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EDITORIAL



In the strange time-warp world of Big Finish Productions, you're reading this in a fresh, brand new year, and I'm typing this before Christmas! So even though December 2009 is well and truly gone, I just wanted to take this opportunity to mention the vast amount of orders our mail order team had to cope with in December. Nine separate releases and a sale too! So a big thanks to our Sales Manager, Gary Atterton, and his hardworking lieutenants Catrin Hubbarde and

Marcin Rogoszewski. These are the people who deal with our customer orders day in and day out and have been working at full pelt to improve our mail order service. We couldn't persuade Marcin and Catrin to pose for a photo back in November when Rob Shearman, Jason and I visited for the official signing of the limited editions of Rob's book *Love Songs for the Shy and Cynical*, but that's Gary in the middle, between Jason (on the left) and Rob (on the right). I think I'm the one holding the camera.

Still on the mail order theme, our fabulous designer/pixel monkey, Alex Mallinson, took it upon himself to storm our mailing warehouse to insist on helping out as a gesture of seasonal goodwill, or possibly madness. Whatever the reason, I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank Alex from the bottom of my heart for doing this. I know Gary and his team were grateful and I find it particularly heartening as a demonstration of Alex's devotion to Big Finish. He'll probably want to do my job for a day soon!

Nick Briggs – executive producer

SNEAK PREVIEWS AND WHISPERS

Doctor Who - Legend of the Cybermen

One of the most eagerly awaited releases of 2010, in which the Doctor and his new/former companion Jamie McCrimmon meet a dear friend... none other than Zoe Heriott (Wendy Padbury). And, just to add to the rush of anticipation, the trio are pitted against an old enemy – Cybermen! There are plenty of other surprises in store too, but we're keeping them under wraps until June 2010 when this very special story is unveiled. Start counting down the days...

AVAILABLE IN JUNE 2010

Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles: Night's Black Agents

Just when Frazer Hines had got his Second Doctor impersonation down to a fine art, what do we do? Give him a *Companion Chronicle* with the Sixth Doctor! Needless to say, Frazer proves just as adept at taking on a later incarnation, in this tie-in to the main range. *Night's Black Agents* takes place immediately after *City of Spires*, and leads in to *The Wreck of the Titan*. The brilliant Hugh Ross guest stars as the sinister Merodach.

AVAILABLE IN MAY 2010



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D LYNN SMITH

The Dark Shadows Dramatic Readings continue this month with *Final Judgement*, starring Lara Parker and Kathryn Leigh Scott. Writer D Lynn Smith lifts the lid on bringing the residents of Collinwood to audio...

Had you always been a fan of *Dark Shadows*?

I started writing short stories when I was eight years old – about the same time

I discovered **Dark Shadows**. Like most kids of my generation, I used to run home from school to watch the next episode. My father, who was a police officer working nights, would be awake and waiting for me; we watched the show together, it was our special time. While I continue to write short stories and novels, I ended up making my living as a television writer, on such shows as **Touched By An Angel**, **Dr Quinn**, **Medicine Woman** and **Murder, She Wrote**.

You also worked for *Dark Shadows* creator Dan Curtis during the 1990s...

I loved working for Dan. I was his writer's assistant, so I'd sit at the computer and type while he dictated. I was in heaven! I mean, this was the man who brought us **Dark Shadows**, **Trilogy of Terror** and **The Night Stalker**. Every time he mentioned a movie he'd directed, I'd say, 'Oh, I loved that one.' One day he commented that he didn't realize he was hiring his biggest fan when he hired me.

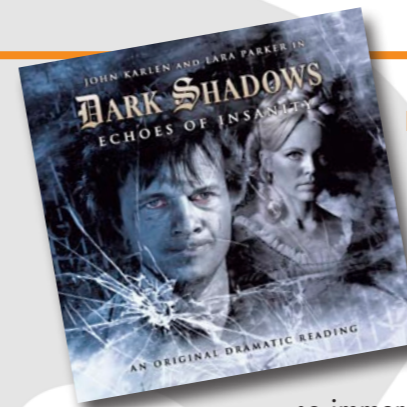
Your first *Dark Shadows* audio drama was *Echoes of Insanity*. What was the starting point for the story?

