

The doctor is in at DePaul: 'Doctor Who' colloquium celebrates 50 years of television

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Published: Sunday, May 12, 2013

Updated: Sunday, May 12, 2013 21:05

Fifty years of time travel and space exploration were celebrated May 4 at DePaul's "A Celebration of 'Doctor Who'" in the Loop campus.

"Doctor Who" is a television show broadcast on BBC, which centers on an alien called The Doctor and his ever-changing rotation of companions that travel with him in a space and time machine called the TARDIS. While traveling, The Doctor and his companions face monsters and aliens and usually have to find a way to save the world from potential demise.

The first episode of the show was broadcast Nov. 23, 1963, and originally ran until 1989. A new series began in 2005 with Christopher Eccleston picking up the role of The Doctor.

Altogether 11 actors have played The Doctor; Matt Smith currently portrays the role.

The reason so many actors have been able to take over the role is due to the regeneration of The Doctor. Within the show, whenever The Doctor dies, he regenerates into a new body.

Paul Booth, an assistant professor of media and cinema studies in the College of Communication, organized the event after talking to students in his "Time Travel on Television" class.

The event consisted of six panels on different topics relating to the show, including "'Doctor Who' and Gender" and "The Long Appeal of 'Doctor Who'." There were multiple scholars speaking at each of these panels. There were also episode screenings throughout the day.

The screenings culminated in a live commentary of the episode "Dalek" by Robert Shearman, who wrote the episode. Afterwards, Shearman read from his book and did a book signing, along with the other authors who attended the event.

Shearman was the guest of honor at the event, and his screening was followed by a Q-and-A session, where he discussed his job as the writer for "Doctor Who", among other things.

"I enjoyed the Q-and-A with Rob Shearman the most," said Booth. "It's great to get to ask him some questions and hear his thoughtful answers."

One of the speakers in the panels was Carole Barrowman, an English professor at Alverno College in Milwaukee, and also the sister of "Doctor Who" and its spinoff Torchwood star John Barrowman, who played Captain Jack Harkness



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"Doctor Who" memorabilia for sale at the Doctor Who 50th anniversary colloquium hosted by DePaul Saturday, May 4.

in both shows.

Barrowman has been a fan of the show for 45 years and continues to watch.

"'Doctor Who' is timeless," said Barrowman.

DePaul graduate student Emily Gilmer enjoys the show for different reasons.

"I love the character relationships, as well as how different every Doctor is," said Gilmer.

"Every regeneration is such a different character, but he's still the Doctor."

There were multiple aspects of the "Doctor Who" fandom represented throughout the event, including the attendance of members of Verity Podcast, editors and contributors from Chicks Dig Time Lords and representatives from the annual convention Chicago TARDIS, as well as many more scholars and "Doctor Who" enthusiasts.

Overall the event was a success, and Booth hopes to do a pop culture event every year.

"The event exceeded all my expectations," said Booth. "There were so many people. I don't think I've ever been to a conference before where panels were this well attended. I think the event went perfectly, and I can't wait to do it again."