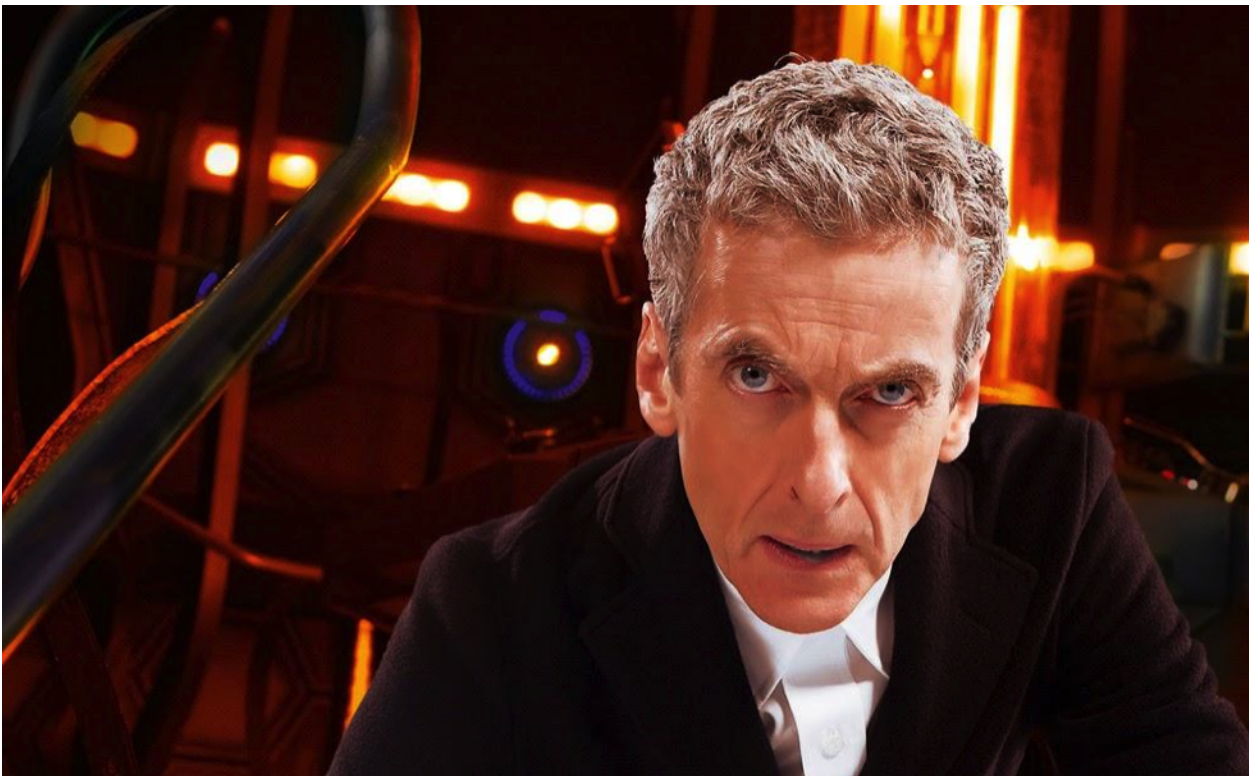


DOCTOR WHO FANS TAKE A “DEEP BREATH”

August 26th, 2014 By Jovel Johnson

Peter Capaldi steps into the TARDIS



The last time we saw the Doctor, he had already gone through his 12th (or 13th, depending on how you look at it) regeneration and was complaining about the color of his new kidneys. Yes, his kidneys. Don't ask. As usual, the initial regeneration process comes with a sort of amnesia, since his faculties and physicality change. So his memory takes time to catch up. A whole heap of time.

The countdown to Doctor Who's Season 8 premiere was unprecedented, with the main cast members Peter Capaldi and Jenna Coleman [embarking on a World Tour](#), visiting the UK, South Korea, Australia, US, Mexico and Brazil. Matt Smith stepped out of the TARDIS and laid down the screwdriver, making way for Capaldi, the veteran

Scottish actor to take his place. But while the very core of Doctor Who is total whimsy and quirk, Capaldi's Doctor promised to be darker, more serious. That would make sense, as Capaldi is much older than Smith (Smith took the role as the youngest actor to play the Doctor at 26), so much older that he's the **oldest actor to play the role at 56** (William Hartnell, the first Doctor, was 55). Where Smith's doctor was more youthful and manic, Capaldi's doctor promised to be more in control and focused (and maybe a little bit grouchy). The wait for the show's return was palpable, and it was over on Saturday with the premiere episode, "Deep Breath".

Rollercoaster Beginnings

It's the Victorian era and there's a dinosaur on the loose in the heart of London which is, I'm guessing, not a normal occurrence. It seemed to have time traveled, and the only way it could have done that was with the Doctor's help (she, yes she, spat out the TARDIS). I don't think he knows that though, because he's extremely mentally worse for wear with the regeneration, babbling and even mistaking Strax for Clara. Clara is still shaken up with the change (too shaken up), but **Madame Vastra and Jenny** bring her back to reality, allowing her to come to grips with his new face and personality.



