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VORTEX

A portrait of Paul Spragg, a man with short brown hair and blue eyes, wearing a dark blue zip-up jacket. He is looking slightly to the left of the camera with a gentle smile.

PAUL SPRAGG
1975 – 2014

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ISSUE 64 • JUNE 2014

DIMENSIONS

2014



PAUL MCGANN



PETER DAVISON



SYLVESTER MCCOY



KATY MANNING



LOUISE JAMESON



SOPHIE ALDRED



SARAH SUTTON



KAI OWEN

AS WELL AS... ANGELA DOUGLAS,
DONALD TOSH, ANDREW CARTMEL,
RICHARD MARTIN... AND MANY MORE



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CHARITY FUNDRAISER IN MEMORY OF PAUL SPRAGG

Lossing Paul Spragg on the 8th May this year has hit everyone who knew him terribly. The subsequent outpouring of happy anecdotes, memories and consideration has not only been a tiny comfort to those in their worst of days, but was a confirmation that Paul was one of those rare things: a genuinely good bloke. He enriched all those he loved, he knew, he worked with, he was friends with, he even emailed as part of his day job at Big Finish Productions.

When something horrible and unfair happens like this, you look for any positive. A contribution to the British Heart Foundation helps in the hope that perhaps in the future someone else won't have to experience this sort of sadness when a charismatic smile and laugh is made silent.

Although Paul's death was not related to a heart condition, he and his family have been supporters of the British Heart Foundation for many years.

For anyone who would like to remember Paul in this way, a Just Giving page has been set up here.

www.justgiving.com/Big-Finish-Paul-Spragg

Thank you for your generosity.

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Coronary heart disease is the UK's single biggest killer but we are leading the fight against it. Your donations power our life-saving research. Help us keep more families together. Join our fight for every heartbeat.

EDITORIAL

I've no idea when Big Finish became a big family. Certainly it wasn't a cynical, conscious decision on anyone's part - and I'm sure if someone set out to make something similar, it would fail massively. I have a theory that the sense of family comes from a boss (Jason Haigh-Ellery) who is kind, considerate and a thoroughly decent human being, from an executive producer (Nick) who just trusts and leaves people to revel in being creative, from a sales team who work theirs socks off to make it all happen, from a shared interest in making these magical audio productions, and a shared interest in listening. There's no boundary between the production team and those who listen - if I see Roddy McDougall or Gill Spaul or Jay Thomas or Tim Rideout or countless others at a convention, I think 'friends!' not 'customers'. We all love the same thing. We're all on the same side.

On May 8 a seismic blast echoed through the Big Finish family. One moment we were sharing loads of emails with Paul Spragg, as we did every day, and suddenly they stopped. A few hours later we were told he had suddenly passed away. They say that grieving goes in stages, starting by working through shock, denial, pain, guilt and depression. They don't prepare you for these happening all at once, denial leading the way while the others blast their way into your system. And with all this going on, we were recording with Tom Baker the next day, with a whole block of Dark Eyes 3 lined up three days later. And we made it through because we're a family - everyone who works at Big Finish, everyone who listens, just came together to honour and remember Paul.

Vortex is usually about the stuff we make. It's usually written by Paul, and it's usually about everyone else but him. This month is different. This month, everyone else writes about Paul. It's a memory book to our friend and colleague, who will remain part of the Big Finish family forever.

DAVID RICHARDSON

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A DEATH IN THE FAMILY

OUR TRIBUTE TO THE INCOMPARABLE PAUL SPRAGG

DAVID RICHARDSON – PRODUCER

Sometimes people are in your life for so long you just take it for granted. They become like roast chicken dinners or *The Ark in Space* – one of your very favourite things, but you assume they'll always be there.

I first met Paul Spragg about fifteen years ago. I was editing a magazine (*Starburst* I think) and he came in as a new production assistant. My earliest memory is that he talked a lot. To my shame, I remember shouting at him "Will you shut up!!!" as I tried desperately to reach a deadline. But I soon realised that this chattiness was nerves – as soon as he found his feet he began to shine, knuckled down, and worked his way up the ranks to be another magazine editor, on *Cult Times*. No one could put a magazine together like Spragg – he was like one of those geniuses you see who can quickly finish a Rubik's Cube.

I must have worked with Paul for over a decade, and then I was offered the job of producer at Big Finish. And when we needed someone smart, diligent and reliable as a producers' assistant, my only thought was Spragg. And then, on his first day... he talked a lot. I remember everyone looking at me and thinking, 'Is he actually going to do any work?' Oh, those nerves of his.

And then he settled in, and shone, and over the course of five years he carved out his own area of responsibility and he became our rock. He did more than you will ever know, and more than we will ever know because he just did things without a song and dance. Our customers loved him. The actors at the studio loved him. And he saved my bacon on more times than I can remember.

I just keep thinking back to the *Doctor Who* 50th Celebration at the Excel, when a stock of 35,000 CDs turned up to be sorted and displayed, with just Ken Bentley and me there to do it. I sat with my head in my hands, because my brain could not process how to sort this huge mountain of stuff. It wasn't humanly possible. I rang Spragg and practically cried down the phone to him, and he got on a train, turned up late afternoon and sorted all 35,000 CDs into a displayable order.

I just said to him, "Spragg, I have no idea what I would do without you."

I still don't.

JONNY MORRIS – WRITER

This isn't part of the plan. The plan was, in thirty or so years' time, we would all meet up together in a pub somewhere and talk about how much fun we had thirty or so years ago. I was looking forward to it. And now Paul's not going to be there, and in thirty years' time, we'll all be talking about what a shame it is that he died so young, just when he was having so much fun. What an incomprehensible, ridiculous, horrible shame.

I first knew Paul when he worked as a galley slave at Visual Imagination. I don't remember when we first met. He just pops up in my email archive as though I'd always known him. Which is how it felt whenever I heard from him, when we went to a recording of *Have I Got News For You* together, when I'd bump into him at pubs and recordings. Whenever he emailed me asking for some words for an inlay or an interview, and the

PAUL SPRAGG

conversation would inevitably freewheel into a surreal back-and-forth during the day. I'll miss him asking for '250-300 of your finest Earth words'. And emails like this:

'Hello writing machine. As you've got yet another release coming out *sigh*, can you please do me some notes? :-)'

My last email to him was some blurbs and the words 'Here you go, my dear-i-o' (we're both West Country boys although I lost the accent). So, cheerio, my dear-i-o.

(And one last thing. Whenever we forward an email from now, on, whenever we even so much as glance at the button, we're all going to hear Paul saying 'foward', aren't we?)

GRANT KEMPSTER – DESIGNER

There aren't many people who can get away with calling me Grantypoos, but Paul was one of them. He and I worked together at Visual Imagination but it was the time we spent playing What! at lunch times and the conversations we had about all life's ups and downs over a beer (and an Archers and Lemonade at the Irish) that I'll always remember. That and his observation about my 'box of commas' which would often make appearances in my writing. We would work together again via Big Finish, but Paul was never a work colleague. He was a friend, and not just that, he was the best kind of friend: sweet, caring, funny and generous to a fault, to name but a few of his wonderful qualities. I will miss his irreplaceable laugh, his comedy surprise eyes, his amazing Pauly hugs, unflinching friendship and above all the increasingly ridiculous comedy pet names we had for each other. See ya on the other side, Paulywallywoowaa. X

IAN ATKINS – PRODUCER'S ASSISTANT

I lost two characters in my life on that terrible Thursday afternoon. Not only Paul Spragg, the kind-hearted best of friends, but Mangrove Badgerhunt, the stressed and exasperated news anchorman in a series of comedy videos I directed, which would never have happened if it hadn't been for Paul's enthusiasm and drive. Nobody did comedy exasperation like Paul (at least I assume it was comedy). Nobody fought a glove-puppet rabbit called Geoffrey like Paul. And nobody hit themselves in the head with a rolling pin to invent the onomatopoeic word "Pok!" like Paul. That we'd talked about doing more videos in recent weeks just makes the loss all the sharper because those were the best of fun.

