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ISSUE #10 DECEMBER 2009
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take a trip to Stockbridge**

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**Katy Manning and David
Benson get into the
Christmas spirit**

CYBERMAN 2

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EDITORIAL

Hello! This month's editorial comes to you direct from Chicago. I know it's impossible to tell if that's true, but it is, honest! I've just got into my hotel room and before I'm dragged off to meet and greet lovely fans at the **Doctor Who** convention going on here (Chicago TARDIS, of course), I thought I'd better write this. One of the main reasons we're here is to promote our **Sherlock Holmes** range and Rob Shearman's book **Love Songs for the Shy and Cynical**. Have you bought either of those yet? Come on, there's no excuse!

Roger Llewellyn gives an amazing performance as Holmes, Watson, Lestrade, Moriarty and just about every other Holmes character you can think of in *Sherlock Holmes: The Last Act*. That one was released last month.

Now, this month, we have *Sherlock Holmes: The Death and Life*, which has a really surreal quality to it. Conan Doyle actually comes to blows with his characters. Brilliant stuff by Holmes expert and author David Stuart Davies.

And as for Rob's book... well, you may notice on the back cover that we'll be launching it to the public at an open event on December 19th, at the Corner Store in London, near Covent Garden. The book will be on sale and Rob will be signing and giving a couple of readings too. See the advert for details.

Right, time for me to return to Chicago TARDIS. I'll be back in the office, with jet lag, by Tuesday. No rest for the wicked, naturally.

Nick Briggs – executive producer

SNEAK PREVIEWS AND WHISPERS

Rebecca's World

For far too long this has been the Holy Grail from Terry Nation's career: his popular children's book, adored by people of all ages, which has been out of print for years. Now the pleas of the many people who wished to step into Rebecca's magical world again have been answered, as Big Finish presents a very special audiobook version, read by Paul Darrow, and accompanied by atmospheric effects and a full musical score. A chance, at last, to discover what all the fuss is about...

AVAILABLE IN FEBRUARY 2010

Doctor Who - The Eighth Doctor Adventures: Situation Vacant

What does a Time Lord do when he is left alone after years travelling with a much-loved companion? If you're the Eighth Doctor, you just might audition for a replacement – with four notable characters all in the running for the journey of a lifetime. The names of the young hopefuls will be revealed early in 2010; the actual identity of the Doctor's new companion won't be divulged until *Situation Vacant* is released in the summer...

AVAILABLE IN JULY 2010

Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles: Solitaire

June 2010 was planned to be an Evelyn **Companion Chronicle**, but due to Circumstances Beyond Our Control, that has slipped back to the autumn. So instead here's a very special release indeed, which pushes the boundaries of the spin-off audio series. This fully-fledged play for two voices finds a young girl with no memory trapped within a shop with a mysterious owner. The fact that the girl is played by India Fisher, and the 'owner' is played by David Bailie might provide two very exciting clues as to what this story is about...

AVAILABLE IN JUNE 2010



Left: Paul Darrow lends his silky tones to Rebecca's World. Right: David Bailie returns to a certain celestial role

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POINT OF ENTRY

Alex Mallinson's multi-tasking skills are once again put to the test as he photographs the cast of, designs the cover for, and joins the chorus of voices in the sixth **Lost Story**.

I'm now a little bit behind with covers, so if anything is late, please forgive me. My excuse is simple: I was asked to take cast photos for, and play a bit part or two in, *The Macros* and *Point of Entry*, the last two tales to be recorded for Colin and Nicola's **Lost Stories**. How could I refuse? So I made my way to the Moat Studios crammed into the corner of a Jubilee Line train.

Marc Platt's script for *Point of Entry*, based on a story by Barbara Clegg (writer of the classic series tale *Enlightenment*) instantly oozes from the page. Barely had the sweat from my commute dried on my forehead than practically the entire supporting cast were ushered into the booths for the opening scene. Kit Marlowe, played by Matt Addis, is struggling with his latest play while all Elizabethan London conspires to distract him. A colourful picture of the sixteenth century emerges, familiar and boisterous until a shadowy figure appears to Marlowe and begins his introduction to dark forces. It's a lovely scene and from that point on, the whole cast were full of praise for Marc's script and his ability to turn the mood on a sixpence. Not to mention his moist, home-made muffins. I'm fairly sure that between all Big Finish's cohorts you'd find every discipline one could ever need. Apart from writing, directing and acting, Nick Briggs is also an accomplished welder. David Richardson spent some time smuggling exotic animals and Paul Spragg can whistle from three places at once.

In the green room, Colin Baker spoke enthusiastically about some of his favourite audios, singling out *Arrangements for War* for the balance of human stories against a wider backdrop. Tam Williams was here too, an actor I photographed (and added pointy ears to) in my very first association with audio plays, John Ainsworth's *Space 1889* adventures.

Nicola chatted about directing *Prisoner of Peladon* with the irrepressible David Troughton. I had listened to it the previous week; it's a captivating little tale and effortlessly recaptures the atmosphere of Peladon. How odd to feel a sense of nostalgia for stories broadcast before I was born! Nicola's next **Companion Chronicle**, however, will be on the other side of the mic, playing Peri once more in a tale by Nev Fountain.

Luis Soto, playing the villainous Velez, asked how putrefied his character was in a given scene, then reflected how rarely one gets to pose that question. Between scenes I showed him the cover, which features the nefarious Spaniard, his face stripped of all skin. In fact the cover you see is the PG version. A rejected variant had his worryingly lidless eyes glaring at the audience.

I'm compelled to sing the praises of Matt Addis, who you'll hear a lot of in the coming months, as Kit Marlowe in *Point of Entry*, Chancellor Bundth in *The Macros* and as Faisal Jensen in *An Earthly Child*. Like Toby Longworth and John Sessions, he has the enviable ability to remould his voice and accent in the booth. Hearing him play a gruff American Admiral, supercilious alien chancellor and tortured Elizabethan playwright once again brought home what skill is required to bring a story to life on audio.

The lunch was, as ever, phenomenal, but Toby's modesty on the subject and the fact that you've almost certainly heard about it many times before prevents me from mentioning it again. Afterwards, the conversation turned, almost inevitably, to **The X Factor** and I could only listen in silent incomprehension. Our TV is plugged solely into a dusty PS2... we're a box set and iPlayer household. Producer David Richardson and Colin Baker chatted animatedly on the season's reality shows for ages. I always feel dreadfully churlish for breaking up these cheery conversations in order to take the cast photos.

