

## The Global Year Of Doctor Who – August 2013 – August 2014



### Award Entry (2,000 word submission)

*“...a British cultural institution, half a century old now, but with the potential for endless regeneration.....  
“It is all about the triumph of intellect and romance over brute force and cynicism.” When the news each day grows ever darker, those seem like the sort of values that any nation would be happy to export.”*  
Elizabeth Minkel, New Statesman

### Introduction

At the start of 2013 Doctor Who was a much-loved brand that had long been established in the UK and Australia. The show had influenced generations of British TV viewers, and had recently gained the beginnings of a cult following in the US. Despite the show being broadcast in over 200+ territories, the UK, Australia & US still accounted for 90% of revenue. It was clear that the route to higher value growth outside of those key territories was to grow the brand through fan engagement. Our fans (the ‘Whovians’) could be found in small pockets in many territories – our strategy was to superserve the fan community, leveraging their network effect to broaden appeal of the show to a mass audience. Ultimately, we needed to grow awareness of the Doctor Who brand internationally in order to make 2013 Doctor Who’s most profitable year ever and provide a springboard for further global expansion.

This isn’t just the story of a celebratory moment in time, but how a year-long campaign strategy helped manage the brand through a period of regeneration. The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in November 2013 was a landmark, but hot on its heels was the announcement of a new Doctor. As the programme had experienced substantial growth in the US during the Matt Smith period, this news presented both an exciting opportunity and a risk. How could we convince audiences to embrace the new Doctor as *their* Doctor, especially following the emotional and poignant Christmas special episode *The Time of the Doctor* which saw Matt’s regeneration into Peter? Introducing a new time lord required a careful marketing operation to a fan community with high expectations. This was the challenge for 2014.



To achieve our goals, we set about creating a year of activity with four key pillars –

- (i) Record-breaking global simulcast
- (ii) Global cinema release
- (iii) World class fan events with a global scope
- (iv) A cost effective digital marketing & PR approach

#### **(i) Record-breaking Global Simulcast**

The Global Simulcast of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary episode (*The Day of the Doctor*) was an important focal point for the campaign. In effect the simulcast became the campaign launch, allowing us to ‘eventise’ a global TV moment with local points of activation. The episode was aired on BBC One at 7.50pm on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2013 (achieving the highest ratings since 2008) and broadcast simultaneously in 98 countries and 15 different languages. In the US, the show was broadcast at 2.50pm EST on BBC America to an audience of 2.4million, becoming the largest audience in the channel’s history. The simulcast delivered on average 69% more viewers than the previous series across our key markets. The simulcast was our queueing outside of the Apple Store for the new iPhone moment, giving fans a special access window and allowing them to participate in a global event. To truly push into new territories with Doctor Who, we needed to even the playing field, and make the show as accessible as possible to fans everywhere.

The simulcast was a feat of extraordinary project management that involved collaboration between many different parts of the BBC, as well as many long conversations convincing broadcasters that the marketing and PR value was so much greater when delivered through a truly global simulcast. It broke the Guinness World Record for the largest ever simulcast of a TV drama, giving the brand a global platform and bringing all fans together in a global moment.

## Largest TV drama simulcast (number of countries)

Share   



Who

**BBC WORLDWIDE**

Where

**NOT APPLICABLE**  
GLOBAL

When

**23 NOVEMBER 2013**

The largest TV drama simulcast was achieved by the special 50th Anniversary episode of Doctor Who, which was broadcast in 98 countries across six continents at 19:50 (GMT) on 23 November 2013.

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### (ii) Cinema Release

The global cinema release of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary episode was an unprecedented success in terms of helping to 'eventise' this key milestone for the brand. It delivered a shared experience for fans and subsidised a very limited budget through posters in movie theatre foyers and cinema trails amongst some of the key theatrical releases at the time.