The last conversation I had with Paul face-to-face was as I was leaving the Big Finish offices one night in very late April. I can't remember how we'd got onto it, but he reminded



me of an old arrangement I'd got him to commit to years back. "Do you still want me to do your eulogy and do the ventriloquist bit with the coffin?" he asked. I confirmed that I did, confident that I'd die years and years ahead of Paul. And I really should have done.

LISA GREENWOOD – FLIP JACKSON

I am so sad to hear that Paul Spragg has left us. He was wonderful. The memories I have of Paul all put a smile on my face... Like the time we were at the Chicago TARDIS convention. I had bought a ridiculously big blue floppy hat with me. I made Paul try it on, he was really reluctant at first to wear it but after five minutes I don't think he wanted to give it back! We all agreed he genuinely looked better in it than me and pulled off the diva look really well!!

I loved Paul's company whenever I was around him he made me smile. We were all the the Doctor Who 50th. Paul kindly decided to do the coffee and tea run. I asked for a "small" cup of coffee. Paul returned from his coffee trip with everyone's

“THROUGHOUT LIFE YOU MEET THOSE GENUINE CHARACTERS. THE ONES THAT YOU GRAVITATE TO, THE ONES YOU FEEL INSTANTLY COMFORTABLE WITH. PAUL WAS ONE OF THEM.” LISA GREENWOOD

teas and coffees, he gave me my cup and it literally had two centimetres of coffee in it haha!!!! It really was the smallest cup of coffee I've ever had haha! Paul's face was a picture and responded with "That's what he gave me! You asked for small coffee!". We laughed about it a lot that day!

Throughout life you meet those genuine characters. The ones that you gravitate to, The ones you feel instantly comfortable with. Paul was one of them. He was a special person. Every time I saw him he was always smiling and always happy. I really loved being in his company. He made such a lovely impression on me and I know he did the same for a lot of other people. He really will be missed. XXXX

ANDREW SMITH – WRITER

I first met Paul at the Big Finish recording studios four years ago, and most recently with his girlfriend Natalie at Simon Guerrier's wedding anniversary party. We'd met a number of times in between, and would sometimes bump into each other on the train to Croydon. It occurs to me that each time I saw him he had a smile on his face, and that's how I'll remember him – smiling, upbeat, welcoming, friendly and very funny. Paul was always glad to see you, and it was always good to see him.

It feels incredible to be talking about Paul in the past tense, to think that I won't see him again or hear his voice on the Big Finish podcasts, where he was so entertaining in his 'double act' with Nick. He has been taken from us far too soon, but he'll be remembered. And, appropriately, those memories will continue to evoke great big smiles.

KEN BENTLEY – DIRECTOR

Paul couldn't make it along to Big Finish Day in January this year. Big Finish Day is always crazy. Fun, but very busy. At 9:44 he sent me a text. It was a photograph he'd taken of a Red Panda, and with it the words "Just in case you need a moment of calm today, Ken, here's a Red Panda up a tree."

We're all different. We all find different things appealing, amusing or comforting. That text was Paul all over. He



always knew exactly how to make you smile, and took every opportunity to do it. That makes him easily the most thoughtful and generous person I've had the pleasure of working with.

I can tell from what I've read online that Paul touched so many people in just the same way. His life was too short, but what an impact he made. What a terrific legacy he leaves behind. To have brought so much joy into all our lives. We're all richer for having known him, and I, for one, am grateful that I did.

CHASE MASTERSON – VIENNA SALVATORI

Like all of us, I am so very sorry for the loss of Paul Spragg. Paul was exactly the kind of lovely man who makes being in this business a joy. He had charisma that shone in the way that counts, from the inside out. His happy demeanour and pureness of spirit was contagious to everyone around him, and I know how truly his presence in the Big Finish family impacted the entire team. He was the



“HE LOVED HIS FRIENDS, HE LOVED HIS WORK AND MOST IMPORTANTLY HE LOVED HIS GIRLFRIEND (AND HE MADE THAT PLAIN EVERY TIME HE SPOKE ABOUT HER).” JASON HAIGH-ELLERY

kind of man who loved this genre for all the right reasons... the transcendence of the stories, across space and time, that give hope to our present day lives. When I joined this team, he was so welcoming... though I was far from home, he helped to make me feel right at home. And he was lovely to fans in a way that many will never forget. Thank you, Paul, for your joyful spirit, your encouragement and good-heartedness. You made the world a better place, and we will never forget you.

AMY PEMBERTON – SALLY MORGAN

The Very Lovely Paul Spragg, I first met Paul around six years ago when I began working for Big Finish (I had heard everyone speak of this famous Spraggz!) and we hit it off straight away! Such a wicked sense of humour and as with everyone at Big Finish, I would always really look forward to seeing Paul in the studio, catching up and discussing all the new twists and turns my character Sally was taking for the *Vortex!* I then

had the opportunity to head to the Chicago TARDIS conventions two years in a row with Paul and the gang, where we all did a spot of Xmas shopping & festive drinking in our time off. I always loved doing panels and signings with Paul too – so funny, talented, loved and appreciated by all his work colleagues and **Doctor Who** fans. Paul and David, only very recently, were kind enough to help me sort out **Doctor Who** auction prizes for my late father's charity event for 'Headway' – always so happy to help, always so smiley, always remembered with a special place in my heart. x

JASON HAIGH-ELLERY – EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

When I heard the news of Paul's death I called a few friends in the Big Finish family to tell them the terrible news. Like David, Nick and I, they all expressed deep shock and disbelief that a man so full of life and love is no longer with us. I say love quite deliberately as he was full of love. He was the epitome of a man who loved his life. He loved his friends, he loved his work and most importantly he loved his girlfriend (and he made that plain every time he spoke about her). Writing this, I keep seeing Paul's face smiling back at me – his eyes full of joy at some new scheme we were hatching at Big Finish. He always looked on the bright side, and when something negative was happening at Big Finish he would always try to lighten the mood with a silly joke. Many will know him through the podcasts he did with Nick and David, where he brought his natural comic timing to create a slightly exaggerated version of himself. He loved his comedy and I believe he would have taken pride in me describing him as an entertaining fool – an optimistic Tony Hancock. I once asked for a show of hands at a convention on whether Paul was “a comedy genius or a buffoon” – it was obviously asked in jest as we do spend a lot of time pulling each other's legs on stage. The result was split 50/50 – and Paul seemed very pleased with that, as he'd successfully pulled the wool over the eyes of half the audience – and he didn't care which half! He shared his love of life with us – and we will try and follow his example in the days ahead.

LOUISE JAMESON – LEELA

I first remember Paul in the green room at The Moat [recording studio]. Self-effacing and blushing in the corner. I said 'hello' and shook his hand. He went

NATALIE HAYDEN – PAUL'S GIRLFRIEND

What can I say about my wonderful, brilliant, lovely boyfriend Paul Spragg? I first met him at the beginning of 2006, when I was introduced to him by a mutual friend at the recording of a BBC radio show. At that time, he was working for Visual Imagination as the editor of *Cult Times*,

throughout that period, I knew he was the one I ultimately wanted to be with. I was in love with him. In November 2010, he finally got it together enough to ask me out, and we became a couple. It felt like such a perfectly natural, organic step. We didn't have to do the whole getting to know each other, first date thing, because

There was barely a song from the last 20 years that he didn't know all the words to), comedy shows (I'm so pleased I introduced him to the live comedy circuit early on in our friendship), and most of all his job. He could never understand why I carried on in a mundane, boring career that didn't make me happy but paid the bills, when he was having a whale of a time every day, meeting and working with his heroes, and immersing himself in the world of *Who*. Even the bits of it he didn't enjoy so much weren't really big problems for him. He would often grumble to me about a stupid question someone had emailed in to Enquiries, or an irritating thread someone had started on the forums, but he'd always do it with an air of mock frustration and a shrug of his shoulders, and he'd be nothing but polite and patient to the people in question when he replied to them. I was always telling him he was too nice for his own good, but that was him all over.

