



Who's who

The new Doctor Who has a souped-up Tardis, leather jackets, even flying Daleks. But will this incarnation stand the test of time, asks Sarah Dempster

Sixteen years after the icy winds of obsolescence sent him spinning into the televisual ether, Doctor Who is to rematerialise in the glittering wasteland that is BBC1's Saturday evening line-up, an event that bears testament to the persistent nature of nostalgia. Had it not been for the affection still accorded to the elderly Time Lord by those whose childhood fantasies were stuffed with fearful images of stocky extras in silver bubble wrap, it's doubtful whether the revival would've made it past Auntie's doorman, let alone been handed a £10m budget and the estimable services of script man Russell T Davies (Queer As Folk, Casanova, etc) and Christopher Eccleston (the ninth incarnation of the Gallifreyan).

BBC

While the most recent attempt to revive the franchise — a 1996 TV movie starring a pointlessly bewigged Paul McGann — was an unmitigated mound of disaster, grumblers have suggested that the format is simply too naff to make an impact on today's cynical young audiences. Thus, with the weight of expectation squatting fatly on the Doctor's time-weary shoulders, we force the scarf-wearing pensioner to square up against his toughest enemy yet: himself.

THE DOCTOR

Then: Each new Doctor brought with him a bumper holdall of fresh quirks and mad clobber, exposure to which would instantly determine whether fans would continue to partake of the Time Lord's space-placed adventures or

abandon the Tardis with a harrumph of disgust/despair.

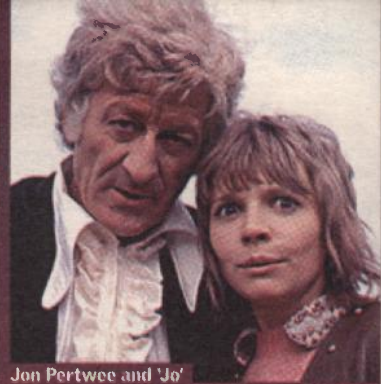
In chronological order, then, we've had: William Hartnell (who played the Doctor as a harried academic), Patrick Troughton (a pratfall-prone tramp), Jon Pertwee (a flouncing dandy in frock-coat and frills), Tom Baker (the nation's official favourite; a brilliantly booming wag whose huge scarf and roaring eccentricity helped ratings top 16million), Peter Davison (a panting schoolboy), Colin Baker (a massive sod) and, finally, Sylvester McCoy (a lisping ninny whose profoundly irritating habit of suddenly BELLOWING for absolutely no REASON WHATSOEVER was at least partly responsible for the BBC tugging the chain after 26 years of dogged but ultimately quite silly service). Oh, and Paul McGann, whose sole outing makes him the George Lazenby of the Who franchise and therefore of no use to anyone at all. **Now:** Formerly a dandy in aspic, now, apparently, a youth worker in Hellmann's mayonnaise. Russell T Davies' insistence that today's Time Lord be "more emotional and down to earth" has ensured that the latest incarnation of this pan-galactic icon is an



William Hartnell



Patrick Troughton



Jon Pertwee and 'Jo'

emphatically un-extraordinary cove. Indeed, with his leather blouson, shabby jeans and bluff northern rationality, he looks more likely to be found reasoning with a ruffian outside a chip shop in Salford than he would discussing the minutiae of quantum physics with the president of Gallifrey. Still, his saturnine scowl, wanton cheekbones and bawdy use of common language ("shut up," "brilliant", etc) also suggest that Eccleston's Doctor may finally get to use his sonic screwdriver for purposes other than removing the terrillian diode bypass transformer from the spaceship of a passing Sontaran (ie he might get to boff).

THE COMPANION/S

Then: As vital to the Doctor's grasp of human emotions and mores as they were to the nocturnal reveries of the nation's grateful schoolboys, the best companions were those who displayed as much wit and self-sufficiency as they did tights (Jo, Sarah-Jane, Tegan and K9). And the worst? Everyone pre-Jon Pertwee (too twee) and post-Tom Baker (either too dull or too self-consciously "feisty"). Shoddiest of these was the thunderously inconsequential Adric, a dough-faced bore whose death, at the end of 1982's *Earthshock*, saw the legendary theme tune replaced by several moments of appallingly misjudged silence. Overcome by grief, the nation yawned and switched over to *Bullseye*. **Now:** The name? Rose Tyler. The look? Skint teen at Etam. The attitude? Superdrug cashier on a day out at the Royal Observatory.▷



