

New Who

Doctor Who, Monday and Tuesday BBC1

Peter Davison, everybody's other favourite vet, the bespectacled Brian in *Sink or Swim*, is the new Doctor Who.

Renate Kohler meets this 30-year-old actor as he prepares to step into the Tardis and delight yet another generation

PEOPLE WATCHING television one evening last autumn would have seen an unlikely duo. The *Nine O'Clock News* that night starred two actors – Ronald Reagan and Peter Davison. Only one of them got the part of **Doctor Who**.

The enduring Doctor has, over the years, become a kind of lovable national monument. The tension and speculation that surround the election of each new actor to that part is not unlike that surrounding the election of the American president. But that it should qualify for inclusion in a major news bulletin amazed the 30-year-old victor, Peter Davison.

'I was staggered to see it announced on the news,' he says, the disbelief still evident in his voice. 'I really had no idea that Doctor Who was so important. I bet some of my friends thought I'd died when they saw my picture.'

The new Doctor, regenerated at the end of the last series, appears this week for the first time. Davison, sweet-faced and with the sort of soft blond hair you ache to brush off his forehead, brings a new and impetuous element to the redoubtable Time Lord.

'For a start, I will be a much younger Doctor Who and I'll be wearing a kind of Victorian cricketing outfit to accentuate my youth. I would

like him to be heroic and resourceful. I feel that, over the years, Doctor Who has become less vital, no longer struggling for survival, depending on instant, miraculous solutions to problems.

'The suspense of "now how is he going to get out of this tight

corner?" has been missing. I want to restore that. My Doctor will be flawed,' says Davison. 'He will have the best intentions and he will in the end win through, but he will not always act for the best. Sometimes, he will even endanger his companions. But I want him to have a sort of reckless innocence.'

It was as something of an innocent that Peter Davison first made the acquaintance of the Doctor nearly 18 years ago. He was a little lad of 12 and, for six years, tuned in regularly every Saturday to catch the wanderings of the Time Lord.

And, as befits a dedicated Doctor-fan, he is able to analyse and dissect with intimate knowledge the characters of his four predecessors. 'I don't consider it a disadvantage taking on a part that is well known. It is

not as if you have to continue the same

characterisation. You have to start from scratch.'

He confesses, however – and freely – that he does occasionally feed off the forerunners. 'I don't overtly copy them,' he

explains, 'but I do bear in mind a particular aspect of each one.'

The choice of Peter Davison, everybody's other favourite vet, as successor to the eccentric Doctor of Tom Baker, came as a surprise to many, not least Davison himself. 'The producer rang me up one day and said something like, "How would you like to be the new Doctor Who?" I was speechless.'

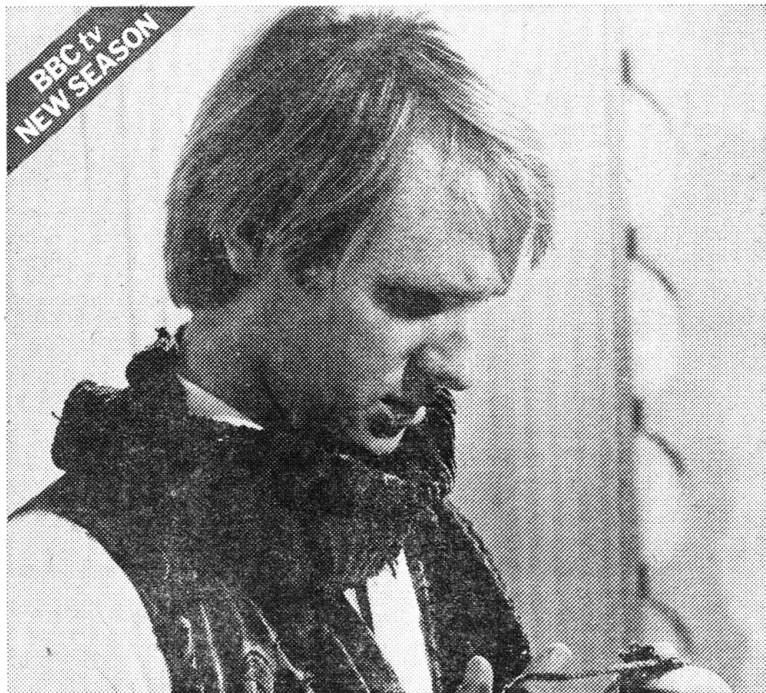
It worried him that there were some children who had only ever known Tom Baker as Doctor Who and that there were certain responsibilities to children that went with the part. 'I realised that it was a lot more than just an acting job. You somehow take on the mantle of Doctor Who and that kind of instant charisma goes with the job,' he reflects.

But none of this prepared him for the pain of his first read-through. Hearing himself say the lines that he had always heard Tom Baker say made him flinch, he admits. But it was a momentary panic.