At the *Macros* recording, Paul David-Gough returned to BF after several stints in Mega-City One and an outing in Sylvester McCoy's 2007 adventure *Nocturne*. Paul was full of sage advice about balancing the jobs one wants to do with those one has to, a balance I could never quite get right, allowing the bread-and-butter work to eclipse my Big Finish commitments or vice versa.

My abiding impression of these recordings has been how much enthusiasm has been poured into them by all involved. David has worked so hard to get the very best from everyone, and while the stories may be rooted in their time, every other aspect of these productions is the result of a fresh look from the writers, producers, directors, actors and sound designers.

This series has represented a big learning curve for me, both in experimenting with the covers, alternative covers and the interior illustrations, but also in that director John Ainsworth and David have encouraged me to try my hand in front of the mic. Having played a mute alien in *A Thousand Tiny Wings*, I've now graduated to playing a mute earthling in *Point of Entry*. While the irony of portraying a voiceless character on audio isn't lost on me, I do find non-verbal communication fascinating. Given a chance, I often find myself attempting to imitate the body language and vocalisations of animals. This has led to me having been savaged by a dog (under the Christmas dinner table), a cat (the old adage that if a cat bites you, biting it back will permanently discourage it proved painfully not to be the case) and in the jungle of Sumatra by an innocuous-looking monkey with deceptively sharp teeth and nails (I'm no Dian Fossey). If nothing else, these experiences have helped inform the mute Jack's whimpers of pain and self-pity.

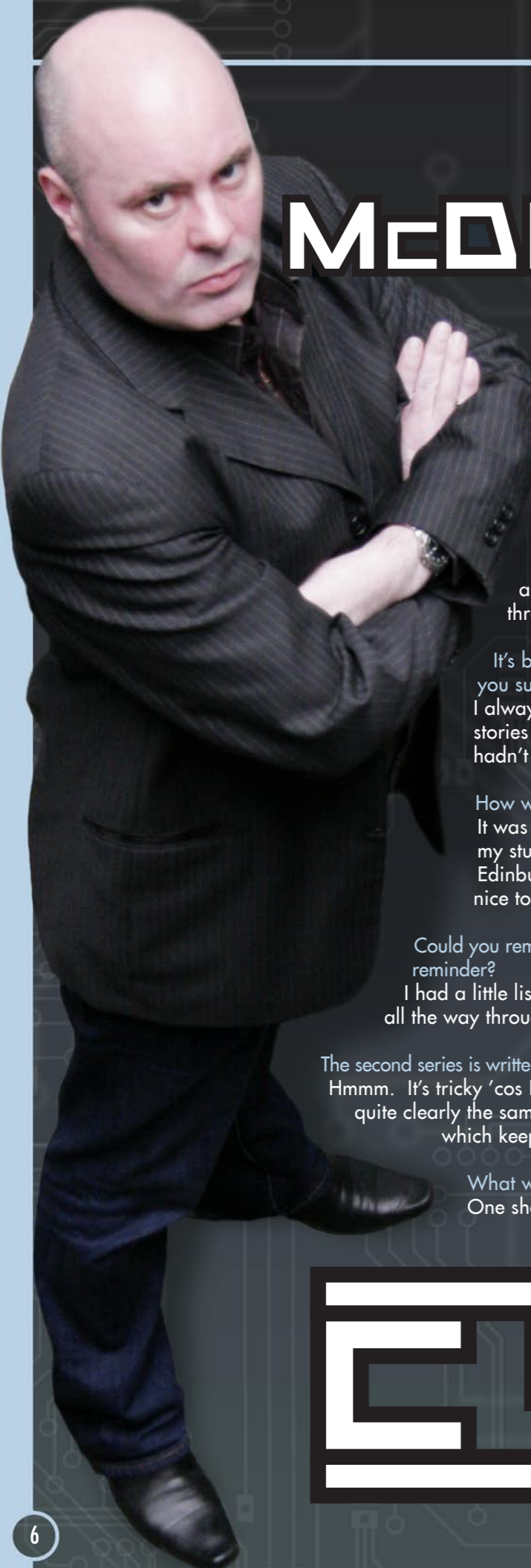


Right: Luis Soto, writer Marc Platt, Sean Connolly, Colin Baker, Nicola Bryant, Tam Williams and Ian Brooker

Below: Tam Williams, Gemma Wardle, Colin Baker and Matt Addis



MARK McDONNELL



How would you describe Liam Barnaby, and how has he changed since *Cyberman 1*?

Liam is incredibly handsome. And tall. With hair. But seriously, Liam was a resolutely loyal military figure who, since the events of *Cyberman 1*, has had to re-evaluate his entire world view.

Where do we find him physically and emotionally at the start of *Cyberman 2*?

He's tired and angry and desperately needs to change the human perspective of the war. He's in love with Sam and needs to convince the rest of the human race that the threat is not android, but Cyberman.

It's been three years since the first Cyberman release; were you surprised to be asked back for more after all this time? I always hoped it would happen again. There were clearly more stories to tell. And at least I was safe in the knowledge that Liam hadn't died. And neither had I!

How was the reunion of the survivors from the first series? It was lovely to see everyone again. Though we recorded my stuff in Liam's story order, as I was rehearsing a play in Edinburgh and only had a little time free. It would have been nice to stick around for a while longer.

Could you remember your original performance or did you need a reminder?

I had a little listen again to remind myself, yeah, and ended up listening all the way through again! I loved it.

The second series is written by Jim Swallow instead of Nick Briggs. How does it differ?

Hmmm. It's tricky 'cos I haven't been sent a copy to listen to yet. Although it's quite clearly the same world, there are slight differences in style and tone, which keeps the series fresh.

What would you say to fans hoping for a happy outcome?

One should always have hope.

Having worked opposite both Daleks and Cybermen, which did you find scarier? Or is Nick Briggs even more terrifying than both? The Daleks have the edge for me. But only just. And as Nick is the man behind the mic I guess you could conclude that he is doubly terrifying. Though I, of course, couldn't possibly comment.

You've been in a multitude of Big Finish productions now; which have been your favourites and why? I love *Embrace the Darkness*. Great story, very creepy and McGann is fab. *The Fearmonger* for being the first and having a laugh with Sylv. **Dalek Empire**, **Cyberman**, **Strontium Dog**... I love 'em all!

