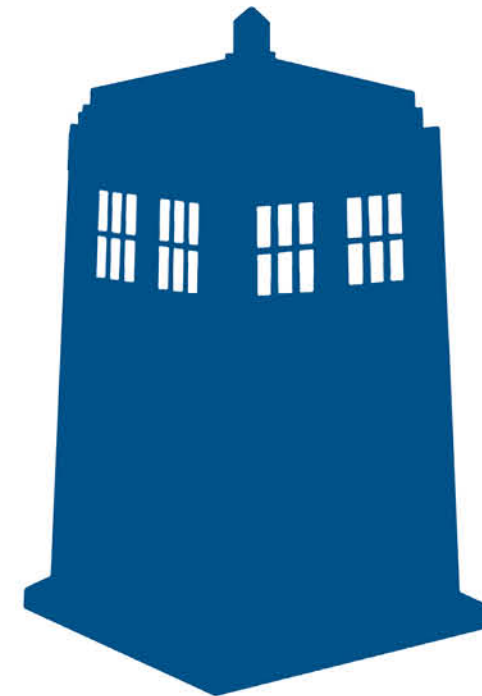


FAN  
PHENOMENA  
**DOCTOR  
WHO**



EDITED BY  
PAUL BOOTH

## Chapter 01

# Frock Coats, Yo-Yos and a Chair with a Panda on It: Nostalgia for the Future in the Life of a Doctor Who Fan

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### → THE DOCTOR AND THE PRESIDENT

When I think about my earliest awareness of *Doctor Who* in the early-to-mid-1970s I think, among other things, of textures, the imagined *feel* of material objects (see Figure 1). I think of velvet, silk, metal, wood, leather, wool, felt, paper.



Fig. 1: The textures of childhood on display at The Doctor Who Experience, London Olympia, February 2011-February 2012. (©Ivan Phillips; Doctor Who @BBC).

The velvet of the Third Doctor's smoking jackets and Inverness cloaks; the silk of his ruffled shirts; the yellow paintwork and red leather upholstery of his vintage roadster, Bessie; the endless rainbow wool of the Fourth Doctor's scarf; the felt of his broad-brimmed hat and stiff herringbone tweed of his jacket; the rustling white or brown paper from which he offered his jelly babies (which were sometimes dolly mixture); the wood, or *apparent* wood, of the TARDIS exterior. I also think about hair, curly hair, at first white, then dark brown after the shock of regeneration. My own dad had curly hair, at first dark brown, then fading towards white as he approached the shock of his early death. The dark curls were enough, as a child, to enable me to associate my living dad with my fantasy Doctor. Perhaps they are enough, as a middle-aged man, to enable me to associate my fantasy Doctor with my dead dad.

Nostalgia's a strange thing, after all; so intimately connected to the physical world but always occurring at the level of emotion.

Recollections of childhood experience are, inevitably, caught in the filters of adulthood – knowledge added, subtracted, modified, warped – and so, when I think about my earliest awareness of *Doctor Who*, the white and the brown curls of my 'original' Doctors become entangled with prior and subsequent Time Lord hairstyles, from the long silver wig of the First Doctor to the floppy 'not ginger' fringe of the Eleventh. The Second Doctor's Beatle cut is especially interesting from the perspective of this chapter. Iconic of the Sixties, it suggests the complex ways in which memory, myth and design have combined over time in the lives of the show. *Doctor Who*, like sexual intercourse (according to the poet Philip Larkin), 'began in nineteen sixty-three'. It also, strikingly, coincided with another emblematic happening of that decade, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy on the day before its first transmission. Coincidence is, in some ways, the essence of nostalgia and the conjunction of these two happenings has long been written into the lore of *Doctor Who*. Take a random sampling of books about the series and it's a safe bet that most of them will mention events in Dallas, Texas, on 22 November 1963, in their early pages. Peter Haining's *Doctor Who: A Celebration*, a book published to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the programme in 1983, is typical in this respect, beginning with a personal reminiscence that consciously fuses incidents: 'I remember that day and those hours vividly. Like countless millions of others I can recall *precisely* where I was and what I was doing when news of that terrible event hit Britain on the Friday evening.' The original broadcast of *An Unearthly Child* (Hussein, 1963, Season 1, Figure 1.2) and the infamy of Lee Harvey Oswald are strangely, inextricably, linked.

tive text and video discussions, and mashup videos exploring 'what might have been'. These media forms are discussed below.

#### Databases and folksonomies

Fanfiction has been written for decades, long before social media made it easy to share these works. Previously, fans distributed and traded fiction in person, at conventions or via regular mail. Now, sites like Doctor Who *FanFiction Archive* and *A Teaspoon and an Open Mind* offer fans the opportunity to write and read stories across genres that encompass romance, adventure and character studies. Other stories dramatize missing scenes and events positioned between existing episodes.