Luckily for him Tom Baker did not put his head round the door and smile that man-eating toothy smile of his. 'But we did meet in the bar one evening to discuss the part, and he was all set to give me advice. But it was *Top of the Pops* that night and the noise was so furious all I heard was "good luck"!'

BBC tv
NEW SEASON





6.55 *New series*

Doctor Who

starring **Peter Davison**
in *Castrovalva*

A four-part story by

CHRISTOPHER H. BIDMEAD

1: What are the dangers of Event
One?

The Doctor.....PETER DAVISON

Tegan.....JANET FIELDING

Nyssa.....SARAH SUTTON

Adric.....MATTHEW WATERHOUSE

Head of security.....DALLAS CAVELL

The Master.....ANTHONY AINLEY

Ruther.....FRANK WYLIE

Script editor ERIC SAWARD

Designer JANET BUDDEN

Producer

JOHN NATHAN-TURNER

Director FIONA CUMMING

(Part 2 tomorrow at 7.0)

**FEATURE
P9**

*'The new Doctor's coming unravelled in more ways than one', and his
regeneration isn't working too well either! Doctor Who returns at 6.55*

7.0 pm

Doctor Who

starring

Peter Davison

in *Castrovalva*

A four-party story by

CHRISTOPHER H. BIDMEAD

2: Who are the Warriors?

(For cast see page 46)

(Part 3 next Monday)

6.55 pm

Doctor Who

starring **Peter Davison**

in *Castrovalva*, a four-part story
by CHRISTOPHER H. BIDMEAD

3: Can the Doctor solve the
mystery of recursive occlusion?

Script editor **ERIC SAWARD**

Designer **JANET BUDDEN**

Producer **JOHN NATHAN-TURNER**

Director **FIONA CUMMING**

(For cast see page 52 at 7.5)

7.5 pm

Doctor Who

starring **Peter Davison** in
Castarovalva: a four-part story
by CHRISTOPHER H. BIDMEAD

4: *Will The Doctor's Regeneration Succeed?*

Nyssa.....SARAH SUTTON

Tegan.....JANET FIELDING

Ruther.....FRANK WYLIE

The Doctor.....PETER DAVISON

Mergrave.....MICHAEL SHEARD

Shardovan.....DEREK WARING

Portreeve.....NEIL TOYNAY

Adrio.....MATTHEW WATERHOUSE

The Master.....ANTHONY AINLEY

Child.....SOUSKA JOHN

The how and why of Doctor Who

What on earth, I ask, is happening to *Doctor Who* (BBC1)? I thought it a little strange at the time when a relatively well-known face was chosen to play the Doctor in the person of Peter Davison; and now the actual programme itself has been moved from the traditional Saturday teatime to a twice-weekly slot on Mondays and Tuesdays!

The success of *Doctor Who* in my opinion stemmed not only from the time at which it used to be shown, which had a certain appeal about it (as borne out by the ratings) but also from the character of the Doctor himself. Messrs Hartnell, Troughton, Pertwee and Baker were excellent choices at the time because they had not already been well exposed to television in other roles.

Peter Davison is already a very well known face. The result is that we think of Peter Davison as another character in another programme before we regard him as Doctor Who. This somehow detracts from the very character and feel of this once unique science fiction programme...

J. L. Adcock

Tolworth, Surrey

A basic equation

... Surely it is the first, most basic and overriding principle of broadcasting that *Doctor Who* = Saturday and Saturday = *Doctor Who*.

Michael R. G. Trueman
Newark, Nottinghamshire

'Guardian', too

If the powers that be can ignore my protest at the rescheduling of *Doctor Who*, they surely ➤ 76

75 ← cannot disregard the leader in the 4 January *Guardian* ('Tardis lands on the wrong day').

Do they realise it also clashes with *The Archers* (Radio 4)?

Mary Swingler
Sutton Coldfield, W Midlands

Affirmative

As a 28-year-old mother who grew up with the good Doctor Who, I feel I am more than a bit qualified to pass judgment on Peter Davison's suitability... and all I can say is: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes!

(Mrs) Cynthia Segrave-Bingham
Orpington, Kent



ALAN HART, Controller, BBC1, replies:

The decision to move the Doctor from his Saturday slot was not taken lightly. We thought carefully about it and decided that he needed new times; and the hope is that more people will be able to follow his adventures.

In addition, we all felt the need to give him a new lease of life. A new Doctor, a new placing, a new challenge. Time will tell whether the Tardis has landed on the right day. Certainly Mrs Segrave-Bingham thinks it has, and I'd like to bet there are many millions who agree with her. The first episode on 4 January had 10.1 million viewers.

The Doctor will be calling twice a week until the end of March; then we shall discuss carefully on which day the Tardis will land next time around.