

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DOCTOR WHO

Doctor Who is a British television science-fiction series, produced and screened by the British Broadcasting Corporation on their BBC 1 channel from 1963 to 1989 in its original form, with a new series launched in early 2005. In between the two, there was a one-off television movie co-produced with Universal Pictures and 20th Century Fox Television, screened on the Fox Network in the United States in 1996.

In December, 1962, Canadian-born Sydney Newman arrived at BBC Television as the new Head of Drama. Newman was a science-fiction fan who had overseen several such productions in his previous positions at ABC Television and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. In March 1963, he was made aware of a gap in the schedule on Saturday evenings between the sports showcase *Grandstand* and the pop music program *Juke Box Jury*. Ideally, any program scheduled here would appeal to children that had previously been accustomed to the timeslot as well as the teenaged audience of *Juke Box Jury* and the adult sports fan audience of *Grandstand*. Newman personally came up with the idea of a time machine larger on the inside than the outside and the idea of the central character, the mysterious "Doctor"; he also gave the series the name *Doctor Who*. Later in the year production was initiated and handed over to producer Verity Lambert to oversee.

Doctor Who was originally intended to be an educational series, with the TARDIS taking the form of an object from that particular episode's time period (a column in Ancient Greece, a sarcophagus in Egypt, etc.). When the show's budget was calculated, however, it was discovered that it was prohibitively expensive to re-dress the TARDIS model for each episode; instead, the TARDIS's "Chameleon Circuit" was said to be malfunctioning, giving the prop its characteristic 'police-box' appearance. Verity Lambert and the first serial's director Waris Hussein managed to persuade 55-year-old character actor William Hartnell to take the part of the Doctor. Hartnell was known mostly for playing army sergeants and other tough characters in a variety of films.

"An Unearthly Child", the first episode of the very first serial, was transmitted at 5.15 pm on 23 November 1963, but due to the overshadowing news of US President John F. Kennedy's assassination, it drew minimal comment and was repeated the following week immediately before the second episode. It was not until the second serial, *The Daleks*, that the

program caught the imaginations of viewers and began to ingrain itself in the popular consciousness. This was primarily due to the Dalek creatures introduced in this story. Devised by scriptwriter Terry Nation and designer Raymond Cusick, they were completely un-humanoid and like nothing that had been seen on television before.

The program became a great success, frequently drawing audiences of 12 million or more, and the Daleks came back for several return appearances. By the time of the third season in 1965 some difficulties were beginning to arise. Hartnell was finding it increasingly difficult to remember his lines as he was suffering from the early stages of the arteriosclerosis that would later cause his death. By 1966 it was clear that Hartnell's health was affecting his performances, and that he would not be able to carry on playing the Doctor for much longer. The producer, Innes Lloyd, and the story editor, Gerry Davis, came up with an intriguing way of writing the First Doctor out – as he was an alien being, they decided that he would have the power to change his body when it became worn out or seriously injured, a process that was called "renewal" but would later become known within the mythology of the series as "regeneration".

From its beginnings in 1963, there were 7 actors who played the Doctor on the classic BBC television program: William Hartnell, Patrick Troughton, Jon Pertwee, Tom Baker, Peter Davison, Colin Baker and Sylvester McCoy. The program gradually lost viewers and the show was suspended by the BBC in August 1989. However, Doctor Who retained a cult following who continued to follow storylines on BBC radio and continued to purchase the *Doctor Who Magazine*. Virgin Publishing published a series of original books, *The New Adventures of Doctor Who*, from 1991 to 1997.

Eventually plans were made to interest the Fox Network in the program and a pilot movie was made at the beginning of which Sylvester McCoy regenerated into the 8th Doctor, played by Paul McGann. Transmitted on the Fox Network on 14 May 1996 and on BBC One thirteen days later. The production drew only 5.5 million viewers in the United States, although it was far more successful in the UK with 9 million viewers, one of the top-ten programs of the week. In spite of the success and popularity of the film in the UK, the disappointing US viewing figures led Fox to decline to commission a series.

