HEALTH & WELLNESS

Doctor Who Power Of The Daleks

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Rediscovering a Lost Classic: The Enduring Significance of Doctor Who Power of the Daleks

For decades, fans of **Doctor Who** regarded the early stories of the Second Doctor, Patrick Troughton, as the holy grail of lost media. Among these, few serials carried as much weight as the very first story of his era: **Doctor Who Power of the Daleks**. Originally broadcast in November 1966, this six-part adventure introduced a new incarnation of the Time Lord and pitted him against his most iconic foes—the Daleks. For years, only blurry off-air photographs and a surviving audio track remained, leaving an entire generation to imagine the visual storytelling. Then, in 2016, the BBC released a full animated reconstruction, bringing the story to a new audience. This article explores the history, plot, production, and enduring legacy of this landmark serial, examining why **Doctor Who Power of the Dalek** remains a pivotal moment in the show's long, rich history.

The Context: A New Doctor and a Familiar Threat

The Regeneration Gamble

In 1966, **Doctor Who** was still a relatively young series, but it was about to take its most daring step yet. William Hartnell, the original Doctor, had left the role due to ill health. The production team, led by producer Innes Lloyd, decided that the Doctor could "renew" himself—a concept they later termed **regeneration**. This was a huge risk; audiences had grown attached to Hartnell's sometimes crotchety but beloved First Doctor. Who would accept a completely different actor in the role? The solution was to give the new Doctor a formidable test: the Daleks, the show's most popular monsters.

Doctor Who Power of the Daleks was deliberately written as a showcase for the newly regenerated Doctor. Script editor Gerry Davis and writer David Whitaker crafted a story that would force Troughton to prove himself not as a copy of Hartnell, but as a radically different kind of hero. The Daleks, created by Terry Nation, were the perfect adversaries because they represented a clear and present danger that viewers already feared. The story had to work on two levels: as a compelling Dalek adventure, and as a character study of a man who wasn't sure of his own identity.

The Lost Episodes Mystery

Sadly, the original videotapes of **Doctor Who Power of the Daleks** were among hundreds of BBC episodes wiped or destroyed in the 1970s to save storage space. For decades, the only surviving elements were the complete audio soundtrack (recorded by fans off-air) and a few production photographs. The six episodes were considered almost certainly lost forever. This only added to the story's mythical status. Fans pieced together the plot from telesnaps (photographic negatives of the episodes, taken by a fan named John Cura) and the detailed audio. Every line of dialogue, every sound effect, every Dalek shriek was studied. The animation project, greenlit for the 50th anniversary of the story in 2016, was a dream come true for the fan community.

Plot Summary: Deceit, Rebellion, and a New Kind of Doctor

The Arrival on Vulcan

The story begins immediately after the First Doctor's regeneration. The TARDIS materializes on the planet Vulcan (a human colony, not the Star Trek variety). The new Doctor emerges, collapsed and confused, unable to even remember his name. His companions, Polly and Ben, are horrified. They don't believe this strange, clownish man is the same Time Lord they traveled with. This early confusion is crucial; Troughton's Doctor appears weak, bumbling, and uncertain. He babbles, plays with his recorder, and seems incapable of decisive action. This deliberate misdirection is a key feature of the character's psychology.

The colonists on Vulcan have a problem. They have discovered a crashed spaceship containing three inert Daleks. The colony's deputy governor, a paranoid figure named Bragen, wants to use the Daleks as weapons. The governor, Hensell, is more cautious but is swayed by the scientific curiosity of the colony's chief scientist, Lesterson. The Daleks are revived, but they claim to have lost their power and are now harmless—even friendly. They offer to help the colonists by repairing their mining equipment, using their own technology to generate power. The colonists, blinded by greed and a desire for efficiency, accept.

The Doctor's Strategy

From the start, the new Doctor knows the Daleks are lying. He repeatedly tries to warn the colonists, but no one listens. His reputation from the First Doctor's time means nothing; he is a stranger to everyone except his own companions, who doubt him. The Doctor's approach is not to confront the Daleks directly—he is physically weak and lacks any weaponry. Instead, he plays the fool. He allows the colonists to dismiss him as a harmless eccentric. All the while, he is observing, listening, and planning. This is the birth of the Second Doctor's modus operandi: the cosmic chess player hiding behind a mask of flippancy.

The Daleks manipulate the political situation on Vulcan. They encourage Bragen's ambition, promising him control of the colony. They secretly build a vast Dalek production line underground, using the colony's own resources. Meanwhile, Lesterson, the scientist, becomes increasingly obsessed and unhinged. He realizes too late that the Daleks have been using him. The emotional climax of the story involves Lesterson's breakdown in a Dalek control room, a sequence that remains terrifying even in animated form.

The Rebellion and the Dalek Empire

As the colony descends into civil war between Bragen's loyalists and Hensell's faction, the Doctor finally reveals his hand. He has been subtly working to delay the Daleks' plans, sabotaging their power source and seeding dissent. The final episodes feature a full-scale Dalek rebellion. The Daleks, now fully powered and armed, begin to exterminate the colonists. The Doctor is forced to take a terrible gamble. He uses the colony's own weaponry to destroy the Dalek force, but not before they have nearly triumphed.