These sites demonstrate media theorist Lev Manovich's theory that new media narratives can be subsumed by database structures. Following this model, the stories collected in *A Teaspoon and an Open Mind* may be accessed by users who specifically choose a Doctor, secondary characters, genre and ratings. Readers also can review stories, encouraging dialogue between writer and reader. To facilitate these actions, folksonomic practices occur: folksonomies allow users to define their own categories, just as the Dewey Decimal System is used to catalogue library books. With the latter, established categories assigned to texts, media or objects establish a fixed organizational structure. With folksonomies, users continually redefine the organization, creating original tags reused by other users to gradually create a new and relevant system. Social bookmarking sites like Delicious use this technique to organize web links and online retailers like Amazon use it to organize customer interests.

Also following a database structure, the *Doctor Who* wiki *tardis.wikia.com* parallels the familiar format of Wikipedia to offer a user-created encyclopedia of information related to the programme. The editing capabilities of this wiki empower fans to create their own non-fiction texts that describe and make sense of the entire history of the show (focusing on the television programme, books, merchandise, and other professionally produced media).

#### Reviews and blogs

For *Doctor Who* fans seeking out discussion about the programme, the Internet facilitates the discovery of episodic-based reviews published in numerous professional and amateur publications, including *The Guardian*, a mainstream newspaper in the United Kingdom, and *denofgeek.com*, a popular website/blog about science fiction. Some of these sites publish two reviews for the same episode, one with and one without spoilers (details that give away too much of an episode's content). These sites encourage participation by allowing fans to comment on the reviews, resulting in detailed critiques of the aesthetics and plot logic of an episode, along with speculation about future stories. Blog rankings in Google matter greatly in terms of finding readers, and a low ranking makes it difficult for a new blog to find an audience. Consider that a search for 'Doctor



Fig. 3: Matt Smith, Arthur Darvill, and Karen Gillan are questioned by the audience at Comic-Con 2012. (@PCJonathan; Doctor Who ©BBC).



Fig. 4: A still from a machinima, 'The war menace'. (©FoxHoundProductions; Doctor Who ©BBC).

Who' and 'blog' leads to 47,600,000 results (as of this writing). Such comprehensive results makes it nearly impossible for any one blogger to have a significant readership, but makes it extremely easy for a reader to find specific blog posts about any given *Who*-related topic: considering David Tennant's final episode, a viewer searching for: "Doctor Who" and "blog" and "Wilfred Mott" and "death scene" will obtain 420 results.

#### Professional and amateur videos on YouTube

A search for 'Doctor Who' on YouTube leads to 1,260,000 videos. These offerings range from official BBC promotional video to user-created machinima. Specific categories include:

Promotional videos from the BBC that offer previews of upcoming series and interviews with the show's producers, writers and stars. This also includes appearances by the stars on celebrity talk shows and official interviews at recognized events like Comic Con. (For example, 'Doctor Who at Comic Con 2012 (Part 1 of 5) Q&A Matt Smith, Arthur Darvill, and Karen Gillan') (Figure 3).

Illegal postings of episodes frequently uploaded in sections to comply with time limits. Copyright violations often lead to the removal of these videos.

*Cinéma vérité*-style footage of the television show being filmed or actor sightings, often recorded on smartphones.

User commentary of the programme or particular episodes in the form of a video blog recorded with a camera integrated into a desktop or laptop.

User-created *Doctor Who* narratives featuring writing, videography and editing by fans. This category includes live-action videos or machinima. The latter uses a video game or virtual world as a set and staging area, adding actor-controlled avatars to perform scenes visually, with voices and sound effects typically added in post-production; see 'Doctor Who - The machinima series - Flight of fancy' or 'Doctor Who | Series II | Episode 1 | "The war menace" (The movies machinima)' for two examples (Figure 4).

Mashups that remix footage from various *Who* episodes to create new stories, music videos, unofficial trailers, and newly conceived scenes. (Occasionally, scenes from other programmes may be used.) Examples include a trailer of a hypothetical David Tennant-era episode that brings back Romana and a music video of the Tenth Doctor/Rose 'romance' synced to the Beatles's 'I feel fine' (Figure 5).

The audience numbers for these videos range from under one hundred to hundreds of thousands of views, and offer yet another method for viewers to connect to the show,



**DON'T SHOOT,  
DON'T SHOOT!  
I'M NICE.**

THE 11TH DOCTOR  
NIGHTMARE IN SILVER

