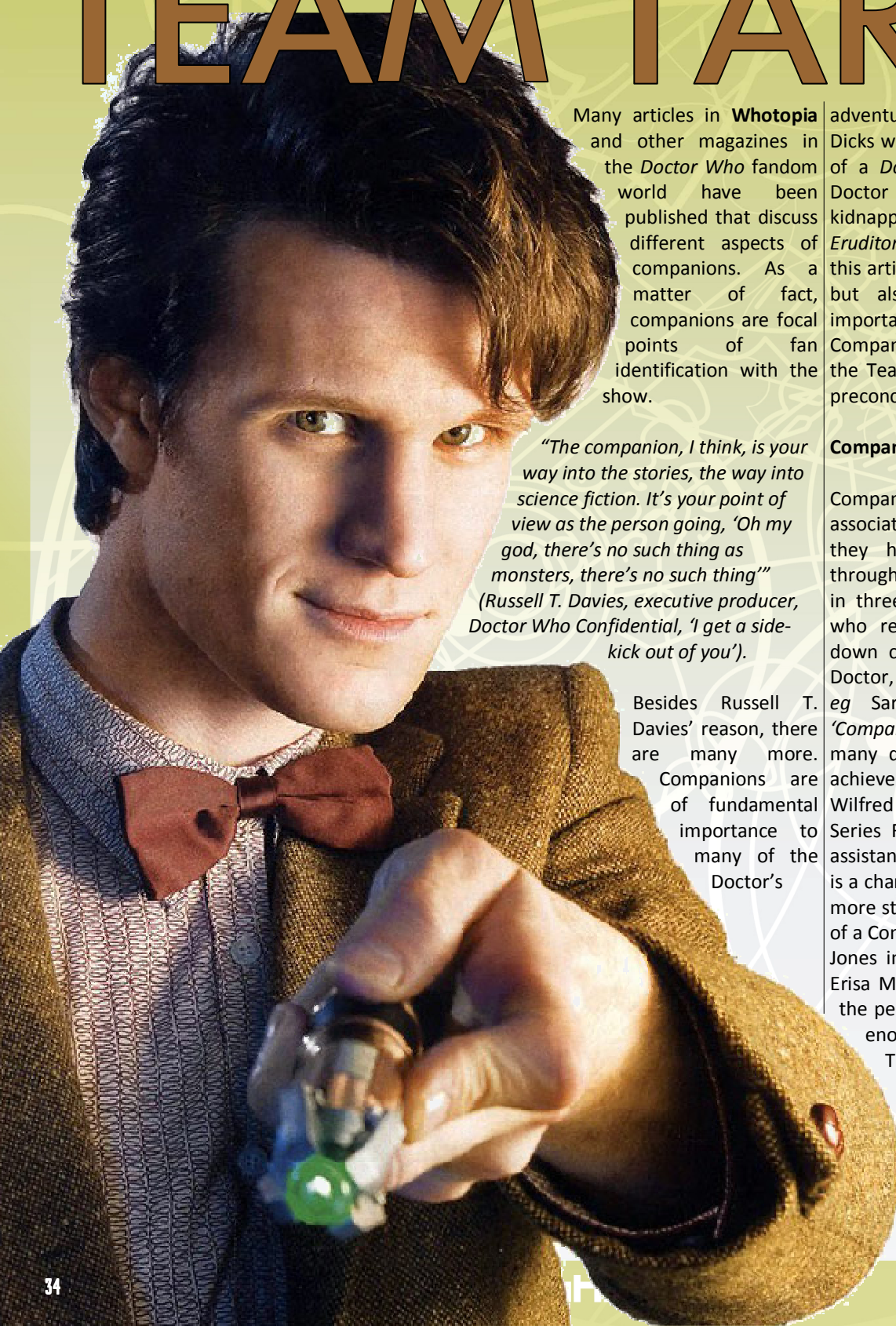


# 50 YEARS OF TEAM TARDIS



Many articles in **Whotopia** and other magazines in the *Doctor Who* fandom world have been published that discuss different aspects of companions. As a matter of fact, companions are focal points of fan identification with the show.

*"The companion, I think, is your way into the stories, the way into science fiction. It's your point of view as the person going, 'Oh my god, there's no such thing as monsters, there's no such thing'"*  
(Russell T. Davies, executive producer, *Doctor Who Confidential*, 'I get a side-kick out of you').

