

Hiding Behind Sofas

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Ask anyone who was a child in England from the 1960s to the 1990s if they were ever frightened by a TV programme and 99% of them will tell you how they hid behind the sofas to escape the “Daleks”

The Daleks were just one of many alien dangers faced by the eponymous hero of the BBC science fiction drama “Doctor Who”. This programme is to the Brits what Star Trek is to everyone else. It is the definitive time and space travel fiction.

The Doctor was a character who travelled through time and space in a phone box which was bigger on the inside than it was on the outside. He had a dog with artificial intelligence called K-9 (think about it!) and every few years he would change in appearance.

I know, I know! It sounds ludicrous! It’s such a terrible premise. But the programme ran for an incredible 26 years! Dr Who is as much a part of British culture as James Bond, The Beatles and tea. The Doctor, and his various companions, had the most exciting

adventures. In one episode the Doctor says, ‘There are some corners of the universe which have bred the most terrible things ... They must be fought.’ And fight they did!

Among the Doctor’s enemies were the Ice Warriors, the Silurians, the Master and, almost as scary as the Daleks, the Cybermen. The Cybermen existed 20 years before anyone had heard the words ‘cibercafe’ or ‘cibernaut’. Even the theme music still seems modern when heard today. Dr Who was screened on BBC1 after ‘Grandstand’, the Saturday sports programme, and ‘Juke Box Jury’, a pop music show. For children of six and seven it was an oasis. We waited all week for Saturday to come around and then, as I said at the beginning, we all hid behind the sofa with the living daylights scared out of us.

In one of the most inexplicable decisions of modern broadcasting the BBC stopped Dr Who in 1989. The number of disappointed fans went into millions. Just type “Dr Who” into an internet search engine and you will see the massive cult that the show engendered. Its ending was stupid act from a too powerful corporation.

As The Doctor himself said in “Face of Evil”: *‘You know, the very powerful and the very stupid have one thing in common, they don’t alter their views to fit the facts, they alter the facts to fit the views, which can be uncomfortable, if you happen to be one of the facts that needs altering.*

However, Dr Who was relaunched in 2005 and has become one the BBC’s most popular programmes.