The Fearmonger was 10 years ago; how has the production process changed over the years? Has it been ten years?! Now I feel old... It hasn't changed much, actually, from my perspective, just moved studios a few times and become a well oiled machine.

Is there a greater sense of danger for the characters with no Doctor, and are there more opportunities to shine as an actor?

Yes, there is a much stronger sense of jeopardy, I suppose, without the Doctor. And that does allow the actors to flourish, since the listener knows the Doctor isn't going to show up and save everyone. So the spin-offs are very different animals. But to be in a studio with one of the Doctors... now that is magical. And I haven't worked with Peter or Colin yet (he hinted none too subtly).

You're currently in rehearsals for the stage; where can Big Finish listeners see you?

I'm in Northampton at the Royal and Derngate theatre (where the theatre sequences for *Talons of Weng Chiang* were filmed, folks – oh yes, I am that geeky) appearing in **Honk! The Ugly Duckling Musical** from December 1st till January 3rd. I'm playing a variety of all-singing all-dancing farm animals and a bullfrog! And it's all marvellous fun.



Ian Hallard, Nicholas Briggs, Mark McDonnell, Andrew Dickens, Hannah Smith, Martin Trent and Toby Hadoke gather in the studio

CYBERMAN 2

BARNABY EDWARDS

Hello Barnaby! We're mainly used to seeing your name in the 'casting director', 'writer' and 'director' boxes with maybe the occasional spot of acting. How was it being solely on the other side of the mic?

An unalloyed joy. Sometime during the late Triassic period I began my Big Finish career purely as a hired actor and I'd forgotten what fun that can be. Most of my recent roles have been filling in odd parts here and there on stories I'm directing or producing, so it's a real treat to get my teeth into a proper character for a change.

Which job do you prefer? Writing, casting, directing or acting?

I like them all. Each is a delicious dish in the smorgasbord of my life: a surfeit of any one would lead to indigestion, but taken in combination they are the food of the gods. There, that's an unpretentious answer for you!

Tell us a little about your character in **Cyberman 2**.

I love Paul Hunt: he's a man of great depth who only ever wants people to see the surface. He's as much victim as villain, although he'd never admit it. **Cyberman** ended with Paul Hunt getting everything he ever wanted: here we see what happens to him in the happily ever after.

How is **Cyberman 2** different to the first run?

I'm not so sure it is. That's one of the most remarkable things about it: the tone is perfectly in keeping with the original, despite being written by James Swallow rather than Nick Briggs. We've got lots of new characters, of course, and the ante has been seriously upped, but it retains the dark political intrigue of the first batch of stories as well as plenty of adrenaline-pumping action.

How different is a **Doctor Who** story without the Doctor?

Rather thrilling, I have to say. There's no safety net: any one of your favourite characters could die and there'd be no deus ex machina caerulea to save them.

Are there more stories to tell in the **Cyberman** mini-universe?

Of course. The world Nick Briggs created (and James Swallow expanded upon) is a vibrant, multi-planet cosmopolis inhabited by an infinitude of characters each with their own story to tell. I think of **Cyberman** as Big Finish's version of *Secret Army* – a group of disparate individuals resisting a seemingly implacable enemy – and that series ran for over thirty hours. **Cyberman** has a way to go yet!



Above: Jo Castleton, Mark McDonnell, Nicholas Briggs, Barnaby Edwards, Ian Hallard and Hannah Smith prepare to face the Cybermen

Below: The entire **Cyberman 2** boxed set. Out now!



SUSAN BROWN



Paul Spragg chats to two of the stars of this winter's Fifth Doctor season, Susan Brown and Keith Barron, both familiar faces for *Doctor Who* fans

Hello Susan. How did you end up in all of the Stockbridge trilogy stories?

I was asked to do one of them and then it very quickly turned into two, and then the realisation that Mrs Withers in part three was related to the Mrs Withers in part one meant that I got to be in all three of them and play some other little parts as well. I've been doing a computer voice and I've been doing a zombie, Mrs Sowerby, who just growls and hisses and grunts.

How have you differentiated between the Witherses?

Two Mrs Witherses sound really very similar because they're both very jolly, delightful West Country women of a certain age. They come, of course, from different time zones, but they're sisters and so they sound pretty similar. Alice Withers in the first episode and Marjorie Withers in the third one.

You're rapidly becoming Big Finish's go-to voice choice. Do you enjoy being in *Doctor Who*?

I just love it. This is the third time I've been in. I've done it a couple of times before over the last couple of years and they're just enormously good fun and lovely to do. The way the sound is used and everything, the fact that we're all in individual booths so that fantastic things can be done with the sound and you can separate all the voices out and do magic things to it afterwards. It's a very different experience from doing a normal radio where you're all in the same studio round the same microphone, it means that the sound that you use in the end can be so much more precise and marvellously atmospheric when it needs to be.

Do you miss having live effects?

In a way I think it makes it easier not having all of them going on at the same time. I mean, you can imagine what they're gonna be like.

What are the key moments for your characters?

Violent deaths are always great fun to do! And I've enjoyed doing my zombies because you don't get a chance to do those kind of silly things very often, so that's great fun. All the characters are always very different; you never know what you're gonna be asked to do, whether you're gonna be asked to do standard English or somebody from the West Country or a Northerner; you just hope that it's within your range when you get asked.

You also featured heavily in *Torchwood: Children of Earth*. How was that?