Besides Russell T. Davies' reason, there are many more. Companions are of fundamental importance to many of the Doctor's

adventures. And not just because Terrance Dicks was said to think that "the only real job of a *Doctor Who* companion is to ask the Doctor to explain the plot and to get kidnapped." (Philip Sandifer, *TARDIS Eruditorum*, 2012, 'Terror of the Autons'). In this article, we look at not only 'Companions', but also the other characters that are important supporters of the Doctor: Companion-Lite and Associate. After a look at the Team TARDIS network, we will look at a preconception about companion ages.

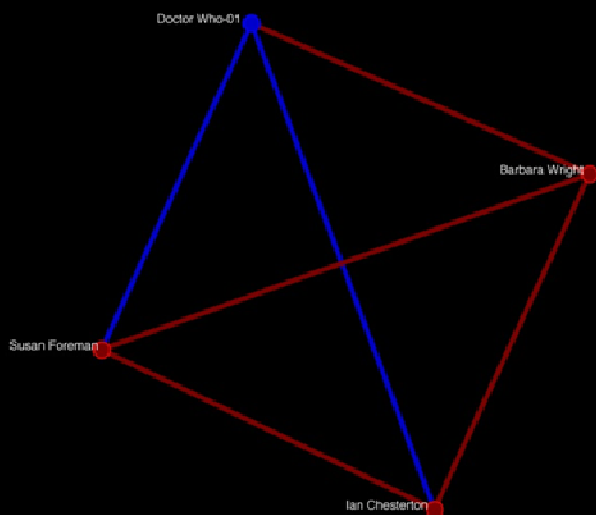
## Companions and Other Friends

Companion is the most common term associated with the Doctor's friends, though they have been known by other titles throughout the years. And they actually come in three flavors. 'Companion' is a character who regularly travels in the TARDIS, runs down corridors, and is a confidante of the Doctor, mostly done over a series of episodes, eg Sarah Jane Smith and Rose Tyler. 'Companion-Lite' is a character that fulfills many qualities of a companion but missed achievements in one of more aspects, eg Wilfred Mott acts like a companion in one Series Four special. We consider all one-off assistants to be a Companion-Lite. 'Associate' is a character who assists the Doctor in one or more stories but doesn't engage in all aspects of a Companion or Companion-Lite, eg Clifford Jones in *The Green Death* (1973) or Captain Erisa Magambo in the new series. These are the people that the Doctor relies on but not enough to invite them for serious travel.

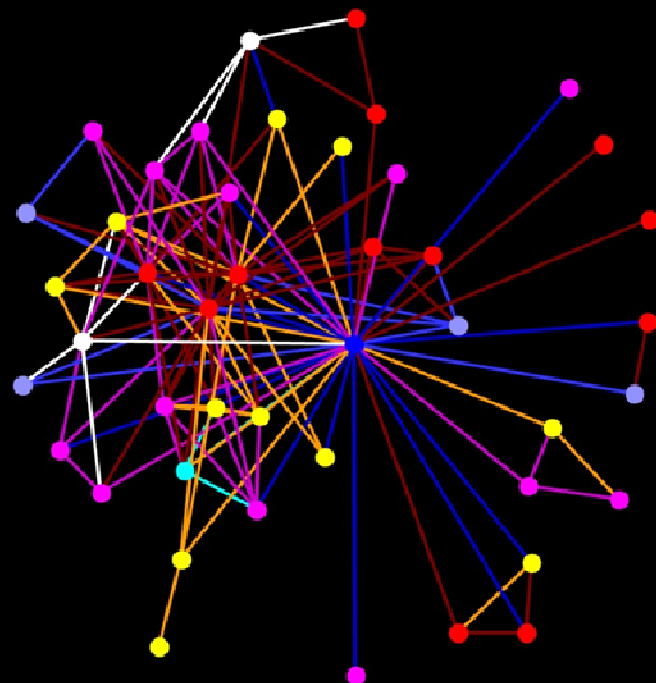
These three groups of people are what we call the Doctor's 'support-group' in network analysis parlance. For the purpose of this article, we refer to them all as 'Team TARDIS'.

