

TV Review of 'Doctor Who': New Team, Same Great Show

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on April 17, 2010 - 10:54am

- [Arthur Davill](#) [2]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [3]
- [Christopher Eccleston](#) [4]
- [David Tennant](#) [5]
- [Doctor Who](#) [6]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [7]
- [Karen Gillan](#) [8]
- [Matt Smith](#) [9]
- [Russell T. Davies](#) [10]
- [Steven Moffat](#) [11]
- [Television](#) [12]

CHICAGO – The eleventh doctor makes his debut tonight on the highly anticipated BBC America season premiere of the great “Doctor Who,” one of the most purely entertaining shows on television. If you call yourself a science fiction fan and you’re not watching what BBC America has offered over the least year with good-to-great programs including “Torchwood,” “Primeval,” “Being Human,” “Demons,” “Ashes to Ashes,” and “Survivors”. “Doctor Who” is the elder statesman of them all and he shows no sign of his age.



Television Rating: **4.5/5.0**

Although he has, technically, gotten younger with the addition of new star Matt Smith. In case you’re completely unfamiliar with the current resurgence of one of the most essential genre characters of all time, get thee to a Netflix queue. After fading into relative obscurity for many years, the man who rides the TARDIS was brought back to the forefront in 2005 with the premiere of Russell T. Davies’ remarkable reboot of the franchise. Christopher Eccleston played the good doctor at first but quickly handed the reins over to the excellent tenth doctor played by David Tennant, who has held the role for the last five years. His shoes are big ones to fill as the show has remained wildly popular with BBC America fans here in the States.



Doctor Who: Karen Gillan and Matt Smith.

Photo credit: BBC

As the series approaches its fiftieth anniversary, the saga of the doctor must go on. And so we meet the newest doctor, played by the boyish

Matt Smith, a stage actor who becomes the youngest actor to ever play the doctor at only 27. Wisely, the team behind “Doctor Who” didn’t try to find a Tennant copycat and brought on someone with his own style, look, and energy. The show has also seen a major shift behind-the-scenes with a new showrunner (Steven Moffat) and it definitely has a slightly altered tone to reflect the new lead. Don’t worry: This is still the clever, witty, subversive sci-fi that you know and love.



Doctor Who: Matt Smith and Karen Gillan.
Photo credit: BBC

We meet the new doctor hanging from the TARDIS as it speeds through the sky toward Big Ben. After the credits, he’s crashed in some poor girl’s backyard and emerges somewhat worse for wear but having lost none of that typical Doctor charm. He’s still being “formed” as the new doctor - the character regenerates into new bodies, explaining the different actors - and Smith puts his stamp on the character immediately. He’s somehow both suave and gawky at the same time. He’s quick-witted and yet somewhat bumbling; charming but also socially awkward. Smith is a perfect fit in that he can perfectly deliver a line like “Do I just have a face that nobody listens to?”

Immediately, as the Doctor tries to find something to eat and throughout the episode, Smith’s comic timing is perfect. He’s both entertaining and believable as a hero. Of course, nothing can be known for sure after only one episode and we wish BBC had sent us more, but this is the kind of debut that bodes well for the future of “Doctor Who”.

Of course, a new doctor means a new companion: Amy Pond (the strikingly beautiful redhead Karen Gillan), the aforementioned girl who watches the good doctor literally drop into her life. Introduced as a child, we meet Amy again after the Doctor promises to be back in five minutes and shows up twelve years later. Naturally, the handsome man who agreed with her that the crack in her wall was not inconsequential has been her obsession for the last decade or so, making for an interesting companion-doctor relationship in that he’s kind of her childhood hero; it’s an imaginary friend come to life. Gillan matches Smith with pitch-perfect delivery and charming characterization while also being one of the most stunning future stars now on TV.



Doctor Who: Matt Smith.
Photo credit: BBC

The first episode, “The Eleventh Hour,” has a lot to handle. It must introduce the new doctor, new companion, and present a standalone plot; one that’s pretty standard for the show but handled with typical wit and truly remarkable pacing. That’s the most amazing thing about “Doctor Who”. It runs 64 minutes and feels a quarter as long with a breakneck pace that still doesn’t feel rushed. It’s a remarkably well made show despite its budget limitations. In fact, the cheap special effects almost make it more endearing.

Over four decades of time-travelling, shape-shifting, and numerous attempts to destroy our planet and “Doctor Who” has not faltered in the

slightest. Of course, changes in lead and showrunner are likely to lead some purists and those who run the David Tennant Fan Club to cry foul, but the show is just as entertaining as it has been at any point during its current era. And the thought that Smith, Gillan and Moffat could actually improve on this premiere as they get more experienced should make any “Doctor Who” fan downright giddy.

The new season of “Doctor Who” premieres on BBC America on Saturday, April 17th, 2010 at 8pm CST. It stars Matt Smith and Karen Gillan. It was executive produced by Steven Moffat, Piers Wenger, and Beth Willis.



[13]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [14]
Content Director
HollywoodChicago.com
brian@hollywoodchicago.com [13]

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