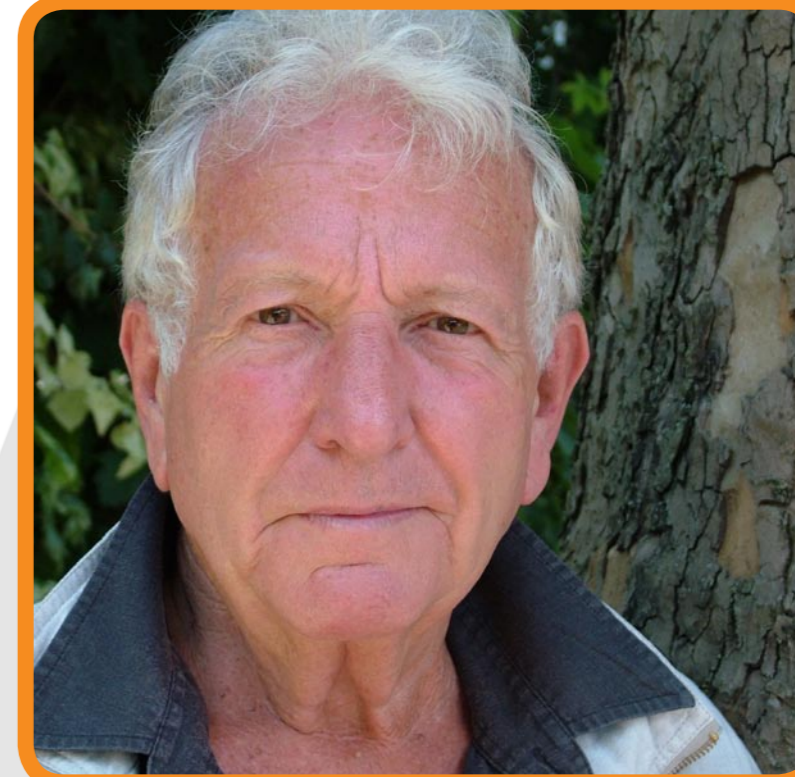
Oh, that was lovely because I worked with Nick here first and I knew that he was one of the Dalek voices – bow three times to the East, what a great thing to have on your CV! – but because he's always so busy here, I didn't know he was out and about doing his own thing as well as being a Dalek, and so it was so nice when I saw him, and I said, 'What are you doing here?' and he said, 'What do you think I'm doing here? I'm an actor!' And we had about a week of filming together, which was lovely.

It was great working with [director] Euros Lyn, who's done a lot of the *Doctor Whos* as well. He was marvellous, it was a fantastic cast, I think it's a great story. I enjoyed it more than any other telly I've ever worked on. I was on it for four months and I'm in and out and in and out in the first four episodes, haven't got a huge amount to do, and she really comes good in the last episode, which is lovely.

Do you prefer TV or audio acting?

I love them all, and I love stage as well, I do a lot of stage work. But doing audio work, there are two big things which I think actors love. One is that you don't have to learn the lines, so people are not walking round looking terribly worried with their mouths working all the time, going through their lines and thinking, 'Oh my god, I'm gonna dry', so that lends a kind of relaxation to being with the other actors. And the other thing is, it doesn't matter if you wake up with a spot, because nobody knows you've got it and you don't have to sit in make-up for hours! So there's a lovely relaxation about it. Also, I love listening to radio and that kind of thing because I love the fact that it makes you use your imagination in a way that we don't when we're watching visual things. And I've always loved that, ever since I was a kid, and that hasn't changed, I don't think that'll ever change. I think people will always enjoy listening to drama.

KEITH BARRON



So Keith, what's it like being back in *Doctor Who*?

Marvellous, really! I mean, a million years ago I did do *Enlightenment* and I still get a lot of letters about *Enlightenment*. All positive, which is encouraging really when you think how long ago it is. So it's really nice to be back. I've heard today they've actually done something to the original [of *Enlightenment*]. I don't know because I'm very untechnical, but because the effects were a bit 'galleons hanging from the roof on bits of nylon' I think they've changed that now for the DVD, which is interesting to say the least. I think it's great now with David Tennant and Cardiff and everything else; it's had a total rebirth in every way. Obviously now it'll go on for another 40 years!

How are you enjoying working in audio?

It's so much easier now than when it used to be waiting for green lights. I think [the script] said, 'Genial Northerner', so that's what I'm being, which is what I usually am. It seems to be going very well, and a really great team of people, which I always think is the answer to everything: if you're surrounded by people who know what they're doing and help you to do it. I haven't experienced the Daleks yet, but I think they're on the way...

How much did you prepare in advance?

There's only a certain amount of preparation you can do. I do think you have to read it several times, and then when you get here you have to trust to luck because it's all really to do with other people; how they are and ultimately how you are. You can't sit at home thinking, 'Oh, I'll say it like this' or 'I'll say it like that', you just have to read it and then be carried on with it when you get into the studio. I think you always start off with a certain amount of apprehension, if you've got any sense, and then somebody says something nice, like, 'That's very good,' and you get propelled on to page 48 or whatever it is.

Have we treated you well?

I think it's been brilliant, and I'd quite like to live here! I don't know whether you could put a word in...

Would you do one of these again?

Oh, certainly! I love it! I go anywhere to work!

Will you be giving copies of the CD to anyone?

Everybody. Oh yes, I shall have a big stack in the car and take them to Waitrose.



The Stockbridge Trilogy (*Castle of Fear*, *The Eternal Summer* and *Plague of the Daleks*) is out now

FORTHCOMING RELEASES

DECEMBER

- Doctor Who – Plague of the Daleks (129, Fifth Doctor/Nyssa in Stockbridge)
- Doctor Who – An Earthly Child (Subscribers to main range only, Eighth Doctor and Susan)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – Death in Blackpool (Christmas Special 4.1, Eighth Doctor/Lucie)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Mission to Magnus (1.2)
- Cyberman 2 (Box set)
- Iris Wildthyme – The Claws of Santa (Christmas Special)
- Judge Dredd: Crime Chronicles – The Devil's Playground (1.3)
- Sherlock Holmes – The Death and Life
- Bernice Summerfield – Secret Histories (Book)

FEBRUARY

- Doctor Who – Survival of the Fittest/Klein's Story (131, Seventh Doctor/Klein)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – The Hollows of Time (1.4)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Suffering (4.7, First Doctor)
- Dark Shadows – Audiobook 11
- After the Break-Up by Carrie Sutton (Paperback)

APRIL

- Doctor Who – City of Spires (133, Sixth Doctor/Jamie)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Point of Entry (1.6)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – Shadow of the Past (4.9, Third Doctor)
- Dark Shadows – Audiobook 13
- Love Songs for the Shy and Cynical (Paperback)

JUNE

- Doctor Who – TBA (135, Sixth Doctor/Jamie)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – The Macros (1.8)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – Solitaire (4.12, Eighth Doctor)

AUGUST

- Doctor Who – TBA (137, Fifth Doctor/Tegan/Turlough/Nyssa)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – Nevermore (4.3, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (5.02, Second Doctor)

JANUARY

- Doctor Who – A Thousand Tiny Wings (130, Seventh Doctor/Klein)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Leviathan (1.3)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – Bernice Summerfield and the Criminal Code (4.6, Seventh Doctor)
- Judge Dredd: Crime Chronicles Double Zero (1.4)
- Dark Shadows – Court of Love (1.10)