I knew I wanted to write a story with Angelique and Willie. I was watching some old episodes and realized that there was a break

between when Willie was shot and sent to Windcliff and when he was later released back into Barnabas's care. That first episode when Willie returns really struck me, because he was so obviously insane. So I wondered what might have happened at Windcliff... and, of course, Angelique soon came to mind.

How do you approach translating *Dark Shadows* to audio?

I'm having fun writing these audio dramas, because it combines my screenwriting and prose writing skills. I'm usually a very visual writer, so I have to really concentrate on what I can bring across in narrative and dialogue. For *Echoes of Insanity* I did a lot of research on exotic locations that Willie visited as a merchant marine. I also watched many episodes of the original series to make sure I had both Willie's and Angelique's voice in my head.



Do you think the show has a specific 'voice'?

Dark Shadows has a very dark, gothic voice. It's very important to me to capture the atmosphere and voice of the series,

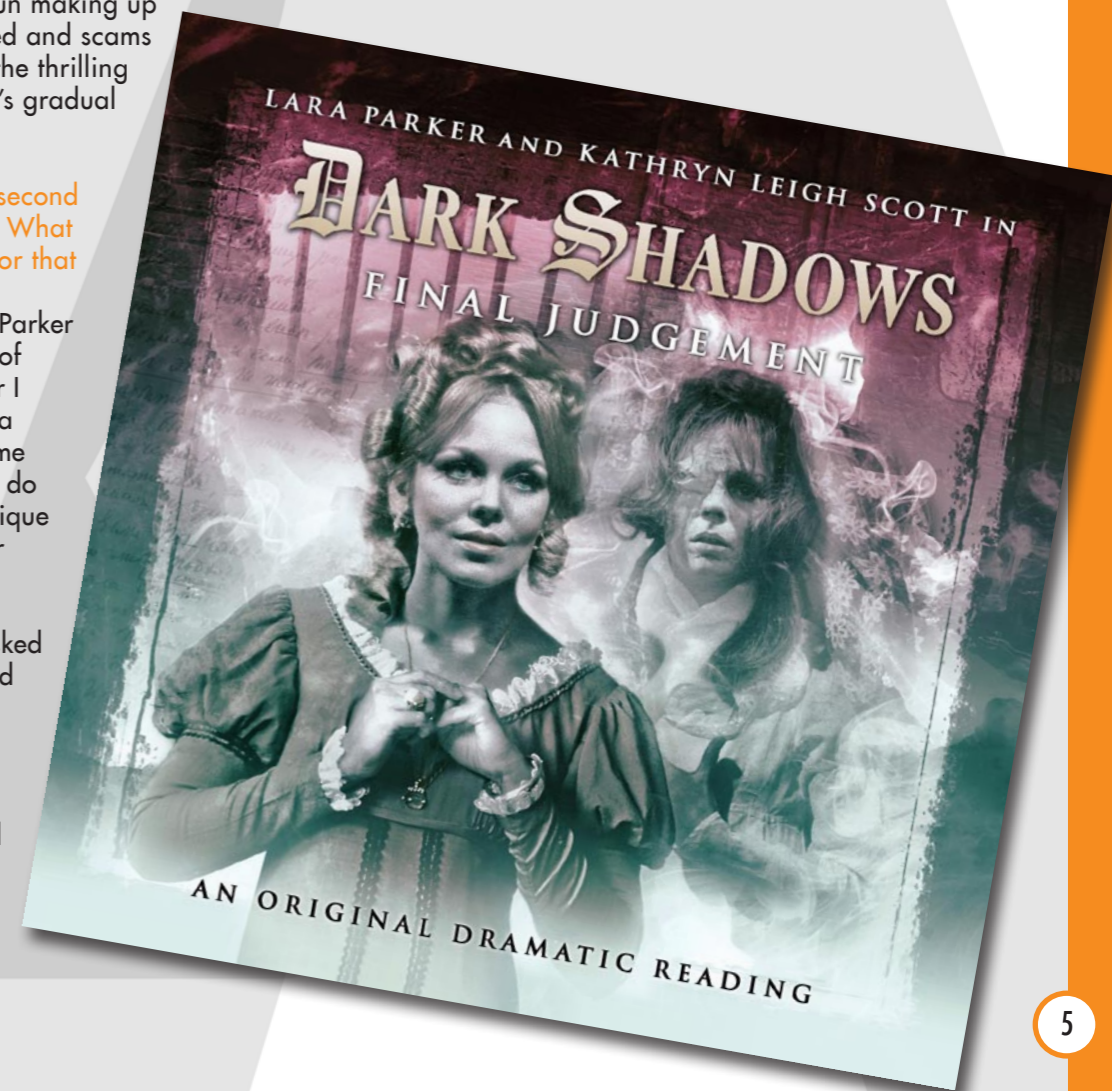
so immersing myself in the show before putting pen to paper – fingers to keys, actually – is a must. And, of course, it's great fun. I have several friends who are always up for **Dark Shadows** marathon parties when I'm researching. So fun is had by all, with me taking notes so I can pretend like I'm working.