I know from reading all of your amazing tributes to him that you all cared about him too, and your grief is no less valid than mine just because you weren't close or you hadn't met him. He was an amazing person that touched the lives of so many, and it's been really comforting to see that confirmed since his passing.

Paul, my darling, I love you so much. And I always will. Rest in peace.

"I'LL JUST TELL YOU THAT HE WAS THE MOST CARING, CONSIDERATE, KIND AND PATIENT MAN I EVER KNEW."

and happened to mention in the course of conversation that he was looking for new writers. As I'd just started a freelance journalism course, I thought I'd try my luck and told him I did a bit of writing myself. He gave me his card (an old 'Assistant Editor' one with the word 'Assistant' scribbled out!), and told me to email him some pitches. I duly did, the next day, and he replied with something along the lines of, "Blimey, you didn't waste any time did you?!" A few weeks later he published my first ever piece of professional writing.

I knew from that very first meeting that I liked him a lot, and I wanted to get to know him better. Over the next four years, we grew closer and closer to each other, and despite the fact that we were both in other relationships at various points

it felt like we'd already done all that. We were two friends who cared about each other deeply, who now wanted to spend the rest of their lives with each other.

We'd been together for three and a half years to the day when he so horribly got taken away from me. I won't dwell on his death because that's not going to help anyone. Instead, I'll just tell you that he was the most caring, considerate, kind and patient man I ever knew. I think, in the entire time I knew him, I only ever saw him lose his temper about three times. He would always put me first and make sure I was happy, and I'm sure I sometimes took advantage of that without meaning to, but he never complained. It wasn't just me that made him happy either. He took joy in everything; Sci-Fi geekiness, music (his tastes were amazingly eclectic.

very red. Explained he usually stayed in the office but had been 'let out for the day' to interview me. The first of several interviews. And always, the blush as he arrived. And if he made a cheeky joke, a nervous little laugh would follow, as if he couldn't believe he had been quite so daring. What a sense of humour though. It is almost impossible to believe that he has died. My heartfelt condolences to his nearest and dearest. So young. Too young. Rest in Peace Paul, you will not be forgotten.

SIMON GUERRIER – WRITER

It was easy to take Paul for granted. If you emailed a question, he'd have an answer that day. If you asked him to do something, it got done. He was a sympathetic ear in crises large and small. Paul made work easy, and never complained – at most, you'd get a long-suffering sigh and then a big grin. "As you've asked so nicely, no," he told me in an email just a month ago. "Oh, go

TOM SPILSBURY – EDITOR, DOCTOR WHO MAGAZINE

I don't know if it's possible to do justice to Paul Spragg in just a few short hundred words. But I'll try to scratch the surface, at least.

Paul was one of the best. Funny and friendly, generous and gentle, he was – very quietly and in his own way – one of life's lovely people. He didn't have huge ambitions, and he didn't have much of an ego – as long as he was happy doing what he was doing, he was content.

I first met Paul at Bristol Cathedral School in 1987, when we were both 11. He spotted me reading *Doctor Who Magazine* on a school bus, and decided to say 'Hello.' That says something about Paul from the word go – I would have been far too nervous to have struck up conversation with someone I didn't know, but Paul was always pretty fearless in that sort of situation. I'm glad he did introduce himself, though – *Doctor Who* fans were pretty thin on the ground in those days, and I could tell right away that he was a kindred spirit.

We became thick as thieves – soon discovering that we shared a love of all things Sci-Fi. While I educated Paul on the complete history of *Doctor Who*, Paul, in return, introduced me to *Star Trek*

“READERS OF VORTEX WILL BE VERY FAMILIAR WITH PAUL'S PUN-TASTIC HEADLINES – WELL, HE HONED HIS SKILLS AT CULT TIMES.”

and *Red Dwarf*. Paul was also the one who got me listening to pop music, which had never really interested me much up until that point. Together we grew up listening to and loving the sounds of The Wonder Stuff and so many other great pop songs. I can't now listen to any pop song from the 1990s without it reminding me of Paul.

While we were at school, Paul protected me (he was always a much taller lad than I was, so he was good at protecting me, if I was ever threatened by less friendly types), and we would tease each other, as friends do. To be honest, I think it was mostly fairly one-sided teasing – and Paul was often the one that ended up on the receiving end, as I'd take it as a challenge to see if I could hide his pen in his own hair without him noticing.

There was one occasion, I recall, where I dared Paul to show off, by flexing his muscles, while we were in PE. I was being very silly, really, and with the encouragement of my other friends, I was showing off my (non-existent) muscles, while the PE teacher, Mr Brigden, had his back turned, dealing with something else. We kept on pestering Paul to join in, and although he held out for quite a while (“No, I'm not doing it, don't be so stupid!”), he finally, very reluctantly, gave in, half-heartedly flexing his own arm muscles... at the exact same moment that Mr Brigden turned around, and spotted him.

“STOP SHOWING OFF, SPRAGG!” Brigden bellowed, much to the amusement of the rest of us. The ludicrous idea that Paul would be the one showing off thrilled us no end.

But Paul was a class act. He got his own back on me a few years later, when we both appeared in a youth group pantomime together. Paul and I formed a double act: Sidney Snatchem (Paul) and Gordon Grabbem (me). At one point in the play, I had to be possessed by a magical spell, which forced me to behave like a chimpanzee (I forget the exact details of the plot – it was all good stuff, though).

So I would have to leap about the stage, doing my best monkey impression for about 20 seconds, at which point Paul was to snap his fingers; the spell would be broken; and I would return to normal.

Of course, on the opening night of the panto, having endured this demeaning routine for the required 20 seconds, I looked up at Paul, expecting him to snap his fingers to end my humiliation. But he just looked back with an evil smirk – he was going to force me to do my 'oooh-oooh-oooh' monkey act around the stage for a good while longer!

Paul and I knew that we'd stay friends beyond school days, and when we both went to separate universities in 1994, we knew that we would stay in touch with each other. With email accounts rare, and mobile phones practically non-existent, we wrote to each other every week. I must dig out some of the old letters I received from Paul. I'm sure they're mostly predictions of the following week's Top 40 chart, and details about upcoming *Star Trek* episodes, but those were the sorts of things we'd never get tired of discussing with each other.

When Paul got the job at Visual Imagination in 1998, working on *Cult Times* magazine, it was like he'd hit the jackpot. He'd studied journalism at Luton University, so the chance for him to be able to put his qualifications to good use on a magazine that would let him write about *Star Trek* and *Doctor Who* was just about the best thing that could have happened to him. Paul suggested I apply for a job there too – he kept trying to convince me that I had the right skills to succeed working in magazines, and his words of encouragement paid off. Thanks in no small part to Paul, and his belief in me, I started working at the same publisher just over a year later.

Paul loved that job, and he was brilliant at it. He loved pretty much all science-fiction and fantasy television, so when he was promoted to become editor of *Cult Times*, you couldn't imagine anything would ever make him want to leave. Readers of *Vortex* will be very familiar with Paul's pun-tastic headlines – well, he honed his skills at *Cult Times*. The more the rest of us groaned, the more that encouraged him. Paul didn't mind at all – if it got any kind of reaction, he was happy.

Paul did eventually leave Visual Imagination, when the company basically collapsed, went bust, and stopped paying their staff. Even Paul had to draw the line at that – but it would turn out to be Big Finish's gain. Fans of Big Finish will have 'met' Paul in a number of different ways over the last few years. His appearances on the Big Finish podcasts sum him up to a tee. He was always trying to make people laugh, never being at all offended when being told to 'Shut

on then... I am rubbish at being horrible." That's a typically self-effacing comment from Paul. He was a lovely, caring, funny bloke who was a pleasure to work with and a joy to know.

JAMES GOSS – WRITER

I used to stalk Paul Spragg. He frequently worked on his own in the Big Finish office, a place full of strange noises. Little creaks. Distant bangs.