In our network charts, every circle

**First Doctor's Network  
Season One**



**Eleventh Doctor's Network  
Series Six**



(node) represents a character: blue=Doctor (and various duplicate selves), red=Companion, yellow=Companion-Lite, fuchsia=Associate (The other colors represent characters not used in 'this' analysis.) and lines (links) between the circles are drawn indicate these characters collaborated with each other in at least one episode during that season. Looking at the nearly 50 years of *Doctor Who*, we can find some interesting patterns. First, Team TARDIS got a lot bigger as time went on; Team TARDIS has grown as support characters are added. The network from the first season of the First Doctor has only the four main characters: the First Doctor, Susan Foreman, Ian Chesterton, and Barbara Wright. There were no Companions-Lite or Associates at that time. The majority of the interaction was between the four main characters. But in Seasons Two and Three, the network grows and in Season Three we see the first of the Companion-Lite characters: Katarina, Sara Kingdom, and Bret Vyon. We place in the Companion-Lite category not only Sara Kingdom but also Bret Vyon (who actually had more screen time than Sara Kingdom). Both appeared in *The Daleks' Master Plan* (1965/66) Then,

***"Companions are focal points of fan identification with the show."***

after a closer look, we also classified Katarina as a Companion-Lite since she was more a hasty addition to replace the 'fired' Vicki who was supposed to die in the episode 'Airlock' of *The Daleks' Master Plan*. Five episodes do not a Companion make.

The Eleventh Doctor's network, on the other hand, dwarfs the First Doctor's network. It contains many characters that we class as Companion, Companion-Lite, and Associate. Notice how many characters do not share connections in the network. Many of these characters are story specific and interact only with the core group. In the big visualization at the beginning of the article, we show the networks of all seasons together. The bottom half of the network consists of the 26 years of Classic *Who*. The top right nodes are the four years of Russell

T Davies and the top left are the two years Steven Moffat. The number of characters in New *Who* compared to Classic *Who* is quite a bit larger even though there are both fewer years and stories. That there are many more characters in the network of later incarnations of the Doctor has led to more complicated storylines. The main story narrative no longer needs to be carried by only the main characters. During the Pertwee years, there was often a secondary plotline headed by the Brigadier and UNIT, which connected with the Doctor's plotline in the end. A complex Seventh Doctor story, *The Curse of Fenric* (1989) contained many supporting characters with their own subplots which were all important for the final confrontation.

When looking at the large overall network, one more structural property is interesting: everyone is somehow connected with each other, even though we coded the Doctor's incarnations as eleven different and unconnected nodes in the network. There have been a series of mini-reboots in order to start the series fresh, which should have disconnected the network. Many times when a Companion (or Companion-Lite or



Associate) leaves they are replaced by someone new. But quite often, the new Companion never meets the old Companion (eg Jo Grant leaves at the end of *The Green Death* (1973) and Sarah Jane Smith enters in the next story, *The Time Warrior* (1973/74). These two Companions don't meet until 2010 in the *Sarah Jane Adventures* story, *The Death of the Doctor*. Until then they were connected only through the Third Doctor. Vicki (who entered in *The Rescue*, 1964) never met Susan (who left in *The Dalek Invasion of Earth*, 1964). At the end of the Second Doctor's time, he was banished to Earth and regenerated into the Third Doctor while his two Companions, Jamie and Zoe, were mind wiped and sent back to their original starting points. But the network tendrils found a way to connect. Jamie showed up with the Second Doctor during the Sixth Doctor's tenure in *The Two Doctors* (1985). And after the Tenth Doctor left his Companions and regenerated into the Eleventh Doctor, he met up with Amy and Rory. This initially looked like a clean start. But soon enough River Song, who first appeared in *Silence in the Library/Forest of the Dead* (2008), made an appearance which connected them back to the Tenth Doctor. But one of the strongest connections in all of *Doctor Who* was the return of Sarah Jane Smith in the new series episode, *School Reunion* (2006) and the Eleventh Doctor appearing in the *Sarah Jane Adventures* story, *Death of the Doctor*. This had the impact of connecting a large portion of Classic *Who* to the new series. In network terms, she is called a 'Boundary Spanner'. So, the overall network is truly a timey-wimey ball of connections, not a straightforward progression though time.