In September 2003, The head of BBC1 managed to persuade Worldwide that as several years had now passed and they were no nearer to producing a film, BBC television should be allowed to make a new series. After some scurrying around which included an animated film, the powers that be approached Russell T. Davies, who had often told the BBC when approached for other projects that he would only return to them to take charge of a new series of *Doctor Who*. He quickly accepted, and on 26 September 2003 it was officially announced that *Doctor Who* would be returning to BBC One, produced in-house at BBC Wales in 2004 for transmission in 2005. Davies was made the chief writer and Executive Producer of the new series which would comprise thirteen 45-minute long episodes, with the first story titled "Rose" after the Doctor's new companion Rose Tyler. Unlike past seasons which used serial-style storytelling, the new series would have mainly stand alone or two-part episodes. Filming of the first season began in Cardiff on 18 July 2004 with Christopher Eccleston as the 9th Doctor accompanied by former pop singer Billie Piper as Rose. "Rose" finally saw transmission on 26 March at 7 pm 2005 on BBC One, the first regular episode of *Doctor Who* for over 15 years.

The series was well received by both critics and the public in the UK. The 2005 TV Choice/TV Quick Award went to Eccleston for Best Actor, and *Doctor Who* was nominated for Best Series. Eccleston, Piper, and *Doctor Who* were all winners in their categories at the UK's National Television Awards, announced on 25 October 2005. Although not as prestigious as the British Academy Film and Television Arts Awards (BAFTAs), they are the highest-profile UK television awards voted on by members of the public. The series did go on to win two BAFTA awards in May, including the Best Drama Series category. The success of the launch saw the BBC's Head of Drama, Jane Tranter, confirming that the series would return both for a Christmas Special in December 2005 and a full second series in 2006. Due to an initial lack of interest by networks in the US, *Doctor Who* did not debut on the Sci Fi Channel until March 2006, one year after it's Canadian and UK showings.

Hours after the announcement of a second series, tabloid newspapers *The Sun* and the *Daily Express* reported that Eccleston had quit the series. Eccleston then apparently released a statement through the BBC, saying that he would be leaving the role at Christmas for fear of being typecast. Fan reaction to the news ranged from disappointment to irritation to outright anger.

On 16 April 2005, the BBC confirmed that David Tennant would be the Tenth Doctor. David Tennant remained in the role through 2009, airing his final episode on New Years day, 2010. In a massively surprising move, On 29 October 2008, during his acceptance speech for the Best Actor award broadcast via live feed at the National Television Awards, David Tennant publicly announced his intention to exit the series at the end of the 2009 specials, making way for a new actor to portray the eleventh incarnation of the Doctor in the 2010 series. Tennant had proved to be so popular in the role that there was some speculation at BBC that they would have to cancel the show following his exit.

When Russell T Davies also announced his departure as show-runner Steven Moffat, who had proven wildly popular as a writer on the show, was confirmed as his replacement. 26-year-old actor Matt Smith was announced as Tennant's successor in a special edition of *Doctor Who Confidential*, broadcast on BBC One on 3 January 2009.^[29] Production on Moffat and Smith's first series began in July 2009,^[30] and the first episode was broadcast on 3 April 2010.

The advent of the show's 50th anniversary in November 2013 meant that instead of starting to film an 8th series, the BBC started work on a feature-length special, to be transmitted on 23 November 2013, the precise date of the show's 50th anniversary. As well as being made in 3D for presentation at selected cinemas, the episode was also announced to be co-starring David Tennant as the 10th Doctor. Smith stepped down as the Eleventh Doctor with his last episode being the 2013 Christmas special.

On 4 August 2013 in a live TV special, Peter Capaldi was revealed as the Twelfth Doctor. On 22 January 2016, the BBC announced that Steven Moffat would be stepping down as show runner to be replaced by Chris Chibnall as lead writer and executive producer..