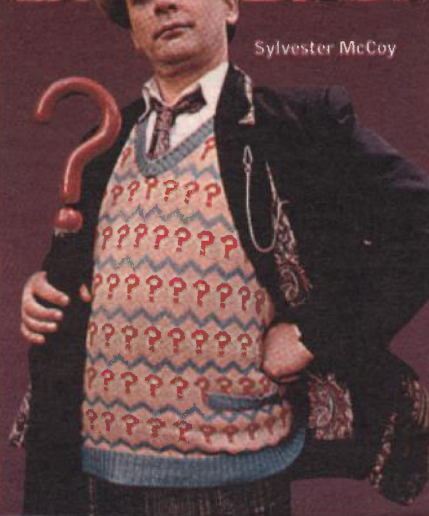
Tom Baker and 'Sarah-Jane'

Peter Davison



Colin Baker

Sylvester McCoy



Paul McGann



Davros



Mummy from Pyramids Of Mars



Nimon

Her working-class credentials may be a blatant sop to today's slovenly, toff-wary youth, but London shop girl Rose (reformed pop singer Billie Piper) is a worthy successor to the companion's spray-painted throne, her gum-chewing insouciance and natural inquisitiveness compensating for the fact that her trainers are crap and she looks like she smells of Impulse Hint of Musk.

THE MONSTERS

Then: Given that one man's Dalek is another man's Android of Tara, it would be folly to attempt to compile a definitive list of the Scariest Doctor Who Monsters Ever. Nevertheless, here is my list of the Scariest Doctor Who Monsters Ever, which is definitive: Davros (camel's scrotum on a commode), Scaroth (rotting vegetation in a suit), the mummies from *Pyramids Of Mars* (ex-wrestlers wrapped in bog-roll), the Nimon (half bull, half middle-aged extra in Timpsons platforms) and Pertwee-battering bruisers The Sea Devils, whose crocheted tabards and abysmal posture pre-dated the work of Spandau Ballet by some nine years.

Now: Mindful of postmodernism's cynical eye, the new series capitulates to the demands of today's

multiplex-minded sophisticates by swapping the Velcro and felt for a fresh spread of wow-inducing CGI effects and impressively disgusting prosthetics. The resulting foe include the Gelth (wispy green things that bear more than a passing resemblance to the wraiths from *Lord Of The Rings*), the unnervingly baby-faced Slitheen, the newly rubberised Autons (expressionless gits that first appeared in 1970's *Spearhead From Space*) and the return of long-time adversaries the Daleks, which can now, according to Davies, "fly like bastards".

Most impressive of all, however, is the Moxx of Balloon, a dome-headed pig-like bloke whose trotters and bitch-tits hark back to the days when Saturday night telly was properly frightening.

THE TARDIS

Then: Housed inside a pre-second world war police box (if only to enable a constant stream of gags involving baffled "comedy" bobbies), the Tardis boasted an

interior so big it contained not merely a control room and the Doctor's living quarters, but a library, swimming pool and cricket pavilion. Unfortunately, what it boasted in size and relative dimensions it lacked in decent armour. Indeed, so shoddy was the time machine's chassis that even the briefest spot of turbulence would precipitate several minutes of violent juddering; a design flaw that saw the Doctor "accidentally" fall into his attractive companion as many as nine times per episode. This, in turn, enabled dads across the country to imagine what it might be like to find themselves momentarily pressed against Bonnie Langford's polyester/wool-mix leggings. The general consensus? "A bit itchy".

Now: Out go the wobbly fittings and plastic console: in come thrusting hydraulics, metal platforms, vein-like protrusions on the walls and what look like strange glowing bits of coral and bendy tubes that dangle from the ceiling like massive dreadlocks. The look? HR Giger meets Bob Marley. In a brain. In, like, another dimension. Maaaan. On a more practical "tip", there's a wooden coat-stand, which will allow the Doctor to hang up his leather blouson should accusations of looking a bit like Ian Beale get too much for the big-nosed time-botherer. ■

Doctor Who, Sat, 7pm, BBC1



Sea Devil, Jon Pertwee and Moxx of Balloon

BBC