The new Doctor (Peter Capaldi) collapses while still recovering from his regeneration. (geeknation.com)

The dinosaur had been quarantined, but a mysterious villain, a mechanical looking man missing half his face and looking for real eyes (which he successfully accosted from some poor guy watching the dinosaur debacle) managed to kill it. What we come to find out is this “cyborg” is a leader of a race of aliens who are looking for human parts to survive, whether to become totally human, or to help fuel their centuries long goal of making it to the “promised land”. The plan to get both the Doctor and Clara in one room is elaborate, but it works (who lured them there?), and they are almost victims of being stripped for “spare parts”. They eventually get caught, but the Doctor leaves her behind.

“Too slow, no point in him catching us both.”

This left me wondering if this was a part of the new Doctor...leaving his people behind. But thinking back to other Doctors, they always make decisions that leave you scratching your head. Clara is left holding her breath (hence “Deep Breath”) for her survival (the droids know you’re around when you breathe), and the head droid, **the Half-Face Man**, threatens to make her meet her demise which works well, because she’s terrified, but like a real ride or die sidekick, refused to give up information on the Doctor. But never fear, the Doctor was there all along and saved Clara.



Clara (Jenna Coleman) and the Doctor are lured to a “restaurant” for lunch. It wasn’t pleasant. (cnet.com)

But it's the subsequent scene that gives us a deeper glimpse into the inner workings of the new Doctor. He's a tad more...ruthless. Or is he? During that skin spaceship battle between him and the Half-Face Man (verbal and physical), their true colors come into question. In order for the lesions of droids to self-destruct, the Half-Face Man has to himself self-destruct or the Doctor will have to kill him. Both claim that those choices "are against their basic programming." But that claim doesn't hold water for long. "You realize of course, one of us is lying about our basic programming," the Doctor said, making the audience know that one of two things will happen; either the droid commits "suicide", or the Doctor murders him. When we see them again, the Half-Face Man is impaled at the top of Big Ben, apparently jumping to his "death" or being pushed. Capaldi breaks the fourth wall and looks into the camera after the discovery with a look of, determined resolve which drives home the question, "Did the Doctor push him to his death or not?" No matter which one it is (murder or convincing someone to kill himself) it shows how far this new incarnation is willing to go for the greater good.

Also kudos for connecting this episode to "[The Girl in the Fireplace](#)" an episode in Season 2 which featured androids using human anatomy to build and fuel their ship, Madam de Pompadour. Apparently that's the sister ship to this one. Of course, still recovering from his regeneration, the Doctor doesn't remember a thing about it. He knows he should, though.



The episode paid homage to Season 2's "The Girl in the Fireplace". (fanpop.com)

“I’ve seen this face before.”

The most poignant scene in the episode is one where a seemingly raving mad Doctor is in an alley, where he pulls a homeless guy into his fragmented confusion. He’s trying to get his memory together, but not only that, he’s also trying to come to grips with his physical features. He’s angry and confused as to why he “chose” that old face (CAN they choose their faces?) with those “attack eyebrows” you can apparently open bottles with. During his Alzheimer’s-like tirade, like any normal person stepping out of their youth, he laments on the fact that he now looks like an old man, but it seems to be familiar to him. “I’ve seen this face before.” Does he mean he’s been old before, or does he mean that he seen that ACTUAL face before (Capaldi **made an appearance in a previous episode** in Season 4, where he played another character, Lucius Caecilius Ivcundus in **“The Fires of Pompeii”** with David Tennant as the 10th Doctor). He’s still “cooking”, but this acclimation process proved to be a harder pill to swallow for the new face. Could it be as a result of him allowing himself to drastically age back in Trenzalore?

We’re never really sure if the Doctor was in control of all his faculties by the end of the episode, but he sort of comes into his own and seems more confident. Clara eventually comes to terms with the new incarnation, but not before Doctor #11 (Smith) **gives her a time-travel type call**, asking her to accept the new face, the new hair, the new personality. But I don’t know how I feel about this. I know it’s Clara’s first regeneration, but did her resistance have to be so...much? This made me have to agree with Lady Vastra when she basically accused Clara of ageism...liking the previous Doctor for his youth and good looks.



“I don’t think I’m the hugging kind.” (geeknation.com)

Capaldi's performance drives it home when HIS Doctor makes the necessary plea to Clara, "You look at me and you can't see me. Have you any idea how that feels? Please, just see me."

Big Sigh

Heaven?

The episode ends with the Half-Face Man in a beautiful Garden of Eden-like, well, garden, with a woman **who calls herself "Missy"** and represents herself as the Doctor's "girlfriend" (girlfriend?). The droid asks where he is and she says "the promised land"...heaven. This had the whodom (yes, I said "whodom") speculating. Is she the TARDIS? Was she a previous character? Is she a new character? Enemy? Friend? We may not find out right now, as the show LOVES to hold on to those moments and throw them back at us at a later time in some **wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey** way.

But aahhmm....what was up with the theme song?

Oh and, I'm onboard with Capaldi.



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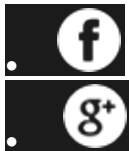
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