Do you have a favourite character?

Angelique has always been one of my favourites. She was a strong woman on television when strong women were few and far between. Angelique and Catwoman were my heroes at that time. So it was a great thrill to write for her. Willie was always a rather mysterious character. He starts out rather disgusting and unlikeable, but after he frees Barnabas, he becomes quite sympathetic. I find this kind of transformation fascinating. Plus, he had a great back-story, travelling the world with Jason McGuire. I had great fun making up places that they'd visited and scams that they'd pulled. But the thrilling part was writing Willie's gradual descent into madness.

Out this month is your second story, *Final Judgement*. What was the starting point for that story?

Angelique actress Lara Parker happens to be a friend of mine, so when I told her I was preparing to write a second script, she told me she'd always wanted to do something where Angelique and Josette could go for each other's throats. I emailed the producer, Stuart Manning, and asked if this kind of idea would interest him. He had an idea that Josette might bring charges against Angelique in a kind of ghostly court and asked if I'd be interested in developing that. I jumped at the opportunity.



***Final Judgement* explores the much-loved rivalry between Josette and Angelique. How have you explored their relationship?**

Josette was always the good person, and yet where did all that goodness get her? Her life was taken from her because she kept trying to play by the rules. I wondered if, in the afterlife, she was embittered by that experience. Angelique is, of course, to blame and would be the obvious target for Josette's revenge. Angelique, however, has played these kinds of games all her life, so when Josette enters the arena, she's a novice. I think that Angelique actually feels for Josette, but she can't let that get in the way of the trial because there's too much at stake – her very soul.

This moves the characters some way on from the original series...

Angelique's relationship to Josette hasn't changed – she's still fighting for what Josette wants to take away from her. It's Josette who has changed – her lover is turned into a vampire, her reputation is destroyed and her beauty crushed by the rocks at the foot of Widow's Hill. That's more than enough to break anyone's mind!

*The dramatic reading, *Dark Shadows: Final Judgement*, is out this month*



Tracey Childs, star of the next three months' Klein trilogy, tells Paul Spragg how much fun it is playing a Nazi scientist

CHILDS PLAY

Can you remember being Klein the first time in *Colditz*, eight years ago?

I can so remember being Klein the first time, I loved being Klein! How can you forget being a Nazi time-travelling physicist? It's not the kind of part that comes along every day, is it? It was the first one of these that I'd ever done, and a gentleman called Ed Salt was the director and I had a ball, because she was such fun to play... and rather vicious! Any actor will tell you that anything connected with the war, you don't wanna play the British soldiers because they've got really crap uniforms and the Germans wear fantastic ones, so you kind of go, 'I wonder what she's wearing? Yeah, it's gonna be high leather boots and a long black leather coat; fantastic, I'm in!' So love her, absolutely love her.