Knowing he was in there on his own, it was sometimes impossible not to resist ending emails with, "Oh, nice t-shirt choice today", "You've missed a typo on the back cover", or "Sorry you can't find your lucky blue pen. It's mine now."

It was like writing a horoscope. I was often completely wrong, but a few times I was bang on the money and that was delightfully rewarding. Any day which ended with an impassioned "Who told you about the broken tap? Was it David?" was a day well spent. And you'd keep it up because emailing Paul was always such a joy.

He wasn't just good at his job. He was so good at his job he made you feel good at yours. He had so much spare enthusiasm that he was happy to lend it out. I recently had to do a large spreadsheet for some Big Finish admin. I loathe spreadsheets, but this needed one. "Can I come and do it in your office?" I pleaded. "Otherwise I know it'll never get done." So I spent a lovely afternoon in the office, with Paul making sure I got things right. For once it was Paul standing over my shoulder in the office. And yes, I did celebrate by hiding his pen.

But now the Big Finish office is empty. It's still a place full of strange noises. Little creaks and distant bangs. But Paul Spragg isn't there to hear them.

PS: The only thing that Paul Spragg was ever ruthless about was proof-reading. I've kept all the pointless punctuation Paul removed from things of mine over the years. Here they are:

''' ~~~~~
There you go Paul. They're yours now.

LISA BOWERMAN – ACTOR/DIRECTOR

It's inconceivable that Paul isn't around any more: that affable, steady, funny (not always intentionally so!), unflappable constant in a world of variables.



up' by Nick Briggs or David Richardson. In fact, if they *did* tell him to 'Shut up', he seemed to love it all the more – he knew they didn't really mean it, it was all part of the theatre.

But that was Paul the performer. Think also of Paul the professional. Think of the number of people who talk of Paul's kindness when they phoned or emailed Big Finish's office. Paul's customer service was second to none. Every enquiry – or, heaven forbid, the occasional *complaint* – was dealt with by Paul with a smile, and an effort to solve the problem as quickly as possible. That's someone who knows what it's like to be a fan, and a customer. On simply a practical level, Paul was the most organized man who ever lived. His desk would always be immaculate; his email inbox would always be empty, with messages dealt with immediately, and then filed off into appropriate sub-folders. He made being organized look so easy, damn him! How did he do that?!

But in the last few hundred words, have I actually managed to sum Paul up at all? Well, I don't know if anyone could do that. He succeeded in the most fundamental ways that any human being *can* succeed. By being kind, by being happy, and by being loved by everyone who met him. However hard the rest of us try, we often fail at all of those things at some point in our lives. But Paul never did.

So thank you, Paul. I'll miss you. We all will. Life without you in it just seems that much greyer.



I can't pretend to have known Paul well, but well enough to know that the gap he leaves is cavernous.

As well as his usual BF duties, and his occasional trips to the studio where we met up – we worked together on the full cast **Stargate** audios, which he produced. It was a minefield of organisational and technical difficulties. Three different casts, two different continents, three different countries, overnight recording via Skype, dealing with overseas actors (and their agents!), as well as the post production process. But he oversaw it all with an almost jocular air; dealing with every hiccup with a smile and a sense that no hurdle was too high to deal with. I don't think I ever saw him lose his temper – there might have been the odd exasperated sigh, that was as far as it ever went, and more often than not trailing off into a chuckle. The end result though, we all agreed, was worth it.

What's struck me over the last week is just how overwhelming the response has been online from the fans and customers of BF. He really did touch so many people's lives. So many messages starting 'I never knew him but...' – and going on to catalogue how brilliantly he dealt with all their enquiries and concerns, his humour, his diplomacy, his patience, and the fact that he would always solve the

"BIG FINISH IS OFTEN DESCRIBED AS A FAMILY, AND FOR THAT REASON PAUL'S SUDDEN LOSS IS LIKE LOSING A RELATION. HE'LL BE MISSED – BUT NEVER, EVER FORGOTTEN." LISA BOWERMAN

problem, and more often than not, end his emails on a personal note, usually with a joke.

I was at the Utopia convention this last weekend, and Barnaby Edwards, Mark Wright and myself got up to say a few words to pay tribute to Paul – again, there were a sea



of faces all nodding and agreeing to our words of loss and praise for Paul, and when, at the end, I asked them if they'd do me a favour and give Paul a big round of applause – it wasn't only resounding – there were cheers as well.

Let that be a testimony to the way Paul touched so many people's lives.

Big Finish is often described as a family, and for that reason Paul's sudden loss is like losing a relation. He'll be missed – but never, ever forgotten.

Fair forward Paul.

ANDREW CARTMEL – WRITER/PRODUCER

My memories of Paul are simple and straightforward, that he was always either smiling or making a straight-faced and very dryly humorous remark. It seemed that whenever I attended an event I would be tapped on the shoulder and turn around to find Paul there among the throng, ready with a witty comment. I am really going to miss turning around and seeing him there. Things won't be the same.

KRIS GRIFFIN – MARKETING CONSULTANT

There aren't many days over the last two years when I haven't received an email from Paul. The last week has been horribly empty.

As a consultant I sit just on the periphery of the core team of Jason, Nick, David and Paul. As a **Doctor Who** fan since 1980 and a Big Finish listener since the early days I'm privileged to call these chaps my friends.

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When I was first asked to speak here today – which I'm honoured to do – I felt like I had over a million things to say about Paul. But as the days have passed, it feels as if that enormous rush of emotions and thoughts has narrowed down to just one, simple, awful thing. That I miss Paul Spragg. I hope that makes some sense to you.

As we all know, humour was hugely important to Paul. And when I had that initial rush of thoughts, many of them concerned funny things I could say. And it crossed my mind that if, in some bizarre way, Paul could be here to listen, he'd really want me to say something massively inappropriate or at the very least in very poor taste.

But I think we might all be a bit too raw and upset to bear that. I know I am. Although, I kind of feel I'm letting him down by not making some ridiculous remark...

Instead, what I want to do is give you some simple, completely random facts about Paul. Facts that mean something to me. Maybe some of them will be at least a tiny bit inappropriate, in honour of Paul's very nearly relentless sense of humour.

Paul gave a terrible interview to get his job at Big Finish. After it was over and he'd left, David Richardson turned to Jason Haigh-Ellery and me and said, 'I know, that was *awful*, but trust me he'll be brilliant'. David was right...

Paul was brilliant at his job. A great writer of articles, interviews, brilliant editorials... Incredible attention to detail... Big Finish customers loved him. Actors loved him. You've probably seen their heartfelt reactions on Twitter and Facebook.

Paul Spragg was a very funny man and he made me laugh a lot. He was so kind and considerate. I don't remember him ever having a bad word to say about anyone... Not even about people who frankly deserved bad things said about them.

On his desk last year was a custom made calendar, featuring pictures of him with his beloved Nat.

Behind his desk were heart-shaped, red balloons, which he refused to take down. They're still there.

Paul preferred not to say balloon. He insisted the word was 'bawoon'. He had a distinctive way of saying many things... for which we mocked him mercilessly in our podcasts. But he was proud and steadfast about saying 'fo'ward' instead of 'forward' and 'reuters' instead of 'writers'. Those words became his trademark, helping to make him so popular with our audience that they demanded his attendance at conventions.

He was fearless in front of large audiences. Fearless and very funny. They loved him. We all do.

Words were so important to Paul, and I loved some of the endearingly old fashioned phrases he would use... in particular... 'in all fairness' and my real favourite... 'all manner of things'. If you said something like 'general nuisance' or 'major influence' within earshot of Paul, he would salute 'General Nuisance', 'Major Influence'. I've no idea why, but I found myself joining in.

After his death, I checked in his desk drawers at the office. As well as the usual things you might expect, they contained lots of chocolate and a bottle of champagne.

