* companion **Karen Gillan** is the lady heading up *SFX*'s celebration of exciting new sci-fi female talent... WORDS NICK SETCHFIELD

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**K**aren Gillan arrives in the room like a particularly bonny skyscraper. She's tall and sparky and full of Pre-Raphaelite goodness, if perhaps just a little daunted by her first taste of media scrutiny. When we meet she's still only halfway through *Doctor Who*'s pitiless filming schedule and some months away from being rocketed into the full-bore glare of the press and public. "I'm 21," she reminds *SFX*, and you remember that only a couple of years earlier she was clocking up credits like Young Girl In Bus Station in Scots thriller *New Town Killers*.

Now of course she's landed one of the plum gigs in the whole of television. As fearless time-travelling kissogram Amy Pond she's the latest in the noble lineage of *Doctor Who* girls and part of the frontline of new female TV talent that we'll celebrate over the following eight pages.

"It's just been a bit of a whirlwind, really," she tells us, snatching a spare half hour from monster-bait duty. "I got the call saying I'd got the job, and then it was into meetings and then preparing for the role and reading lots of amazing scripts. And then we started shooting. It's been crazy but incredible. So much fun..."

## Has Amy changed since you got the role or did she arrive fully formed?

It was strange. The first audition I did I didn't even know the character's name or anything about her. I think they were quite specific and they knew what they wanted and were just waiting for the right girl who had all the components. But then for my second audition I got to read the first episode, so I kind of got the feel for her. It was a very scary audition, but fun. It was really weird that day, with the recall. I read with Matt and it did go really well, but I'm quite hard on myself anyway, so I was kind of in a weird daze afterwards. I didn't really think I was going to get it, because it's so far-fetched – it's *Doctor Who*! But

then I found out on the same day, which was really good. It put me out of my misery!

## Had you been a fan of the show?

No, not really. I had seen a fair bit of it, though, because my mum's a big fan! But no, I didn't know everything about it. I've been swotting up since I got this role!

## How did your mum react when she first heard the news?

I didn't tell her I was auditioning, because it's all secret. I went up to Inverness the day that it was going to be announced that I was playing the role, and told her about an hour before it was released. It was just this crazy day for her. She was like "What's going on?!" I was like "Mum, I'm going to be the new *Doctor Who* companion," and she was doing dishes or something... It was such a nice moment. She was over the moon.

## Has she had the press knocking at her door?

Yes, she has, but she enjoys it! She's like, "Come in, have a cup of tea!" I'm the only one doing this in the family. It's quite strange, I don't really know where I get it from. My dad's a bit of a singer – in karaoke!

## Has Steven Moffat given you any old DVDs to watch, to fill you in on the history of *Doctor Who*?

I've been given the box sets of all of them from 2004 onwards, so I've been swotting up on all the Steven Moffat episodes in



Amy's first sight, that's first sight, of the Daleks, in episode three.

KAREN GILLAN **SFX**

# NO

# AND BEYOND



"Don't worry! The Siltheen aren't in this series!"



particular! They're really good, I'm really enjoying them.

**Have you checked out the '60s and the '70s episodes?**

I haven't. I've only watched the first ever episode of *Doctor Who*, which was really scary – like really, really scary. But yeah, I would like to indulge in that at some point.

**Did it feel like part of the same show that you're making? Could you see the connection there?**

Yeah, I think there is this ongoing thing that's just always present in the series of *Doctor Who*. It was just insane to watch this really old thing that was made in 1963 – very different, times changing and everything, but really cool.

**You appeared alongside David Tennant in "The Fires Of Pompeii". Does this new series feel very different to that experience?**

The new series does feel really different, it really does. It feels like this brand new era, and I'm playing a completely different role, on a completely different level, with a lot more pressure and things to do. And there's a whole new team and everything. So yeah, it does feel really different, but an exciting different.



**How important was it for you to keep your Scottish accent for the role of Amy?**

I actually auditioned for it in both an English accent and a Scottish accent, and after I was cast they still weren't sure if Amy was going to be English or Scottish. Obviously Steven Moffat's Scottish, and we just decided that she could be Scottish. But it was really nice to be able to do it in my own accent, because it's obviously something I feel more comfortable doing, and I think it really suits her.

**Can you convince Steven to film a story in Scotland?**

Well, I said that he should do something with the Loch Ness monster, in Inverness! But I don't think he took me on...

**Has it been a big move for you, coming to Cardiff?**

Yeah... Cardiff's great! I'm really enjoying it. It's a great city and it's a really nice size, so it's not too busy and everything's here. And it's surrounded by this gorgeous countryside that we're filming in quite a lot. So yeah, it's a bit of a change from London – and a bit of a change from Inverness!