Did you listen to *Colditz* again before returning to the role?

Oh, I so did. I remembered a lot of the story; I couldn't quite remember what it hung on, and of course it was all to do with the laser and a CD player; I knew there was something that Ace had left behind that caused chaos. But I needed to remember what Klein sounded like, and just how clipped she was and how precise, and how deep or not she was. The interesting thing has been, of course, doing the trilogy she has been opened up to so many different experiences that actually she's changed and grown over that time anyway and certainly there are points where she even gets emotional, extraordinary for Klein! And, of course, interesting people to hear on [*Colditz*]: David Tennant playing a lieutenant.

Indeed. You must have known him... well, before he was David Tennant, almost.
Yes, exactly!

And how was he to work with?

Oh, he's fabulous. You know, the joy is that it happened to one of the nice guys. I'm so pleased that he's been the incredible success that he is, a) because he's such a lovely man and b) because he's such a good actor, and you're always so grateful when somebody who's been schlepping round the country putting in their time as a good, jobbing actor gets the breaks, and he absolutely deserved them. And the joy of going and doing the telly *Doctor Who* with David [as Metella in *The Fires of Pompeii*] is he's the first on set, he's the last to leave, he knows all his lines, he's never late, he's never behaving like a diva, and of course if he's not, no one else can, so it

means you've got the happiest possible atmosphere to be working in. So yeah, an absolute joy to work with him. On anything!

Back to the Nazi scientist; have you spent the last eight years thinking, 'Oh, I wish I could be Klein again'?

But of course I have! I have not had a day when I have not thought about Klein and how much poorer my life is without her!

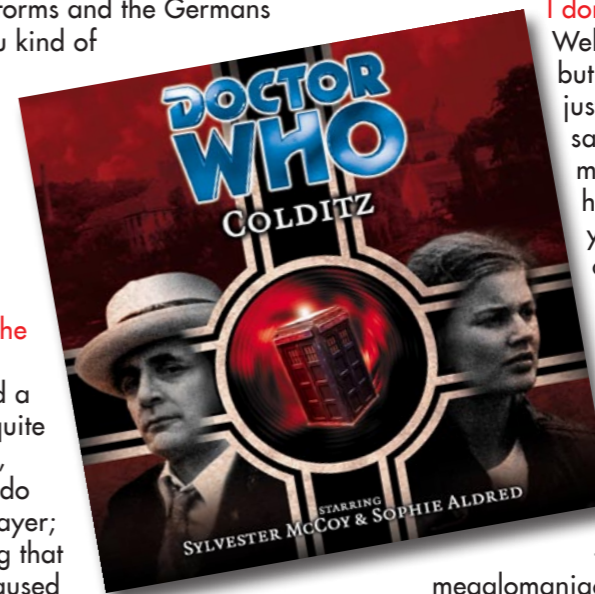
I don't think I believe you...

Well, the honest answer is I haven't, but I might do now! [laughs] I've just done a trilogy for goodness' sake, she's been a large part of my life this year! I'm gonna miss her like crazy! No, the last eight years have been packed with other things, I have to confess, but I've come and done other Big Finishes and that's always fun. And the joy of being an actor is you love the versatility and the variety, so anything that gives you something new to do and coming in to do Big Finishes, playing – mind you, [before] it was a

megalomaniacal computer. There's something about me and megalomania – hmmm, typecasting! I was taught a very good lesson by Matthew Kelly, the first tour I ever did, a very, very, very long time ago, and I was taught that whatever job you're doing at the moment is the best job in the world, and I've stuck with it, and it's a great way of spending your life. Because you don't worry about what you've just missed or what you're going to do in the future, you just concentrate on the present and enjoy it.

How has Klein developed?