MARCH

- Doctor Who – The Architects of History (132, Seventh Doctor/Klein)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Paradise 5 (1.5)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Emperor of Eternity (4.8, Second Doctor)
- Dark Shadows – Audiobook 12

MAY

- Doctor Who – TBA (134, Sixth Doctor/Jamie)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – The Song of Megaptera (1.7)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Time Vampire (4.10, Fourth Doctor)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – Night's Black Agents (4.11, Sixth Doctor)
- Dark Shadows – Audiobook 14

JULY

- Doctor Who – TBA (136, Fifth Doctor/Tegan/Turlough/Nyssa)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – Situation Vacant (4.2, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (5.01, First Doctor)

SEPTEMBER

- Doctor Who – TBA (138, Fifth Doctor/Tegan/Turlough/Nyssa)
- Doctor Who – TBA (139, TBA)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – The Book of Kells (4.4, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (5.03, Third Doctor)

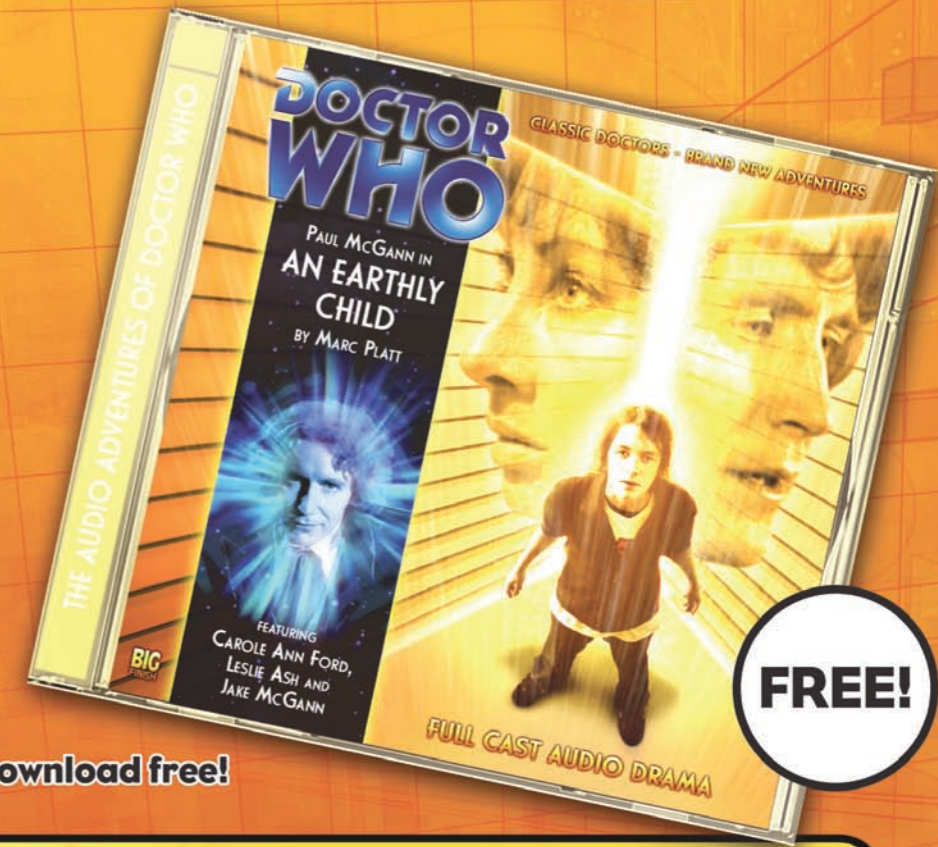
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BIG FINISH

Iris Wildthyme is back in a special adventure for Christmas, *The Claws of Santa*, and she's having the worst Christmas ever! Katy Manning and the cast and crew share their memories with *Vortex* of their best – and worst – Christmases ever...

Katy Manning Iris Wildthyme

My Best Christmas: My best has to be the first I spent with my twins. Then there was the time we spent Christmas in New York with Liza [Minnelli]. Kay Thompson, that fantastic old singer, sang her rendition of *Jingle Bells* to my children. She must have been 90 and in a wheelchair, but she still had her feather boa and dark glasses. Then there was the time that Natalie Cole came to one of my parties and sang Christmas songs on the piano accompanied by my little dog who insisted on running around with a squeaky pig in his mouth!

My Worst Christmas: Definitely the year I decided to be Jewish. I met this girl, Denise Cohen, and I always wanted to be what other people were. I told my parents not to worry about Christmas as I was Jewish now. I woke up on Christmas morning and there was nothing. I've never been so depressed in my life. I then realised I couldn't possibly be Jewish because I wouldn't get any presents!

David Benson Panda

My Best Christmas: I was given a bear when I was five years old and that bear turned me gay. I used to love snuggling up to that bear!

Conrad Westmaas ST58

My Worst Christmas: I was at my grandad's and had this one huge present which I knew I had to leave to last. I was so excited when I finally opened it and it turned out to be a child's car safety seat. The gift of safety is a fine thing, but when you're five it just doesn't cut it.

My Best Christmas: One year my dad told me to stay out of the garage because he was making my Christmas present. I wasn't too thrilled, because when is a home-made present ever good? How wrong I was! It turned out to be a foot-and-a-half tall TARDIS made from wood! The best thing was you could put your Action Man in, turn the light and a secret panel made him disappear.

Sarah Douglas Mary

My Best Christmas: When DVDs were new my partner in LA had a disc of my photos made up. All my memories and friends, and even those pictures you never want anyone to see. No one had ever made anything for me before. I still watch it and get all blurry.

My Worst Christmas: My first Christmas job was working in the Selfridges grotto. Santa had a monkey to pose with the children and my job was to distract the parents if the monkey peed on the kids so we could mop them up.

Peter Sowerbutts Santa

My Best Christmas: I once had a trip to meet Father Christmas in Alaska. How fitting is that? I never dreamt I would play him!

My Worst Christmas: A trip to go to the Millennium Dome. Without doubt the saddest place I've ever been to.

Scott Handcock Alfredo

My Worst Christmas: The year I received a lump of coal from Santa. Seriously. And before you say Santa doesn't exist, I know he does because I've just done a scene with him.

My Best Christmas: It would have been a bike. That's really dull and I'm desperately trying to think of something funny!

Cavan Scott Writer & Producer

My Best Christmas: The year I got Big Trax which was this truck you could programme to go back, forwards and turn corners by pressing controls on its back. I remember the advert was a lad using it to deliver an apple to his dad and also remember being really upset that we didn't have an apple in the house on Christmas Day to recreate that magical TV moment.