The truth is, Paul Spragg kind of crept up on me and my life over the last five years or so. By the 'dastardly subterfuge' of being a thoroughly lovely, kind, generous person, brilliant at his job, always reliable, so considerate and helpful, giving toys to my son, endlessly discussing CD cataloguing with my wife, he became so important and an essential part of my life's picture. And now there's a big, Spragg-shaped hole in that picture.

But that hole is full of great memories. We shall never forget him. He will always be so important to us. We shall continue to credit him on our CDs. And we're going to put a sign up on our production office door. It will read: 'The Paul Spragg Suite'. And when we go in there... it might just feel as if we can see him at his desk, yellow post-it notes at the ready, countless tasks on the go simultaneously and some beautifully stupid remark about to be made. Yes, I can see him there... doing 'all manner of things'.

Paul helped me settle in, his matter-of-fact approach and welcoming demeanour made those early few weeks of a new engagement very easy. I was aware of him from the podcast and was delighted he was all of the comedy genius he presented, and more. His passion for his mates, his work, the customers and comedy were only dwarfed by his love for family. The work, life balance he so carefully nurtured should be a lesson to us all.

DAVID DARLINGTON & JOSEPH LIDSTER – WRITERS

Nice' seems such a feeble, ineffectual word to apply to anyone – but we can't think of a better word to describe Paul. He was one of the nicest people in the world. We swapped emails about *Dark Shadows* with him almost on a daily basis – proofing the packaging, updating the website, arranging podcasts and so much more. We still



“HE WAS ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE WHO EXUDED DECENCY AND INTEGRITY TO AN EXTENT THAT EVEN THE MOST FLINTY-HEARTED OF PUBLICITY-AVERSE ACTORS WOULD FIND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO DENY HIM.” COLIN BAKER

find it astonishing that he was doing so much for our range, and then doing the same for every other series Big Finish produce. We suspect, in fact, that he worked harder than everyone else in the company put together...

But the greatest thing about Paul was his sense of humour. He never ever once complained. We genuinely think he never once responded to an email with “Sorry, I’m too busy today” – he just got on with it. And nine times out of ten those work emails became just random, stupid conversations about *Dark Shadows* and *Stargate* and the theatre and actors and what we were watching on telly and so on. He wasn’t someone either of us saw much outside of work but he was someone we both chatted to every day. It just feels so wrong that he isn’t there to do that any more.

Hard-working, generous, funny, a bit mad, helpful, clever... he was all of those things but, yeah, he was the nicest man in the world.

NICOLA BRYANT – PERI BROWN

I think it must have been about five years ago when I first met Paul at Big Finish. His big smiley face immediately lit up the room. It was a few days later he rang me. It was a simple request for something... but we ended up having quite a long chat. My overriding impression was... “What a nice guy.” He was easy to talk with as he was also a graduate of the school of self-deprecating humour. I shared some personal information but I knew I could trust his discretion. One time I remember Paul calling to ask for another interview. We ended up talking about best and worst interviews and best and worst dates! My pet hate was the opener, “May I call you...” followed by something that isn’t my actual name! We decided it would be fun if in his interview of me I did that to him. It was our joke. I called him Spraggers and Spraglett, and continued to do so thereafter. I remember Paul turning up at Forbidden Planet where I was doing a signing just to see if I was alright. You could talk to Paul about anything. You always knew you would get a solid answer. There was no ego or edge to him. I always found him polite and funny, thoughtful and kind. He understood all about giving more than you’re asked. I cannot believe he won’t be picking up the phone to chat about the next Big Finish project next week.

PAUL MCGANN – ACTOR, THE EIGHTH DOCTOR

Last week I was on holiday and I heard about Paul’s death. Just absolute shock that someone so young and someone so close had passed away – he really was central to this little family we have at Big Finish. It was a strange few days making *Dark Eyes 3* because everybody was knocked by it and things will never be the same without him. He made life easier for the likes of me, Nicola and Ruth. He was kind and humble. Paul embodied the spirit of what we have here at Big Finish and so we are all diminished for his passing.

COLIN BAKER – ACTOR, THE SIXTH DOCTOR

Working for Big Finish is invariably a pleasant experience. They have the knack of employing only the best and nicest of people. That applies to both sides of the microphone.



Paul Spragg was no exception. He was a lovely, gentle, self-effacing young man who would turn up at most recordings to interview members of the team for the Big Finish magazine, *Vortex*. He was one of those people who exuded decency and integrity to an extent that even the most flinty-hearted of publicity-averse actors would find it impossible to deny him. I didn't know him socially but would like to have done. He was a decent, talented and considerate human being. The world of Big Finish and the wider world beyond are the poorer for his departure from us.

MATT FITTON – WRITER

Tf I count how many times I actually met Paul Spragg in person over the last few years, I can't quite believe the number is so low – surely it was more? Such was his amiable, easy manner, even our very first meeting felt like catching up with an old friend. Of course we exchanged many emails, as he nudged (never chased!) for writers notes, or I asked for web-help, or to sneak a peek at a cover ahead of release. Every time, however busy he might have been, Paul would respond in good time and with good humour: a constant, reassuring presence at the heart of Big Finish.

On the odd occasions when we were both in studio, we'd natter excitedly about upcoming projects. I remember having 'blurb-off's as we'd both write summaries for an upcoming release and then pick bits of each other's to use. I remember too Paul being so very chuffed with the cast for the **Charlotte Pollard** finale for which he himself had been given responsibility. The lasting impression I have is of a happy, lovely man, doing a job he adored, and doing it brilliantly. Without fuss, without fanfare, but always with a huge grin. Goodbye Paul, and thank you for everything.

DAN STARKEY – THE SONTARANS

Only met Paul a few times, but given the tight-knit nature of Big Finish, I felt his influence every time I worked for them, through receiving a script to prepare for a recording or a CD afterwards that Paul had sent. The first time I actually met Paul was when he interviewed me during a recording in Ladbroke Grove. It wasn't long after the first couple of stories I had worked on had been released, and he upbraided me for giving the none-too-bright Cravnet in *Robophobia* a Bristol accent. My apologies were profuse and I assured him that I cast no aspersions on the intelligence of those like him with a splendid West Country burr! I did my acting training in Bristol and we shared a few memories of his home town before talking about the episode in hand. Paul would often drop in around lunch-time on recording days for an interview or to consult with David on some other arcane matter, and he was a perennial presence in green room conversation, either in person or in spirit. I last saw him at the Edinburgh Festival last year, bumping into him in the queue for a **Doctor Who**-related show that I'd been invited to. Blinking in the sunshine on an unusually balmy Scottish day, he was full of life and seemed to be having a great time. That's how I'll remember him, doing a job he loved and giving pleasure to countless others. He will be missed.

MARK PLASTOW – DESIGNER

I shall never receive another email from Paul. This seems truly inconceivable as we had communicated this way – almost every day – for the last two-and-a-half years. Generally these missives were to inform me that I needed to do some work, do some work better or stop being late with some work.

A message from Paul pinging into my inbox invariably meant that my life was about to become a chaos of coffee and Photoshop. Despite this, I loved getting them. Simple requests would descend into ping-pong punning matches

(he always won) and more often than not, he wrote something that would make me laugh out loud.

At meetings, I always gravitated towards Paul. It was such a lovely thing to spend time in his company, a feeling that you could tell others shared. At conventions, watching the reactions on people's faces when they realised that they were talking to THE Paul Spragg was both humbling and hilarious. He seemed genuinely bemused that he should be so well regarded and loved.

I was only involved in a fraction of the stuff Paul did for Big Finish; when I stop and think about the sheer volume of things he did, I'm astonished. I can think of no better way to honour Paul's memory than trying to be a bit more like him in my attitude to life.

Oh, and I shall continue to play Yellow Car.

NICOLA WALKER – LIV CHEMKA

It's always a treat to work at Big Finish but recording *Dark Eyes 3* has been very difficult because we didn't have Paul. He's a big reason for coming and working here.

I think this often happens when you are in shock and someone you respect has gone, on the way into the studio on the bus I thought I saw him standing at the end of the road, and I realised the wish fulfilment involved in that. When I'm back next time, that's the strange trick my brain will play on me. I'll expect him to be here.