It's very interesting seeing the difference and seeing what she's been exposed to and, without giving too much away, the different experiences that do open her up, that actually melt her heart a little bit, that give her some compassion, some humanity, that make her emotional. What's interesting is the second story [one-parter *Klein's Story*, part of the *Survival of the Fittest* release] you get to hear her whole back-story as to how she went to Colditz in the first place. There's some very interesting stuff, I think they've come up with some fabulous ideas for her. And it's lovely to see her grow because yes, you can't have her as a one-note Nazi just being very clipped and precise and proper, although that bit's fun to play too! What's also lovely is she'll go off and be emotional and suddenly more female, really, and more open – and then the next moment she's being as cold and ruthless as she ever was.





Sylvester McCoy and Tracey Childs in *A Thousand Tiny Wings*

Is there any hope of redemption for her?

I play her, so of course I don't think she's irredeemable! You see, the thing is, you can't play a character you don't like, because however much people hate themselves, however low their self-esteem is, actually if they really, really hated themselves they couldn't live with themselves, so you always start, with a character, with what you love about them, and actually she's fantastically efficient. Say what you like about the Nazis, they were efficient! So you start with something you like and something you approve of, so no, of course she's not irredeemable. I just hope that it takes episodes and episodes and episodes and episodes to bring that out! I think we probably need a spin-off series, frankly.

Perhaps a box set.

Yeah, absolutely. How many can you get in a box set? I was thinking 16. Like a TV DVD box set. I'm sure the public would want her!

Do you want people to have sympathy for Klein?

Hopefully people will change sympathies umpteen times throughout it. Because of course people are going to be sympathetic with Sylvester, he's the Doctor, but what's very interesting is it is the Doctor who landed her in this mess in the first place. Or at least Ace. So it's not always black and white, there are lots of grey areas.

What does Klein add as a companion?

See, I'm fascinated that she ends up being called a companion. I suppose she kind of is because she gets to travel with the Doctor. I think you get someone who is not a simple devotee and not someone who's just gonna go, 'Yes Doctor, no Doctor,' or ask simple,

innocent questions. You're gonna get someone who really challenges the Doctor and who actually turns round and goes, 'That is not the way it has to be and actually there's a different way of looking at this. You think you've got the bigger picture, what about my bigger picture? What about what I've seen? What about my history? What about what I believe to be the truth? Who says you're right and I'm wrong?' And I think, quite often, she has a point. So I think hopefully it makes for a more challenging time for the Doctor.

Do you think Klein would work as well alongside one of the other Doctors?

If she was with someone like Peter Davison's Doctor, she would be a chief Nazi cow and it would have to be more one-note-ish and the only way I could get my point across would be, frankly, to wipe the floor with the Doctor. And that's not right and that's not fair and that's not what should happen, because Peter Davison's

Doctor would have to change character to fight back. I think it works very beautifully with Sylvester McCoy because his Doctor is not quite so straightforward. There are a lot more layers to him.

You seem very keen to return as Klein.

Give her her own series. I think it would be vastly popular! As we were doing the last episode, everything that came up I was going, 'Oh, we've got to do that episode' and everyone was saying, 'No, that was a telly one; they've already done it.' 'Oh.' 'What about the...?' 'They've already done that.' 'Oh.' But I'm sure there could be some way of giving her her own series, that would be fab.

Would you like to work with some other Doctors?

How many Doctors can you work with? I adore Sylvester. I will work with Sylvester forever. But now I've worked with three Doctors it might be rather fun to work with even more! I've worked with David Tennant, of course, Paul McGann and Sylvester McCoy. I've worked with Colin Baker not as Doctor Who. I've worked with him on stage. So that would be very interesting, to add Colin or Peter to my list. Notches on my belt; Doctors I have worked with.

What's next for you?

It looks like I'm going back to play Martha again in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* with Mathew Kelly as George, and a tour and into the West End next year.

But then you won't have time for the Klein spin-off!

I've got plenty of time, trust me. That's the joy of theatre, you have your days free! Who needs sleep?