Getting into the Christmas spirit(s) are, from left to right: Peter Sowerbutts, Katy Manning, Scott Handcock, Sarah Douglas, David Benson and Conrad Westmaas

My Worst Christmas: Being taken to the young people's carol service at the Salvation Army and being taken to meet Father Christmas. He was terrifying and I ended up running screaming back to my Mum. Another year, they had the Wombles there. That was just as bad. Scarred for life I was.

Mark Wright Writer & Producer

My Best Christmas: Mum and Dad got a job lot of Action Man stuff out of the paper. We had the Action Man with the beard and the roll-neck jumper, tanks, jeeps, troop carriers and even the assault tower. We turned the house into a training camp.

My Worst Christmas: The worst present I ever had was a Hai Karate aftershave giftset that had been in the newsagent's window for too long and faded. I was eight! What did I want with aftershave?

Iris You a Merry Christmas!



Just wanted to offer praise for *Hothouse* and *Wirrn Dawn*. Two excellent, very classic stories! This new season of Eighth Doctor and Lucie plays is turning out to be a real cracker! Very enjoyable stuff. I'm very curious about what the future holds for these two... am I to believe it all ends rather badly?

Kindest,
Andrew

Nick: Cheers, Andrew. Glad you liked those. In my usually biased way, I think there are some great stories in that season. Depends what you mean by things ending rather badly. I can certainly guarantee that it won't quite be what you expect. By the way, we didn't take the decision for Lucie to leave lightly. Sheridan is fantastic and the character has worked really well... But there comes a time when you have to be brave and let a character leave when she is at her peak. There will be tears, I fear...

Although I loved the idea behind *Doctor Who Unbound* it wasn't until *Masters of War* that the series lived up to the concept. Great job and great story. I loved the unique twist on the Dalek story. Please keep up the good work. Now I need to wait for something new to come out.

Roary

Nick: Thanks, Roary. There are no plans for any more *Unbound* adventures at the moment, but I wouldn't entirely rule them out. Interestingly, I felt that *Masters*, although a great story, didn't really live up to the original intentions of the *Unbound* series. We wanted to explore real 'what if?' situations, but it turned out that people just wanted to hear different actors playing the Doctor.

Just thanking you for the free download of *Mists of Time* that was available through *DWM* and was wondering: will you be making this into a CD for sale as I really like having the CDs with covers, etc on my shelf, so just wondering if there are any plans for this or not. Looking forward to getting the first of the *Lost Stories*.

Cheers from down under!
David Goodram

Nick: We do indeed have plans for *Mists of Time* to be released on CD.

Please stop announcing such exciting developments in the world of *Doctor Who* audio. I am getting far too excited which is turning into irritation as I will have to wait for them to be released.

I am particularly excited about the Sylvester McCoy Season 27 box set and also with quiet optimism over the announcement of the 'new'

companion for the Eighth Doctor (nudge nudge, know what I mean!).

Seriously, I just wanted to say how truly excited I am (if not my bank account!) at the coming releases for 2010 and also to thank you for the dramatic reading of *Museum Peace* I have just found in my download RSS feed.

Your obedient and now even more devoted fan,
Richard Jackson

Nick: Richard, it is our pleasure! It takes a lot of planning working out what we're going to announce and when. Very glad to hear that it's paid off. One can never be too excited, I find.

Can you please get Brian Blessed into an audio adventure! I don't care if he's playing King Yrcanos or the Doctor in his own *Unbound*, just get him!

I thank you,
Anthony Daly

Nick: Well, I'll tell you a secret... We did talk to Brian about being in *The Mutant Phase* ages ago. Gary Russell, Adrian Rigelsford and I visited him in his dressing room in a West End theatre. It was the loudest, most confusing meeting I'd ever had. He is a performer of monumental abilities, but I fear we may not be able to contain them within the allotted time we have in a studio day. But never say never...

It's not often I write nerdy emails to you as in days of old, but I am so thrilled that the lost McCoy season is coming to audio.

Am I right in thinking there will only be four of these stories in the range? A look at the website shows there to be six titles for the second series, two of which are resurrections of old black-and-white era stuff.

I'd been hoping for *Earth Aid*, *Ice Time*, *Crime of the Century* (introducing Julia Sawalha as Raine - I know, dream on), *Alixion*, *Animal* and *A School for Glory* (don't forget Tony Robinson!).

The would-be Seasons 23 and 27 really deserved a second chance but I can't help but remember the words of Andrew Pixley in *DWM* back in 1998: "Most *Doctor Who* stories are left unmade for one reason. They're dull. Very dull." I have to admit that I wonder where the line will be drawn before *The Lost Stories* gets off the legendary stuff and onto crap for the sake of completeness. I had to look up Moris Farhi and Dick Sharples on Wikipedia to find out who they were. In the case of Sharples I can see the interest but, alas, not with Farhi.

Regards
Chris Stobart

Nick: Firstly, I'm staggered at the news of Andrew Pixley offering an opinion! I thought he only catalogued facts! You can be the judge yourself when you hear them. The titles of the McCoy *Lost Stories* will be announced soooooon.

I've noted that it's been quite a while since Bonnie Langford and Mel have appeared in any *Doctor Who* audio dramas. Are there plans for her to be back at all? I'll admit, I wasn't a big fan of hers from the original series, but she's been a pleasant surprise in the Big Finish audios, particularly in *The Juggernauts* and *The Fires of Vulcan*. So I was wondering if there were any plans on having her appear in any future productions?

I always thought it might be interesting to do a Colin Baker story where he meets Mel for the first time, which we've never seen on screen or in audio. Obviously, she was already travelling with the Sixth Doctor by the time of *Terror of the Voids* (which was in the Sixth Doctor's future) and she leaves with him at the end of the *Trial of a Time Lord* season but we've never seen how they actually meet. Any chance of something like that happening? Anyway, keep up the good work, loving the Stockbridge Trilogy, and still hoping against all hope we'll have Charley Pollard back some time... even if to just provide some closure for her and Doctor Eight.

Peter Munroe

Nick: There are currently no plans for Mel to return. In the wake of Bonnie's fantastic success in *Dancing on Ice*, we found it difficult to secure her services for *Doctor Who* audios, which led us to make other plans (because we can't commission scripts and then find we don't have an actress to perform them!). The last time she featured, she was only available for one day (rather than the usual two days). She brilliantly recorded all her lines for one episode all on her own, without anyone to cue her. She is a lovely lady and we've always loved working with her. We hope that we will work with her again in the not too distant future.