Starting with a modest target of around 400 cinemas across the UK, US, Australia, New Zealand and Canada, the final number grew to over 1550 cinemas across 20 countries. Fans joined forces on social media, starting petitions which demanded cinema chains to put on screenings in their countries. Whovians the world over were speaking out, telling us what they needed. It became our job to respond and accommodate at a very regional level. Despite *The Day of the Doctor* being available on TV, often on free-to-air channels, it achieved No.3 at the box office in the UK film chart for a week behind blockbusters *Hunger Games: Catching Fire* and *Gravity*. In the US, 10,000 simulcast tickets sold out in 28 minutes without any paid advertising spend. An interactive cinema screening map on our new website DoctorWho.tv attracted 1million unique browsers as we updated daily with new screenings. In the end cinema served a significant role in the marketing mix by driving PR and building brand awareness, giving fans a place to congregate, engage in cosplay and share their passion for Doctor Who.

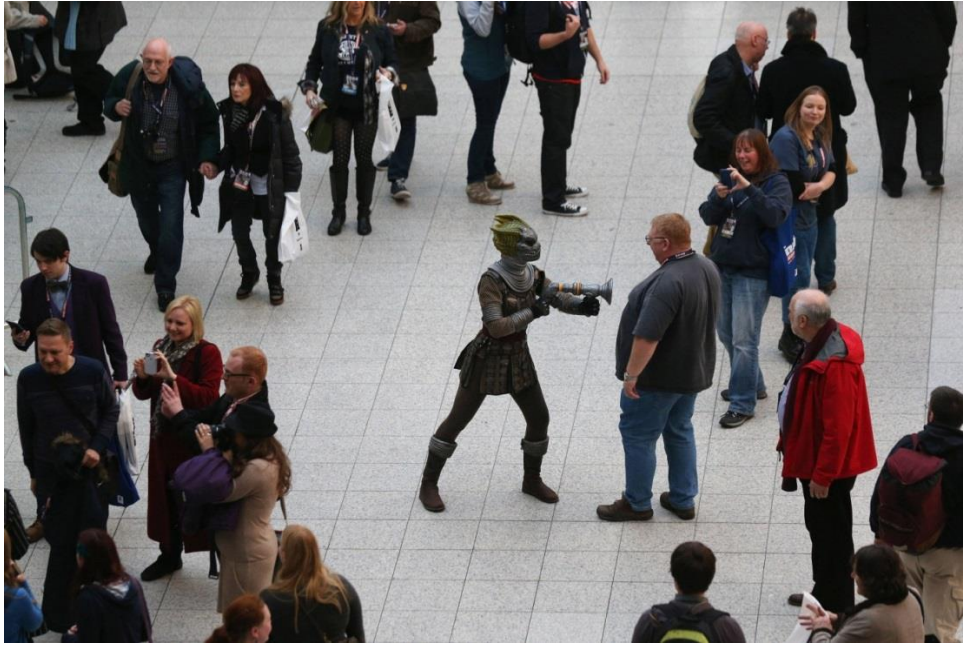


### **(iii) World Class Fan Events**

Super-serving the fan community was the driving idea behind the experiential elements of the campaign: the Doctor Who Celebration at the Excel in London (22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> November) and the World Tour in August 2014 to mark the launch of Series 8 and introduce a brand new Doctor.

Due to the legacy and history of the show in the UK, we knew the 50<sup>th</sup> celebration was an opportunity for fans past and present to celebrate and get a priceless up close interaction with their part of the Doctor Who's history. The event sold out 24,000 tickets in 24 hours, and we negotiated 87 different talent contracts to ensure cast and crew from the last fifty years, including Matt Smith and Steven Moffat, were in attendance. Across the three days there were: panels and Q&As; TARDIS and junkyard sets fans could walk through; costumes from the show's history; a live screening of the simulcast for 4,000 people and a five Doctors photocall – the first time doctors from past and present had come together.

A talent driven event delivered with high production values while remaining affordable and accessible for a family audience was immensely complicated and full of budgetary challenges. The event was unprecedented in terms of offering fans an opportunity to connect and physically experience moments and people from across its full 50 year history.



The success of the London event proved the appetite and importance of experiential, paving the way for the World Tour the following year. The objective of the Tour was to build on the success of the 50th by driving significant press value in the six countries the tour visited, leveraging the passion of the fans on the ground and stimulating sales demand in market for Series 8. If the 50<sup>th</sup> event in London was about Doctor Who 1963-2013, the World Tour was the presentation of a new era with Peter Capaldi at the helm.