The trilogy of stories featuring Tracey as the villainous Klein begins this month with A Thousand Tiny Wings

JANUARY

- *Doctor Who – A Thousand Tiny Wings* (1.30, Seventh Doctor/Klein)
- *Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Leviathan* (1.3)
- *Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – Bernice Summerfield and the Criminal Code* (4.06, Seventh Doctor)
- *Judge Dredd: Crime Chronicles – Double Zero* (1.4)
- *Dark Shadows – Final Judgement* (1.10)
- *Sherlock Holmes – Holmes and the Ripper*

MARCH

- *Doctor Who – The Architects of History* (1.32, Seventh Doctor/Klein)
- *Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Paradise 5* (1.5)
- *Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Emperor of Eternity* (4.08, Second Doctor)
- *Dark Shadows – Audiobook 12*

MAY

- *Doctor Who – The Wreck of the Titan* (1.34, 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* (1.36, Fifth Doctor/Tegan/Turlough/Nyssa)
- *Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – Situation Vacant* (4.02, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- *Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA* (5.01, First Doctor)

SEPTEMBER

- *Doctor Who – TBA* (1.38, Fifth Doctor/Tegan/Turlough/Nyssa)
- *Doctor Who – TBA* (1.39, Seventh Doctor)
- *Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – The Book of Kells* (4.04, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- *Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA* (5.03, Third Doctor)

FEBRUARY

- *Doctor Who – Survival of the Fittest/Klein's Story* (1.31, Seventh Doctor/Klein)
- *Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – The Hollows of Time* (1.4)
- *Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Suffering* (4.07, First Doctor)
- *Dark Shadows – The Porcelain Games* (1.11)
- *After the Break-Up* by Carrie Sutton (Paperback)
- *Rebecca's World* (Audiobook)

APRIL

- *Doctor Who – City of Spires* (1.33, Sixth Doctor/Jamie)
- *Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Point of Entry* (1.6)
- *Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – Shadow of the Past* (4.09, Third Doctor)
- *Dark Shadows – Audiobook 13*
- *Love Songs for the Shy and Cynical* (Paperback)

JUNE

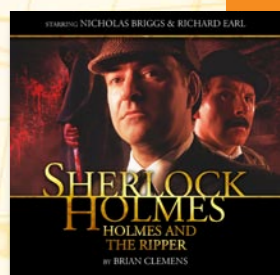
- *Doctor Who – Legend of the Cybermen* (1.35, Sixth Doctor/Jamie/Zoe)
- *Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – The Macros* (1.8)
- *Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – Solitaire* (4.12, Eighth Doctor)

AUGUST

- *Doctor Who – TBA* (1.37, Fifth Doctor/Tegan/Turlough/Nyssa)
- *Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – Nevermore* (4.03, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- *Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA* (5.02, Second Doctor)

OCTOBER

- *Doctor Who – TBA* (1.40, Seventh Doctor)
- *Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – Deimos* (4.05, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- *Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA* (5.04, Fourth Doctor)





FISHER & THE RIPPER

To celebrate the release of **Holmes and the Ripper**, India Fisher tells David Richardson about the project and considers the future of Charley Pollard

How did you come to be involved in **Holmes and the Ripper**?

I came to be involved in **Holmes and the Ripper** because I blackmailed Nicholas Briggs, basically! I made him offer me a job live on a podcast so he couldn't back out! No; very sweetly Nick said he was hoping to do an audio version of the Sherlock Holmes play he'd done in Nottingham – to great critical acclaim, I believe! – and he said he'd always had me in mind for the role of Katherine, the medium. And I jumped at the chance because Sherlock Holmes is another great British institution. Big Finish are cornering the market in great British institutions, and I knew that Nick would do it brilliantly.