Just wanted to be a bit helpful and let you know how you sold me a pre-order on the Rob Shearman book. Was delighted to find *The Nightmare Fair* drop through my door this morning (episode one is splendid fun) with a *Vortex* magazine coupled with it. The interview with Rob Shearman had me rushing to pre-order, so well done... cunning piece of sales. For what it's worth, I've never pre-ordered a book or bought a cheekily enhanced edition of any book before, but the twist of a handwritten story seemed too novel an edition to miss. Looking forward to release...

Jolyon Tuck

Nick: Jolyon! You have fallen into our dastardly trap! But I think you'll enjoy the book. Rob is a unique talent and a very dear friend.

I loved the last podcast, but I found the repeated catchphrase embarrassing even before you all did. On the other hand, thanks for *Museum Peace*! It makes me glad I subscribe.
Henrik Hansen

Nick: Glad you loved *Museum Peace*. I did that over a number of months, recording and editing a little bit of it at the end of each day. It was, as they say, a labour of love. And as for the catchphrase... well, all this marketing and advertising stuff is a little bit embarrassing, isn't it? But what can I say - apart from 'subscribers get more at bigfinish.com', of course? We have to do it to try to make sure people buy our CDs so that we can go on making them. Although I would add that it is indeed true that subscribers do get more than those who buy single productions. And there will be more free audio readings in your inbox in the not too distant future.

I had a thought today regarding your upcoming trilogy of Seventh Doctor/Klein stories which seemed worth passing on. My memories of listening to *Colditz* were that it was a very well written play, unfortunately let down by poor post-production. (The music felt intrusive in parts and had me straining to hear the dialogue beneath, and I remember the metallic echo portrayed for the corridors being pretty unpleasant to bear with!) I parted with my copy of it via eBay several years ago, deciding that although it was a good story, I wouldn't enjoy listening to it again.

I wondered today if you would consider allowing one of your excellent sound designers to do a fresh remix of *Colditz*, re-presenting it to the BF audience before (or as) the trilogy of Seventh Doctor/Klein stories are released. Maybe it could be offered as a special download-only purchase (avoiding the cost of pressing a replacement batch of CDs), and might possibly entice your newer audience to find a way in to Klein's story?

Keep up the excellent work - I don't think *DW* fans have ever been so spoilt for choice as they are now!

Best wishes,
Julian Shortman.

Nick: It's an interesting thought, Julian. I do remember a groundswell of opinion about the post-production of *Colditz*, even though it's a great story. We've no plans to do what you suggest. To be honest, we hadn't thought of it, and it's certainly too late now. But the idea of revamped earlier BF releases is an interesting one. Perhaps, in future,

we could re-release 'special editions' of old plays, at a bargain price. Hmmm. You see the monster you've unleashed within me?

I know you are a mammothly big corporation so I hope this email gets routed to the correct person. It's a bit of a plea for generosity from you to us lowly subscribers. I'm a download subscriber and I make my own CD of each episode for archiving purposes. My printer allows me to print lovely art and text onto the CD I make. I think your CD art is far superior to anything I create and I would like the CD art jpeg to be included along with jacket jpeg art you already include.

I have found a forum thread that states you think it's a perk to CD purchasers to receive the full package (jacket, insert, CD and jewel case). I can see that point of view and agree it might be why some would buy the CD over downloading it. Now here is my pitch: don't you make more profit from selling downloads and the up-front revenue from us subscribers helps your cash flow, so as a download subscription perk please add access to CD art. Simple, huh? Continue to hold back insert and back cover art because that encourages wasteful printing and the use of un-green jewel cases (un-green as in environmentally polluting use of natural resources).

By the way, your product rocks. It is a premium product and I make budget cuts in my drink allowance so I can purchase it.

Is Big Finish going to be represented at the 2010 San Diego Comic-Con in July? If as exhibitors or attendees please let me know, I would like the opportunity to meet you. Okay, get Big Finish swag.
Eric Frasher

Nick: Eric, you articulate our reason for not offering the cover to download subscribers perfectly. And in answer to your spirited 'pitch', the uptake of download-only subscribers and purchases is surprisingly modest and in some cases has lost us CD subscribers. So, sorry to say, there is no massive influx of cash to support your idea. Unless we can see good economic arguments to the contrary, our priority for incentives will be CD subscribers and download subscribers (who pay less), in that order. We do make sure download-only subscribers get the free audio readings too, so we do love you really. The bulk of *Doctor Who* fans, we find, are quite traditional in their buying habits and are not keen to leave behind the physical CD. The vast majority of our sales are on CD. The downloads are there for children of the future such as yourself. In five years' time, I might be giving a very different answer to your question. But really glad you like our stuff. Not sure if we'll be at the Comic-Con, though.



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Jason Haigh-Ellery on... Heroes Season Three

Started this DVD box set with slight trepidation having not enjoyed season two all that much – and you get the feeling the production team felt the same way! This is a return to form, with characters better defined and plotlines that weren't really going anywhere removed... and any show with Kristen Bell has to be a plus. Don't tell me the end! I'm on disc four...

Nick Briggs on... Defying Gravity

Look, I know it was cancelled in the States and I know the BBC seems to be shoving it around the schedules like an unwanted child (what a rubbish simile!), but I kind of like this show. It does suffer from the fate of all 'real' or 'real-ish' space dramas (from **Moonbase 3** onwards) in that it's a little on the soapy, unevenful side, but there's nevertheless something rather compelling about this tale of astronauts, their tortured loves and lives and endless flashbacks. And behind it all seems to be some unknown alien presence. Is it on the ship? What does it want? Where will the mission around the solar system really lead? Those are the questions that are intriguing me. I just pray that the series wasn't cancelled before that bit of plot emerged. So, in spite of some shortcomings, it has a very special place in my heart and I must, must, must know what happens in the end.

Alex Mallinson on... Chinese food

At an office in which I once worked, the question was posed: If you had to confine yourself to one cuisine for the rest of your life, what would it be? I struggled, as pizza is clearly one of the greatest inventions of the western world, but it had to be Chinese food. Oh, the variety! The taste! Ginger, garlic, chilli! Oh my. Nothing is left out! Oily noodles or moist, fluffy rice, eaten with the sublime simplicity of chopsticks. Why on earth put spiky metal prongs in your mouth? Silly people. That said, a colleague from Munich, when posed the same question, simply looked at us all bemusedly and pronounced: "German food of course: sausages and beer!" She had a point.