### The Primary Female Companion

In the face of changing the main female Companion from Amy to Oswin, we also take a closer look at this role. In the 1960s, the main female Companion started out as a young girl to be protected by the Doctor in a 'grandfatherly way' (Susan and Vicki); but this evolved into representing the mod girl from swinging London (Dodo and Polly) but still very young. In the 1970s the female Companion became a symbol of the emancipated woman who worked alongside the Doctor more like a sidekick (or even an

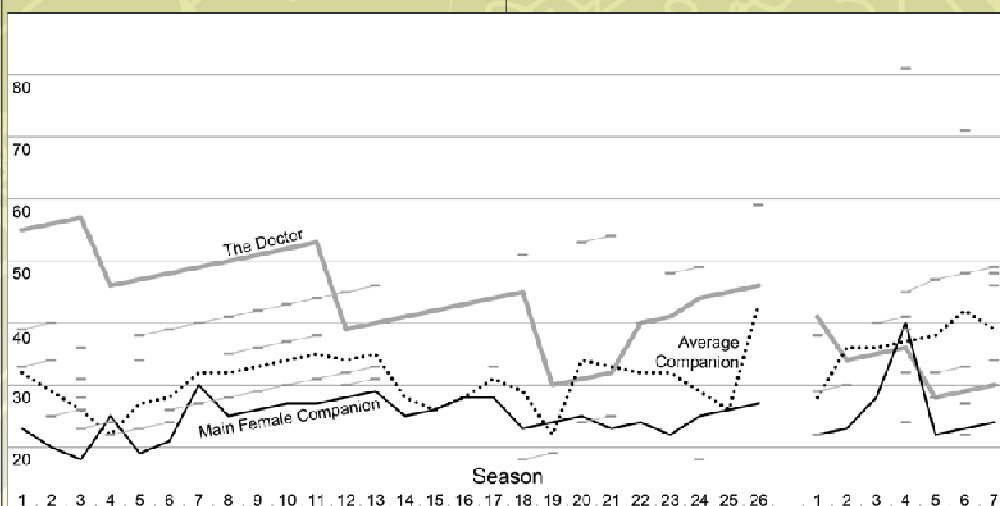
equal). Liz had multiple Ph.D.s, Sarah Jane was a journalist, Romana outscored the Doctor at the Academy, and Leela was a savage warrior. And, Jo took her A' levels, and flunked them, but she was still extremely independent. The 1980s saw a turn toward more diverse Companions, all of which had their quirks from the best screamers (Tegan and Melanie) to the street-wise teenage girl (Ace). And in the new series all the main female Companions are strong-willed individuals who actively sought out the Doctor.

The main female Companions share a very striking characteristic: age. In the final chart,

Companions.

### Conclusion

For 49 years the program has been in existence, many characters have come and gone without immediate overlapping stories. This normally tends to shake a network loose or even it break apart. But the Team TARDIS Network has, in essence, done the opposite. It remains a tightly packed ball where the degrees of separation between any two characters remain only a few steps. No matter how many changes there are. It shows how *Doctor Who* is, in essence, one big happy family.



we visualized the actual ages of actors (not the ages of the characters they were portraying) of Team TARDIS over time. The three continuous lines represent the Doctor, the main female Companion, and the average age of Team TARDIS. (The *Doctor Who* Movie is considered part of the 'Wilderness Years' and due to multiple Doctors and primary Companions was excluded from the chart as an anomaly.) You can see that (with little exception, eg Donna Noble) the average age of all the companions per year is higher than the age of the primary female Companion in that year – in their mid-twenties with two in their teens. In contrast to many opinions out there, the age of the primary female Companion is not getting younger. It has, in fact, been steady throughout *Doctor Who*'s history. And from the perspective of this chart, Jenna-Louise Coleman is right in line with the ages of the previous main female

It's also no secret that the Doctor enjoys traveling with young female companions. He's a protector looking for someone to protect. But there's another reason for the Doctor to travel with a young attractive female. It began mostly to attract the dads of the viewing children. But after that, the formula worked so well they just continued on along the same vein. It's not to say that older companions won't work. Donna Noble is a great example that older companions ace the viewer's expectations. But for the most part, the Doctor has picked his companions from a very narrow age range.

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