American actor Eric Roberts, who played the Master in the 1996 "Doctor Who" made-for-TV movie, is the headliner guest for Wichita’s Time Eddy III convention.

Former ‘Doctor Who’ companions head to Wichita for the adventure

BY AMY GEISZLER-JONES
Eagle correspondent

If you’ve time-traveled as former “Doctor Who” companions and are up for another adventure you head to ... Wichita.

“I think it’s an extraordinary city, and the distance you can see, you can tell it’s on the Plains,” said William Russell, who had just returned from a morning visit to “pay my respects” to the iconic Wichita landmark, the Keeper of the Plains. “As a little boy, I eagerly read all about the Plains.”

An original cast member of the iconic “Doctor Who” series, Russell, who turns 93 next month, is making a rare appearance at a stateside “Doctor Who” convention, happening Friday through Sunday at the Drury Plaza Hotel Broadview Wichita. As science teacher Ian Chesterton, he was Doctor Who’s first companion in the series’ first two seasons. He’s been to only one other “Doctor Who” convention, happening in the U.S., in Los Angeles, said Russell, who lives in the greater London area in Hampshire.

Other special guests for Wichita’s Time Eddy III convention are Matthew Waterhouse and Katy Manning who have also played companions; classic series script editor Andrew Cartmel; “Doctor Who” music composer Dominic Glynn; and space history author Amy Shira Teitel. American actor Eric Roberts, who played the Master in the 1996 “Doctor Who” made-for-TV movie, is the convention’s headliner guest. The convention name refers to a distortion in the space-time continuum, according to the series. Cartmel appeared at the first Time Eddy convention in 2015, while Glynn attended the second one last year.

During the convention’s three days, fans of “Doctor Who” will hear from presenters and the special guests in various panel sessions. The special guests will also be available for autograph and photo opportunities.

Other convention activities include a popular cosplay costume contest, learning about prop-making, game-show type activities, and a performance by the Timey Wimey Puppet Show that is popular on the Whoconvention circuit, an electronics music concert by Glynn and more. A special murder-mystery dinner has already sold out. Fans can do a bit of time travel themselves by visiting the KPTS Channel 8 booth, which will display early publicity shots from the series. KPTS airs “Doctor Who” episodes Saturday evenings.

While Waterhouse has been to several stateside conventions — as well as in Britain, where fans are more “possessive” of the British series, he said — and has lived on the East Coast, he accepted the invitation to attend Wichita’s Time Eddy III convention because he’d never been to Kansas.

“So that makes this a bit of an adventure,” said Waterhouse, who has the distinction of being the youngest actor to play a “Doctor Who” companion. At the end of his teenage years, he played Adric in the series from 1980 to 1982. He upped the adventure quotient by flying into Chicago from London and then taking the train to Newton to get to Wichita. Waterhouse marked his first morning in Wichita with a visit to the Bookaholic Bookstore, where he found a “Dark Shadows” novel to complete his collection. Waterhouse has played characters in the “Dark Shadows” horror-soap opera audio drama.

Waterhouse still is involved with the “Doctor Who” series through work he does with an associated audio series.

“I just love it. I’m not just talking about something I did 35 years ago. I’m talking about something I did last month,” said Waterhouse, who has also written three novels, a recently published short story collection and a memoir, “Blue Box Boy.” He is involved in other “Doctor Who” projects that he can’t divulge but that enthusiasts will find “quite exciting,” he said.

“Doctor Who” actors go on forever,” Waterhouse
said.

For Russell, who had several acting roles before and since “Doctor Who,” including stints with the Royal Shakespeare Company, accepting the role as Chesterton was also a bit of an adventure.

“I was intrigued by this thing you went off to space in and did all these things,” he said. “The four of us got on very well,” he said referring to the original cast members. One of his last activities associated with the “Doctor Series” series was playing a self-described grumpy car attendant in “An Adventure in Space and Time,” a 2013 British biographical TV film that focused on the creation of the series. He joked that as a nearly 90-year-old actor then, he couldn’t be trusted to remember lines for a more extended role.

Russell’s rare appearance is pretty exciting to fans like Steve Brosius, who’s been a longtime Whovian and is the KPTS pledge producer and manages the station’s donor clubs. “It’s going to be amazing to talk to someone who was there from the very beginning,” said Brosius.

Landing convention appearances by Russell and Roberts is pretty significant, noted co-organizer Lisa Turner. She and fellow Whovian and convention host Kieran Kinsella wanted to end the three-year run of Wichita’s Time Eddy convention with some star power. The convention has averaged more than 1,000 attendees over the past two years, and this year participants from at least 23 states and from Canada are already registered.

The convention kicks off at noon Friday, Oct. 20, and concludes at 4 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 22. A full schedule can be found at timeeddy.com.