Paul Wilson on... workin' 9 to 5... or not

A few years ago it became apparent that the whole idea of working nine to five in an office day-in and day-out was filling me with horror. I would go into an office, tool around for a while then go home, and for the life of me couldn't work out what I did. So I left all that behind and became a freelancer: it was like a huge weight was lifted and everything felt so much better. In the course of this change in lifestyle I blundered into my job at Big Finish and never looked back. Now I can hardly claim to be earning big money these days, but I have to say that being able to sit in my pants as I work in the comfort of my own house is a huge compensation and definitely worth the loss in income.

Toby Hrycek-Robinson on... Collision

Five hour-long episodes allowed a beautiful pace to this ambitious drama. Tales of government corruption, people smuggling, embezzlement and murder are brought together through participants in a massive motorway crash. Great cast including Paul McGann, Kate Ashfield and Phil Davis and a thought-provoking script.

Barnaby Edwards on... the Tarzan movies

It must be something to do with approaching senescence, but I've recently found great pleasure in revisiting iconic films and television from my childhood: **Bagpuss**, those old **Flash Gordon** serials, the Jon Pertwee era of **Doctor Who**. My latest nostalgia kick has been rewatching the Johnny Weissmuller **Tarzan** movies from the 1930s and 1940s. Forget the animal killing, forget the racism (of which there's surprisingly little), forget the fact that **Tarzan Triumphs** features the loveable chimp Cheeta machine-gunning a Nazi. Forget all that and what remains has an innocence, an optimism and a sense of adventure which perfectly matched my childhood self. And when I rewatch them, I'm transported for ninety glorious minutes back to when I was eight years old. Who needs a TARDIS when you have Tarzan?

Paul Spragg on... Glee

I spend most of my time watching US TV shows, and one of the beauties of heading Stateside to do conventions (on top of the opportunity to meet you lovely listeners, of course!) is a chance to watch the brand new series live (and, indeed, on websites that don't allow access to countries outside the US). Coming to E4 in December as a preview and arriving in its full majesty in January, **Glee** is a work of absolute televisual genius. Created by the man who brought the world **Nip/Tuck** (which it's nothing like, in case that concerns you), it relates the stories of teacher Will Schuester as he attempts to transform a high school Glee Club into a competitive force to be reckoned with. It's a club for singers and dancers that's solely occupied by the geekiest losers that no one likes, who spend most of their lives covered in slushies or picking their way out of dumpsters. Thus Mr Shue has his work cut out blending them into a cohesive whole, not helped by the sinister machinations of brilliantly evil gym teacher Sue Sylvester. Packed with show-stopping and often powerfully emotional musical numbers and stunning choreography, all performed by an exceptionally talented cast and running the gamut of songs from musical numbers to classic rock, rap and more recent hits, **Glee** is unlike anything else on TV right now. I came home with the soundtrack album (volume two out soon!) and recommend it to anyone. Plus I have to mention it now as David will be raving about it next year, just you wait...

David Richardson on... The Office Season Five

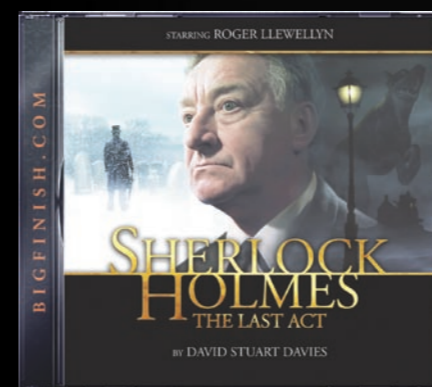
I've heard grumbles that this has been the 'jumping the shark' season, but I couldn't agree less – the US take on the hit Britcom has plenty of life in it yet. The writing and performances remain impeccable: dark, poignant, cleverly observational, and skirting impressively close to the edge. My favourite episode so far: Michael and Dwight inveigle themselves in a rival family-run printing business, hoping to steal their customer list. "I started this firm when I came back from Vietnam," says the owner. "Really," replies Michael. "I hear it's nice there."



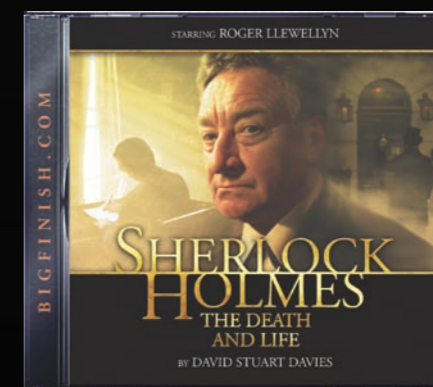
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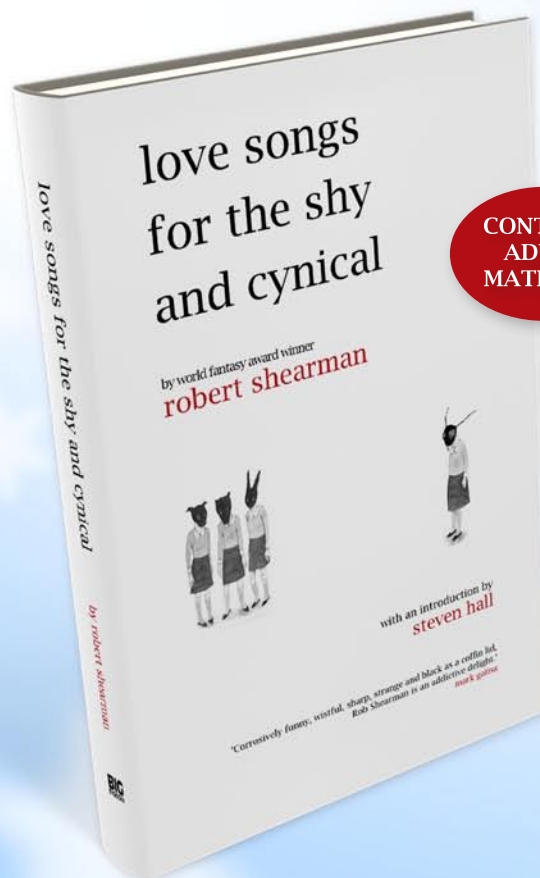
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