SARAH SUTTON – NYSSA

I will always remember Paul tapping away on his laptop in the greenroom at Moat Studios, seemingly in total control of all things Big Finish and trying to broach the subject of an interview with me for *Vortex* which he knew I hated doing!

And knowing this he always conducted those interviews with grace, charm and patience and on top of that managed to make me sound as if I almost knew what I was talking about!

Paul leaves a large hole right in the heart of the Big Finish family and things will not be quite the same without him.

JOHN DORNEY – WRITER

I was always surprised by how tall Paul was. I may have remarked upon it pretty much every time we met. I think it was because I usually encountered him when he was sat down at a desk in the office or opposite me as an interviewer. But I think another factor was that he was



such a light, easy going chap that the sheer intimidating size of the man never seemed to match that gentle personality.

And that's my main memory of Paul, that personality. A seemingly always happy, wryly amused guy who was just terribly easy to get along with. The hard work of a convention was always lightened if Paul was there, and spotting him across the room at a party was always a relief as it meant you'd have at least one fun conversation that night. Most of our interaction, however, was via email, with

“THE HARD WORK OF A CONVENTION WAS ALWAYS LIGHTENED IF PAUL WAS THERE, AND SPOTTING HIM ACROSS THE ROOM AT A PARTY WAS ALWAYS A RELIEF AS IT MEANT YOU’D HAVE AT LEAST ONE FUN CONVERSATION THAT NIGHT.” JOHN DORNEY

requests for sleeve notes or back cover blurbs, but even that seemingly dry task was enlivened by his sense of wit, with story titles abridged so that they sounded a little dirty, appallingly bad puns in the subject line, and just a general easy-going air that relaxed you even if you were dreadfully late. He was a friend first, and a colleague second, and it’s this attitude, along with his patience, and good humour, that marked him out. He transcended his job. He worked hard, but never took his work so seriously that he forgot to enjoy living. He was in many ways the heart of the company, and I think we’ll all miss him very much.

ANTHONY LAMB – DESIGNER

I first encountered Paul Spragg at the start of 2005 when I was a fairly nervous-yet-excited new arrival at magazine publisher Visual Imagination. At the time none of my friends were really into **Doctor Who**, so to be suddenly surrounded by genre fans was something of a delight. I soon discovered that I had most in common with Mr Spragg. Our mutual love of **Doctor Who**, **Star Trek**, comedy shows, exciting music and really, really terrible puns gave us jolly good grounding to get to know each other more. And that we did. As time went on we continued to share our interests. We went to many gigs, comedy nights and Nandi – Nandi being the plural of Nando’s as decided by Paul. I’ve no idea how many Nandi we went to, but our chicken-based adventures were chronicled in a photo album he named ‘The Lamb & Spragg Nando’s ExPeri-Peri-ence’. The fact that such a simple thing as eating dinner could be glorified with such geeky passion goes to show just how much Paul enjoyed life to full.

Through Paul my entire life was enriched. Through him I met Natalie, who would go on to become his girlfriend, and through them both I met people who would go on to become some of my dearest friends. Our continuing love of **Doctor Who** would be enjoyed via a few of us regularly gathering to watch our way through every **Doctor Who** story available, and of course Paul’s spreadsheet of which stories we still had to watch was kept constantly up-to-date. Paul also



encouraged and supported me in my work endeavors, firstly at Visual Imagination, and subsequently helping me into Big Finish. The success and happiness of his friends was of great importance to Paul, and he relished the fact that he could work with his friends in the areas we all loved.

It goes without saying that none of us will ever forget Paul. He was the kindest, most enjoyably friendly friend you could want, and life won’t be the same without him. Thanks Mr Spragg. **VORTEX**

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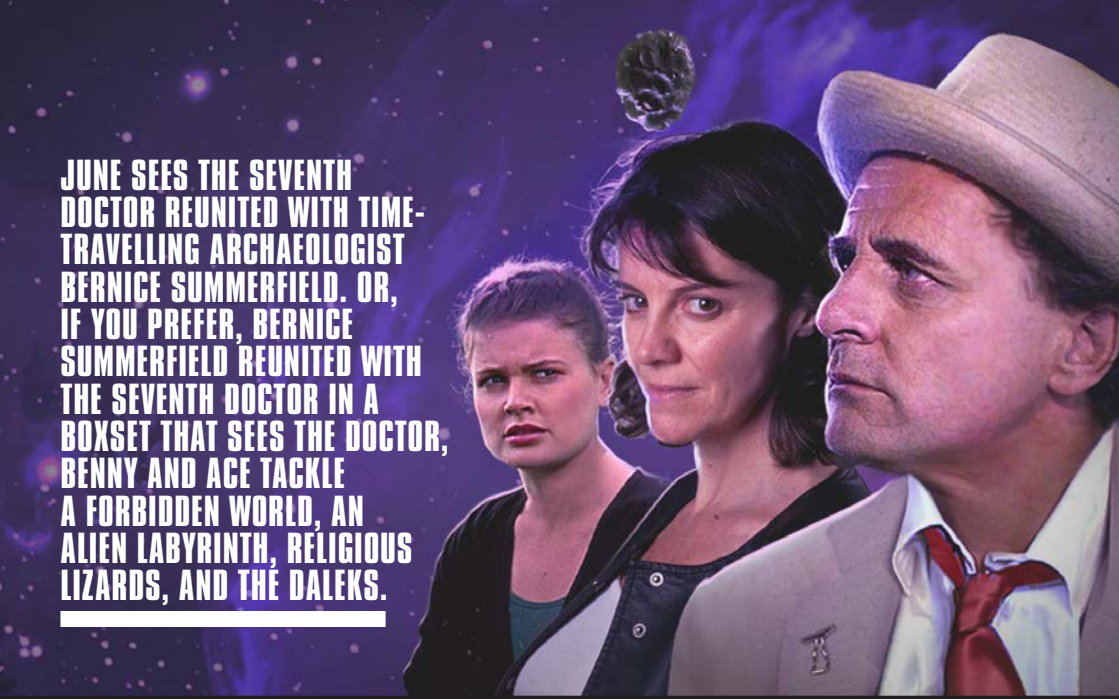
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BENNY'S BACK

(& IT'S ABOUT A TIMELORD)

LISA BOWERMAN'S BEEN PLAYING BENNY EVER SINCE BIG FINISH'S FIRST EVER RELEASE. WE CAUGHT UP WITH HER TO TALK ABOUT WHAT'S AN EXCITING TIME FOR THEM BOTH.

Evening Lisa! We'll talk about the boxed set in a minute, but before that, one of the more recent Benny Big Finish releases was actually her first ever adventure...

■ *Love and War*, absolutely. There's a certain generation of *Doctor Who* fan who started with *New Adventures*...

It was the raft we clung to!

■ It's extraordinary, isn't it? And I suppose you could say the same with *Big Finish*. But *Love and War*, yeah, went down

very well. Obviously we've just done *Highest Science* which is coming out in December. There's always going to be a slight problem adapting the '90s *Doctor Who* books in that there's a lot of adult things in them.

What is it like coming to Bernice's youngest appearances?

■ As well as the technical thing of making sure I didn't sound too old – what I was slightly worried about was that I wouldn't recognise the character that I'd been playing for the last sixteen years because I'd never read the novels. But I was really surprised that I did recognise her, I knew exactly who she was.

And now we've got something new for Benny on the horizon?

■ Oh yes! The new *New Adventures of Bernice Summerfield* with the Seventh Doctor and Ace. I can say without any hesitation that this is a very good jumping-on



DOCTOR WHO: THE NEW ADVENTURES OF BERNICE SUMMERFIELD

A new five-disc box set featuring the adventures of archaeologist Bernice Summerfield and her friends the Doctor and Ace!

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On the planet of Arviem 2, Bernice Summerfield has a lot of problems. Pursued by robots, maniacs and miracles, she has another issue to contend with. The Doctor's come looking for her – and he's not feeling himself.

