

## TV Review: Doctor Who - 'The Day of the Doctor'

Does the 50th anniversary special live up to expectations? [Katy Sandalls](#) and [George Wood](#) review

Tuesday 26 November 2013



**Rating:** ★★★★★☆

**This review contains spoilers.**

Fifty years: few TV series have reached such a prestigious milestone. Then again, few shows can reinvent themselves to new generations of audiences the way Doctor Who has. To say there was a lot riding on this episode is an understatement, but show-runner Steven Moffat has pulled off an excellent piece of entertainment without veering too much into self-referential indulgence, or the hackneyed melodrama that Doctor Who is sometimes criticised for.

There was something for everyone in the episode and for the fanboys and fangirls there was a plethora of references to enjoy (Codename Cromer, anyone?).

For the later fan the return of David Tennant reminds us all why he is remembered as one of the best Doctors. In terms of the actual plot a few cracks seemed to have appeared in Moffat's wall: the unsatisfactory conclusion to Kate Stewart's attempt to destroy the whole of London was quickly passed over in order to get to the more juicy storyline of the return of Gallifrey.

Indeed, UNIT, Elizabethan England and the Zygon threat served as plot devices to parallel the real crux of the story: John Hurt's War Doctor considering the decision to commit genocide on his race for the greater good of the universe. Hurt is on fine form, playing an introspective role that juxtaposed the livelier Doctors of Tennant and Matt Smith ("Are you capable of speaking without flapping your hands about?" was a brilliant line).

Having Billie Piper return as The Moment, a Ghost of Christmas Future to Hurt's Doctor, rather than former companion Rose Tyler, was refreshing - we certainly didn't need another 'Doomsday' reunion (though the Bad Wolf references must have been irresistible!).

In fact, Moffat really seemed to have pulled it out of the bag for once. In his earlier series, he was criticised for making convoluted and unappealing story arcs, and in the last series, every episode seemed

to lack any satisfying conclusion. Perhaps this is a clichéd thing to say about *Doctor Who*, but the balance here was perfect, with an ending that paid respects to the show's past while eagerly looking forward to the show's future.



Plus we got a few unspoilt treats, like our first sneak peak of the new Doctor (Peter Capaldi), and the return of fan favourite Tom Baker in his mysterious role as the 'Great Curator'.

But compared to other specials, *The Day of the Doctor* succeeded not because of its nostalgic nods or the thrill of seeing characters from the show's past, present and future interact on screen, but because of the episode's restraint on overblowing these elements as to provide a richly woven story that lives up to the Doctor Who name.

No one was there just for the sake of it, and no one was made to stay in the TARDIS just because the writers had no role for them. *The Day of the Doctor* left you wanting more, an experience only enhanced by cinema viewing. Could its success be repeated in twenty-five or even fifty years time? It's hard to tell. But the endurance of Doctor Who was almost certainly reaffirmed by this episode. So Geronimo! Allons-y! Gallifrey stands!



## 2 comments

Paul McGann

26 Nov '13 at 8:23 pm

Moffat's time on the show has been hit and miss (series 5 was in my view the best of nu Who, 7.2 was quite rubbish save "The Name of The Doctor"), but this was just perfect. John Hurt was outstanding, the Zygons tremendously creepy and a wonderful conclusion which sets series 8 up perfectly. I just hope the 100th anniversary is just as spectacular!

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Skeptic

27 Nov '13 at 4:40 pm

How can it claim to be the 50th anniversary, when the show was off air for 16 years?!

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