The tour started in the UK in Cardiff and London, and then travelled to Seoul, Sydney, New York, Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro, culminating in a stunt in Parliament Square on the day before transmission. Ticketed fan events were held in each city, and digital was used to mobilise the social army everywhere, not just in the Tour cities. We sent two digital producers who posted a stream of mini TARDIS photos in front of iconic locations along the way, also sharing a 'Make your own TARDIS' guide for the fans at home, who duly responded by posting pictures of their own iconic police box all over the world. The global press coverage of the tour had a total PR value of £20.5m, exceeding targets whilst engaging communities of fans with a highly personalised and unforgettable brand experience.

Did the tour drive take up and audience ratings for Series 8? Episode 1 had its best ever opener on BBC America – over 31% up on the ratings of series 7 episode 1, and a 10-39% increase on the previous series in all measurable countries. It was crucial that we didn't let momentum slide away after the huge awareness spike of

the 50<sup>th</sup>, and the World Tour did exactly that, driving better value sales deals of Series 8 across the territories we visited, securing new merchandising licences and pushing the brand further into the mainstream globally.



#### **(iv) A cost effective digital marketing & PR approach**

The international story took Doctor Who from the TV and culture pages onto the global front page. The key beats of the campaign were supported by a year round PR and Digital offensive. By selecting live events, cinema and a record-breaking simulcast as key marketing media, we expected those investments to pay back in earned media and PR engagement. Cinema screenings meant that paid activity (pre-film trails & poster sites) was carried out by the cinemas, creating noise and adding marketing value without cost. The event at Excel London was attended by 35 media outlets each day, and when Capaldi and Coleman flew around the world in 2014, they were guests and brand ambassadors on CBS This Morning (a Top 3 US Breakfast show), prime-time on Televisa (Mexico – reach of 35m), KBS Entertainment in Korea and countless other television, radio and press interviews. The crucial backbone to every part of the campaign was amplification from an in-house digital and social team. Digital was the house we built to keep our fans in a global community where we could continue to message them about Doctor Who long after the memory of the 50<sup>th</sup> and the World Tour had faded. We saw huge growth across Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr and our owned site DoctorWho.tv. Both PR and Digital were effective ways for us to hit our reach targets, and drive conversation around the brand.



When Julia met the Doctor interview, ABC Australia, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2014



### Key results & conclusion

The rise of Doctor Who as a global drama brand was set against a challenging backdrop. Long in the mainstream in the UK, it was still a fledgling challenger brand on the global landscape with huge US exports to compete with like HBO's *Game of Thrones* or AMC's *Breaking Bad*, with marketing budgets which far exceeded ours.

#### Commercial results:

- FY 2013-14 was the biggest revenue year in the brand's history
- Delivered key objective of growing beyond UK, US & Australia - 8 new commercial partners signed to consumer products licenses in LATAM region from the World Tour promotion
- Even in a declining market, Doctor Who DVDs saw the best ever week one sales off the back of the 50<sup>th</sup>

#### Awareness:

- 440million Facebook impressions reaching 97 million people (in the month of November 2013 alone)
- 50<sup>th</sup> episode *The Day of the Doctor* became most tweeted UK drama ever – 12,000 tweets per minute
- 50<sup>th</sup> episode audiences were up 69% on regular episodes, and series 8 saw an uplift of up to 39%

- 50<sup>th</sup> episode was the highest rating programme ever on BBC America at the time of broadcast
- Average 8% increase in awareness in top 15 countries surveyed following the 50<sup>th</sup> activity

Innovation:

- Achieved a world record simulcast across 98 countries

A year of activity with dedicated teams working on a scale never attempted before was the foundation of the global year of Doctor Who. It was not without staggering challenges, but the campaign built solid foundations for international growth.

***“When they made this particular hero, they didn’t give him a gun, they gave him a screwdriver to fix things... they didn’t give him a superpower or pointy ears or a heat ray, they gave him an extra heart. They gave him two hearts. And that’s an extraordinary thing; there will never come a time when we don’t need a hero like the Doctor.”*** Stephen Moffat, November 2013

Word count: 1,999