GOOD NIGHT, SWEET LADIES BY UNA MCCORMACK

Bernice has come to the Moon of Adolin on a desperate mission. Instead, she finds an abandoned labyrinth, two confused survivors, and something ancient that needs her help.

RANDOM GHOSTS BY GUY ADAMS

Welcome to the Forbidden World. This world has a secret. The problem is that no-one can remember what it is. Time is broken here. Those trapped here must live the same day over and over – forming alliances, lying to each other, trying to escape. Welcome to the Forbidden World.

THE LIGHTS OF SKARO BY JAMES GOSS

Bernice Summerfield is on Skaro, and she's very much on her own. The Doctor can't get to her, not this time. All Benny can do is stay alive for as long as possible. And, in a city full of Daleks, that's not going to be very long.



“I CAN SAY WITHOUT ANY HESITATION THAT THIS IS A VERY GOOD JUMPING-ON POINT, BECAUSE THERE'S LITTLE OR NO CONNECTION TO PREVIOUS STUFF.”

point, because there's little or no connection to previous stuff. It's a story that spans the four episodes, and they're very grown-up, proper scripts.

This set goes from high comedy with Nev Fountain's first episode to end in a much darker place. I'm not detracting from any of the great stuff that's gone before but these are four of the strongest stories I've ever done in the sixteen years. I had such a good time on them.

And also we were incredibly lucky with the cast. There was John Finnemore, he does *Cabin Pressure*, brilliant. There was Miles Jupp who I know has done a *Doctor Who* before [*Power Play*, Ed], he was very, very funny. Colin MacFarlane, he has a very deep voice, he was the voice of TV's *The Cube*, he was very imposing. And then of course we have the lovely, fantastic, Sheila Reid. Oh God, there are some fantastic scenes with her. And also Matt Gravelle from *Broadchurch*. God he was good.

I read the scripts and thought, “oh wow”, and “oh my God, this is making me cry!”. There's big emotional stuff going on in this, and it doesn't feel ersatz, it doesn't feel hooked on. I hate this phrase, but it's really part of her journey!

There is a proper journey for Benny during this, proper emotional investment.



Lisa is unusual in that she's had a significant presence behind the microphone as well as in front of it, directing a large number of Big Finish titles. We wondered if she has any issues being directed by other people?

■ (Laughs hugely) Oh I don't think that for a second! The only thing I occasionally have to do is button my lip. When I'm acting, occasionally I might say, "can I make a suggestion...?" and hope they don't try to think I'm telling them their job. During *Jago and Litefoot* [which Lisa directs] when I'm doing Ellie, you rely on the guys Toby [Hrycek-Robinson] and David [Richardson] to say, "aaah that's rubbish" or "your accent's slipped".

We touched on this before, but in a series run as long as the Benny stories for Big Finish, does this new set require a lot of knowledge of what's come before?

■ Benny has always been a little niche in Big Finish. There's always going to be someone saying, "she's not canon, it's

"INTERESTINGLY, DURING THIS FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY YEAR, BIG FINISH HAS BECOME SO MUCH MORE PART OF THE OFFICIAL *DOCTOR WHO* WORLD – ITS PROFILE HAS DOUBLED OVER THAT PERIOD, OBVIOUSLY WITH PAUL MCGANN'S *NIGHT OF THE DOCTOR* MENTIONING ALL THE BIG FINISH COMPANIONS AT THE END."

New Adventures, she's not been on telly". The frustrating thing is, *Human Nature* [the 2007 TV story, based on a Virgin New Adventure], Martha was Bernice in that story!

Interestingly, during this fiftieth anniversary year, Big Finish has become so much more part of the official *Doctor Who* world – its profile has doubled over that period, obviously with Paul McGann's *Night Of The Doctor* mentioning all the Big Finish companions at the end. In some fans' eyes, I suppose, that's sort-of legitimisation.

I think there are enough fans of the Seventh Doctor who will be prepared to listen to this who will think, "Oh, that's quite an interesting dynamic" and I'm hoping that that will be the thing that will hook people in.

And is there any idea yet of any more adventures for Benny? Any talk of a second new boxed set, for example?

We've just had the thumbs up, even before it came out! I tell you what, James Goss and Scott Handcock and I were doing a talk at the Sci-Fi London event, and dear old Steve Foxon who is the

most wonderful editor I've worked

with, had to throw together a trailer for it. And we were all having lunch after we finished the gig and all of us had had an email not only from Nick Briggs but from David [who had heard all four episodes] saying, "wow, this is amazing". And then the trailer was launched and everything went completely bonkers. The interest and the excitement that that's generated is so fantastic, and what I feel so pleased about is that I don't think that interest will be disappointed. I hope that people will like it as much as we did. **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO: THE NEW ADVENTURES OF BERNICE SUMMERFIELD IS AVAILABLE IN JUNE ON CD AND DOWNLOAD

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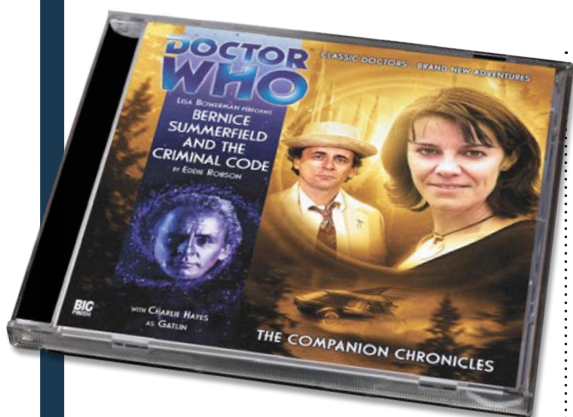
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PROFESSOR BERNICE SUMMERFIELD AND THE CRIMINAL CODE

KENNY SMITH CELEBRATES THE RETURN OF BERNICE SUMMERFIELD THIS MONTH WITH A LOOK BACK AT HER COMPANION CHRONICLE DEBUT



It's the end of an era as the final **Companion Chronicles** release comes out this month, and the start of a new one with **The New Adventures of Bernice Summerfield**.

The two ranges came together in December 2009, as Big Finish's longest-running character was given a chance to recount a tale from Bernice's travels with the Doctor, during their time together in the **New Adventures** era of the 1990s. Lisa Bowerman has been a mainstay of the **Companion Chronicles** as a director, but was given the chance to swap sides of the microphone in *Professor Bernice Summerfield and the Criminal Code*.

Producer David Richardson says: "It only seemed fair on Lisa, to be honest. She'd directed all these **Chronicles** (and since has done many many more) and it just seemed a fun idea to give her a shot at her own."

Charged with writing the tale was the then-producer of the **Bernice** range Eddie Robson. He said: "We were confident enough in her ability to work with the format that originally we were only going to do it with a single

voice – her voice – and no dramatised scenes. It wasn't until I delivered the script that David felt some of the scenes would benefit from being dramatised, so I went back and rewrote. That wasn't anything to do with Lisa, I stress – it was just how the script turned out."

Did Eddie go back and re-read any **New Adventures** to get the feel of that era, rather than modern-day Benny he was producing?

He explained: "No, I didn't really feel the need. I know that era pretty well already, it's quite fixed in my head. I read the **NAs** avidly at the time, and Bernice was a favourite character of mine. It also fitted well with the style of many **NAs** to have the companion foregrounded – it reminded me of books like Andrew Cartmel's, where the Doctor is very much a background figure, and *Birthingright* where he doesn't appear at all but his influence is felt.

"But David wanted something that foregrounded her archaeology more, so I came up with something about a conference and a long-buried menace instead. There's a lot of the latter in the **NAs**, so it felt quite fitting with the period." Lisa Bowerman was surprised and delighted to perform, rather than direct.

She says: "It was lovely to be on the other side of the microphone, with Charlie Hayes doing the second part.