**Doctor Who must call on you to do stuff that you've never done before in your career.**

Yeah, totally. Loads of things. No day is the same. There are these crazy monsters and we're running away at full pelt from things. I've never done anything like that so it's all new to me and all very exciting.

**Did that come with quite a steep learning curve?**

Yeah, going on set for the first day you discover what the tone is, and how you play it and how big you make it. I still want to keep a bit of truth in there, you know, so that people can still relate to this crazy, crazy world. I think it's all about discovering that on the job.

**And did you have time to discover that with Matt, to work out the dynamic between Amy Pond and the Doctor?**

Yeah, we had loads of rehearsal time before we even started shooting. We did this really intense rehearsal period with the director and just worked everything out. That was really helpful.

**What's the relationship like between the two of them? Is there perhaps a hint of unrequited romance there?**

She's Amy Pond, she's this person in her own right, and they have this really strong dynamic relationship, these two people who really combust when they meet. A romantic side to it is really not the driving force of their relationship, and that would never be the main reason that they're together. I think ultimately they're just these two people of the same kind, who are both adventurers and lost souls who find each other. I think that's really what their relationship is all about.

Is that V for Victory a little premature?

Rory's back on the scene in "Vampires Of Venice".

**"I've told Steven that he should do something with the Loch Ness monster!"**



**Have you been called upon to do any particularly gruelling stunt work so far?**

There have been a few really scary things that I've had to do, actually. I have been genuinely scared on various occasions. A lot of stuff involves quite a bit of strength, which I don't have! So that was quite challenging.

**Have you found your fitness tested in the running scenes?**

Yeah, totally! I have been in pain after some of the running days that we've done, and some of the work-outs that I've been given, but it's good, because I want to get fit! We do spend a lot of time running in *Doctor Who*, depending on how big the scene is and how much is involved.

**Have you had a favourite monster moment on set?**

Well, a lot of the time the monsters are, in fact, tennis balls on a piece of rope! So there's lots of imagining, but we get to see pictures of what the monsters are going to be, so we have the same vision. It's obviously easier to act off something that's really there, so I definitely prefer that. But it's fine working with the tennis balls. I'll live!

**Is there anyone that you'd like to appear with on *Doctor Who*? It attracts a high calibre of actors...**

Hmmm... I don't know. I would love to see someone like... Billy Connolly! Just someone who's a big character and really funny. Someone like that. And Scottish! The Scots are taking over!

**As Amy you rocket between the future and the past in this series. Which do you prefer?**

It's evident in all of these episodes that Steven's done that he really plays around with time travel and people getting lost in time, so you can expect a lot of that in the new series. It's just really fun, future and past... it's all these different worlds and I really couldn't choose between them, because they're all these completely different crazy, amazing worlds.

**What's Amy's style like in terms of her wardrobe?**



Yet another person carrying a torch for Amy Pond this year.

Could Silurians possibly be to blame for that hole...?

**"A lot of time the show's monsters are, in fact, tennis balls on a piece of rope!"**

I had a lot of input in how she appears physically, with hair and make-up and what she wears. I think she's got this inner confidence and she's this sassy girl so doesn't have to wear baggy clothes. Maybe she can wear stuff that shows a bit of skin from time to time, because she's got the confidence to do that. Everyone in the team and the costume designer really took on what I had to say about it, and we worked together in collaboration.

**And do you think that is a confidence you have yourself?**

I would say Amy is more sassy than I am. Watching myself on screen is a bit cringey. It's like hearing your voice on one of these! [points at dictaphone]

**What, even with your background in modelling?**

Yeah... well, modelling... it's all very retouched, isn't it! Come on!

**Are you keeping the modelling side of your career going?**

No, I've kind of laid that to rest for the moment. It's something that I did to support my acting, really, and now that I don't really have to do it I'm just concentrating on this. But it was really fun, I really enjoyed it, and maybe in the future I'd like to go back to it at some point.

**How are you going to feel about the dad contingent tuning in?**

I haven't really thought about it! Probably best not to think about it, ever! I'm just concentrating on playing the part, how she should be played and how the writing dictates. And if that appeals to the dads then that appeals to the dads!

**So we're not going to see you in *FHM* or something similar?**

Probably not in things like *FHM*, no! Rest assured.

**Did you ever have a moment's hesitation in saying yes to this? No matter what you do in your career it's going to be something that will always stay with you.**

No, no, not at all. I'd never done anything like this before, so it was just amazing that someone like me was offered this role. I just felt so lucky. So of course I said yes! **SFX**