The ending is ambiguous. The Doctor and his companions escape in the TARDIS, leaving behind a devastated colony. The Daleks are destroyed, but at great cost. The Doctor reflects that he did what he had to do, but there is no joy in victory. This darker tone, with the Doctor being forced into a corner despite his best efforts, became a hallmark of Troughton's era.

The Animated Reconstruction: Bringing the Daleks Back to Life

A Labor of Love

In 2016, the BBC released an animated version of **Doctor Who Power of the Daleks**, created by the team at animation studio Sun & Moon. The project used the original audio recordings, meaning the voices come from the original 1966 broadcast—Patrick Troughton, Anneke Wills (Polly), Michael Craze (Ben), and the Dalek voices. The animation was designed to replicate the black-and-white, shadowy, atmospheric look of the original

episodes. The style is deliberately stylized, with simple lines and stark contrast, evoking the feel of classic comic strips.

The animation runs for the full six episodes, each approximately 25 minutes. It was released first on DVD and Blu-ray, and later on streaming platforms. The work was meticulous. The animators studied the telesnaps and surviving photographs to recreate character movements and set designs as accurately as possible. Where no visual reference existed, they used the audio to infer actions. The result is a seamless viewing experience that feels faithful to the lost original while standing on its own as a work of art.

Voice Cast and Sound Design

Because the original audio was used, the performances are a direct window into 1966. Patrick Troughton's performance as the Doctor is extraordinary. He speaks in a rapid, mumbling, almost childlike cadence, often punctuated with strange bird-like noises or sudden bursts of laughter. This disarms the Daleks and the colonists alike. The Daleks themselves are voiced with the classic harsh, staccato tones provided by voice actors like Nicholas Briggs (in the animation, the original Dalek operators' audio was cleaned up; for the DVD, additional Dalek lines were recorded by Briggs for clarity, but the core is from 1966). The blend of old and new is seamless.

Sound designer Mark Ayres also remastered the soundtrack, cleaning up the audio and adding subtle ambient effects. The music, composed by Dudley Simpson for the original, is a minimalist, eerie score that perfectly matches the paranoid atmosphere.

Thematic Depth: What Makes This Story Unique

Deception and the Nature of Evil

One of the key themes in **Doctor Who Power of the Daleks** is deception. The Daleks are masters of it. They pretend to be harmless, calling themselves "servants" and promising to help the colonists. This is different from their usual portrayal as overt, screaming tyrants. The story suggests that evil is most dangerous when it wears a friendly mask. The Doctor's own deception—pretending to be weak and foolish—is a necessary counterpoint. He wins not by strength, but by outthinking his enemies.

This serial also explores the theme of responsibility. The Doctor is directly responsible for bringing the TARDIS to Vulcan. He could have left immediately, but he stays because he knows the Daleks must be stopped. His companions doubt him, yet he perseveres. The ending, where the Doctor looks sadly at the destruction, suggests that victory often comes with a heavy price.

The Second Doctor's Defining Adventure

For many fans, **Doctor Who Power of the Daleks** is the quintessential Second Doctor story. It establishes every aspect of his character: his love of disguise (he briefly uses a false moustache), his reliance on intelligence over brute force, his ability to turn enemies against each other, and his underlying compassion. The story also introduces the idea that the Doctor's regeneration is a traumatic process. He suffers from amnesia and identity confusion in the first episode. This vulnerability makes him more relatable than the confident, paternal First Doctor.

The Daleks, too, are at their most cunning. They are not just mindless killers; they are strategic manipulators. The serial demonstrates why they are the Doctor's greatest enemies—not because of their weapons, but because of their intelligence and patience.

Reception and Legacy

Critical Acclaim for the Animation

When the animated version was released in 2016, it received widespread praise. Critics noted that the story

held up remarkably well, and that Troughton's performance was revelatory for those who had only heard his reputation. Many reviewers called it one of the best Doctor Who stories of all time, regardless of format. The animation was commended for its elegance and restraint, avoiding the trap of over-complication. The black-and-white palette added a noirish quality that suited the story's paranoid tone.

Longtime fans were ecstatic. For the first time, they could see the visual storytelling that had been lost for 50 years. Key moments—the Dalek production line, Lesterson's madness, the Doctor's sudden shift from bumbler to master strategist—were now vivid and immediate. The animation also introduced a new generation to the Second Doctor, inspiring interest in other lost Troughton stories.

Impact on Doctor Who Fandom

Doctor Who Power of the Daleks revived interest in the "lost years" of the show. It demonstrated that animated reconstructions could be commercially viable and artistically successful. This encouraged the BBC to produce further animations for other missing episodes, such as "The Macra Terror," "The Faceless Ones," and "The Evil of the Daleks." The success also fueled grassroots efforts to find the original film prints. While none have been recovered, the hope remains.

The story's thematic resonance continued to echo in modern Doctor Who. The idea of a Doctor who pretends to be silly while secretly outmaneuvering his enemies is a direct influence on the portrayals by actors like Matt Smith and Peter Capaldi. The "chess master" archetype is now a staple of the character.

Why Every Doctor Who Fan Should Experience This Story

Whether you are a lifelong devotee or a newcomer, **Doctor Who Power of the Daleks** offers

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DIGITAL EDITION

doctor-who-power-of-the-daleks

DIGITAL EDITION

doctor-who-power-of-the-daleks

DIGITAL EDITION

doctor-who-power-of-the-daleks

DIGITAL EDITION

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