"I really like the **Companion Chronicles**, with them being virtual two handers, there's always great potential for good drama. The extraordinary thing about them is just how many different forms they have taken. Initially I think they were conceived as being more of a talking book, with small contributions from other people, but during the course of their run they've really grown." **VORTEX**

BERNICE SUMMERFIELD AND THE CRIMINAL CODE IS OUT NOW ON CD AND DOWNLOAD!

VORTEX MAIL

My condolences on the passing of Paul Spragg. The past few years I have had occasion to communicate with him about various problems with downloads and he always treated me like a friend rather than a customer. He will be missed indeed!

TOM O'DONNELL

I never met Paul Spragg but had come to know him a little by chatting via this e-mail address.

Normally it was to praise BF, very occasionally a problem but each mail was met with a kind word and obvious interest in sorting out my difficulty or thanking me for my kind words.

It is no mean feat to be 'personable' by e-mail but he achieved it and was clearly a very friendly guy who cared passionately.

I was so shocked and saddened therefore to read of his terrible loss. I lost a very close friend at a very early age last February and so I know how you all must be feeling now and so you are all in my thoughts as is his partner Natalie.

CHRIS FENN

I just wanted to pay my respects and send heart-felt condolences to the Big Finish, Paul's family (including his partner Natalie) and close friends, following Paul's sudden passing away.

Having only recently had contact with Paul (regarding a download issue he quickly resolved), he also liked a potential *Vortex* suggestion I had regarding the origin and creation of 'foley effects'. I logged into my Big Finish account over the weekend to download my latest purchases, and was floored after reading the sad news.

No need to reply as everyone must clearly be in shock and need

time to process the news, but just wanted to offer words of support and acknowledge Paul's contributions to Big Finish and their customers. My thoughts are with you all.

Sincerely

RODERICK DAVIES

I am sending this email to express my sincere regret and sadness at the unexpected death of Paul Spragg this week.

I sent a script into Big Finish about a year ago, not expecting to hear anything back about it, but Paul got back to me through email, letting me know that they weren't taking any. He was so nice, letting me down gently, and he ended up returning my script along with a signed cast sheet from one of my favourite audios. I will be forever grateful to Paul for the gift and his attentiveness.

I loved Paul and Nick on the podcasts, and I felt that I enjoyed the podcasts because those two had fun making them. Big Finish will not be the same without him. Paul Spragg will be missed, and my prayers are with his friends and family.

Sincere Condolences,

IAN MANNING

I was very saddened to learn of the all to early loss of the very kind Paul Spragg. I have no doubt that you will pay tribute to him in every way possible way and he won't be forgotten in Big Finish's future.

Yesterday I saw your news article about donating to the British Heart Foundation and I wondered whether you'd considered doing a light-hearted charity release with all proceeds going to the British Heart Foundation (similar to the **Bernice Summerfield** release *Many Happy Returns.*)

I never got the pleasure to meet Paul but I was an avid listener to the Big Finish Podcast and also communicated with him several times through e-mail. He supported me with my script writing and became a sort of mentor at one point and I am gutted that I will never get the chance to thank him for that. So giving you this idea, whether you use it or not, you may have already thought of it, is a sort of thank you to Paul from me for supporting me and making me believe in myself and my writing.

RYAN DENYER

I've been a Big Finish fan from the first **Doctor Who** audio. I am so sorry to read of Paul's passing. He was a wonderful, warm and funny man and through the podcasts I feel like I know him. I was always pleased with his thoughtful responses to my e-mails and the two of you always make me laugh. Please know that you are in my thoughts and prayers in this terrible time, as his Paul's family.

Regards,

HENRIK HANSEN

I am so deeply saddened by the news that your dear colleague Paul Spragg has passed away. I always appreciated receiving his email replies when I sent a comment or had a question. He was always so kind, polite and engaged with us customers and fans of Big Finish. A good friend of mine once said that a death such as this is, "always too soon, and never fair". My sincerest condolences to Paul's family, friends and colleagues. He is never truly gone so long as he is remembered; he will live on in your hearts.

With deepest sympathy,

LOUISE HYPHER



FORTHCOMING RELEASES

JUNE 2014

Doctor Who: *Masquerade*
(187, Fifth Doctor and Nyssa)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor Adventures:
Destroy the Infinite
(3.6, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles:
Second Chances (8.12, Second Doctor)

Doctor Who - The New Adventures of
Bernice Summerfield *Box Set*

Survivors: *Series One Box Set*

Blake's 7: *Caged* (1.6, Full Cast)

Dark Shadows 44: *The Darkest Shadow*

JULY 2014

Doctor Who:
Breaking Bubbles and Other Stories
(188, Sixth Doctor and Peri)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor Adventures:
The Abandoned (3.7, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

Counter-Measures: *Series 3* (Box Set)

The Avengers - The Lost Episodes:
Volume 2 (Box Set)

Pathfinder Legends: *Rise of the Runelords -
The Hook Mountain Massacre* (1.3, Full Cast)

AUGUST 2014

Doctor Who: *Revenge of the Swarm*
(189, Seventh Doctor, Ace and Hex)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor Adventures:
Zygon Hunt (3.8, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

The Fifth Doctor Box Set
(Fifth Doctor, Adric, Nyssa and Tegan)

Blake's 7: *The Liberator Chronicles - Box Set 9*

SEPTEMBER 2014

Doctor Who: *Mask of Tragedy*
(190, Seventh Doctor, Ace and Hex)

Doctor Who: *Signs and Wonders*
(191, Seventh Doctor, Ace and Hex)

Doctor Who - The Early Adventures:
Domain of the Voord (1.1, First Doctor)

Doctor Who - Philip Hinchcliffe Presents:
Volume 1 Box Set (Fourth Doctor)

Pathfinder Legends: *Rise of the Runelords -
Fortress of the Stone Giants* (1.4, Full Cast)

Big Finish Classics: *Frankenstein*

Tom Baker at 80

OCTOBER 2014

Doctor Who: *The Widow's Assassin*
(192, Sixth Doctor and Peri)

Doctor Who - The Early Adventures:
The Doctor's Tale (1.2, First Doctor)

The Worlds of Doctor Who *Box Set*

Jago & Litefoot: *Series Eight Box Set*

The Omega Factor: *Audiobook of Novel*

NOVEMBER 2014

Doctor Who: *Masters of Earth*
(193, Sixth Doctor and Peri)

Doctor Who - The Early Adventures:
The Bounty of Ceres (1.3, First Doctor)

Doctor Who: *Dark Eyes 3* (Eighth Doctor)

Blake's 7: *The Liberator Chronicles - Box Set 10*

Pathfinder Legends: *Rise of the Runelords -
Sins of the Saviors* (1.5, Full Cast)

The Omega Factor: *Audiobook of Novel*

DECEMBER 2014

Doctor Who: *TBA*
(194, Sixth Doctor and Peri)

Doctor Who - The Early Adventures:
An Ordinary Life (1.4, First Doctor)

Doctor Who: *Trial of the Valeyard*

Doctor Who: *The Highest Science*

JANUARY 2015

Doctor Who: *Mistfall* (195, TBA)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor Adventures:
The Exxilons (4.1, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor
by Gareth Roberts
*Box Set: The English Way of Death/
The Romance of Crime*
(Fourth Doctor and Romana)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor
by Gareth Roberts:
The English Way of Detath
(Fourth Doctor and Romana)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor
by Gareth Roberts:
The Romance of Crime
(Fourth Doctor and Romana)

The Avengers - The Lost Episodes:
Volume 3 (Box Set)

Pathfinder Legends: *Rise of the Runelords -
Spires of Xin-Shalast* (1.6, Full Cast)

FEBRUARY 2015

Doctor Who: *Equilibrium* (196, TBA)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor Adventures:
The Darkness of Glass (4.2, Fourth Doctor
and Leela)

Doctor Who: *Dark Eyes 4* (Eighth Doctor)

Blake's 7: *The Liberator Chronicles -
Box Set 11*

MARCH 2015

Doctor Who: *The Entropy Plague* (197, TBA)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor Adventures:
Requiem for the Rocket Men
(4.3, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

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