He said that the Brian Clemens script was brilliant, and it was a lovely opportunity to play a different character. I hope she is vaguely different to Charley! That was my one concern. Nick and I did discuss it, although not very extensively. I went down to his house for dinner one night under the guise of doing big character discussions to make it different from Charley and we just had a very nice supper, I played with [Nick's son] Ben and then at the very end as I was leaving, we went, 'Oh, we didn't really discuss the character,' and I said, 'Well, I'm not going to do silly voices, I don't want to do a comedy voice to make it different to Charley', I didn't suddenly want to put on a Birmingham accent. And I went, 'I think I'm just going to do it a bit lower with more my voice than Charley's voice and he went, 'Yeah, that sounds fine. Okay then, bye!' and that was it. So that was the extent of my research.

How would you describe the character?

Well, she's a woman of a certain age, and she's a clairvoyant, and has been rather shunned in society because of that and people see her as a charlatan. She approaches Holmes because she's been having these visions and wants to help, but is also aware that she has to do it in a clandestine way because she knows that her reputation could hurt Holmes if it was known that he was asking for her help. But Holmes being Holmes, he shuns that and openly admits that he's getting help from her. So it's great and she gets to be part of things because she has these amazing visions; there's one brilliant scene where she gets

readings off a letter. So she's a great character to play, but much more steady and self-assured and worldly-wise than poor little Charley.

You had some intense scenes with Holmes.

Yes, Nick Briggs' love interest is always a fun one to play, but there were some fun scenes at the end where Sherlock is finally admitting that they're maybe going away together and I particularly like that, in an age where you couldn't go away together without a chaperone. There's this one scene where he's nearly understood who the murderer is but then Katherine comes running back in because she's picked up something; it's the idea that they come to the same conclusion at the same time, and I like that she runs in and says, 'It's...'. She asks how he got there, and maybe Katherine got there before him and it was her nudging him in the right direction.

Holmes seems to be more emotionally exposed in this story.

Yes, absolutely, and there are some lovely scenes between Watson and Holmes where Watson is giving him advice on how to be with a lady, because he keeps saying thing like, 'Katherine, you're looking very tired, you should go and lie down', and Watson takes him into a corridor and says, 'You should never tell a woman that she's looking tired'. [There's] the idea that Holmes is innocent around women and Katherine is one woman who's actually made him think about women in *that* way. The one place they go off and visit is a wonderful waterfall; a very knowing tell of what happens to Sherlock.



Will Katherine come between Watson (Richard Earl) and Holmes (Nicholas Briggs)?

How did Nick get involved with Sherlock Holmes? I've only got this second hand or third hand through him, but it started last year when he did Brian Clemens' **Holmes and the Ripper** up in Nottingham and he so loved it and I think he shrugged on the shoes and the coat and, of course, deerstalker hat of Sherlock Holmes and had a really good time playing it. I think Nick's brain always works with, 'I could do an audio of that' and I think it's going to be brilliant. Richard Earl is just so wonderful as Watson and Beth Chalmers as Mrs Hudson is brilliant as well. Sitting back and watching those two, thinking, 'Oh, this is very nice and that's going to really work and settle down into something wonderful', I think you've got a winner on your hands.

Did you enjoy the recording?

I really loved it; it was quite a small cast and Sam Clemens, who is, of course, Brian's son, was playing brilliant villains and various gallery owners, shop owners, and things like that. And we had worked together on *Blue Forgotten Planet*, so that was lovely, to see him again. It was very nice to be back in the studio having said goodbye, I thought, to Big Finish. It was really lovely that you got me back and nice to work with Nick when he wasn't doing silly Dalek voices!

What responses have you had about Charley's departure?

Well, the reaction has been extraordinary. I was just in Chicago last weekend for Chicago TARDIS, and people were humbly wonderful and so sweet about their love for Charley and how sad they were that she's gone. It was a running gag that every time someone said that, I went, 'Ahem. Nick and Jason, did you hear that? Very sad she's gone...!' And yes, a very lovely and humbling experience to hear people who've really taken her to heart and were moved by her ending, which I think is testament to Nick's writing. I've said it before and I'll say it again, he did me proud with that final story. Actually, all three of those, that final series – the Charley finale as you so brilliantly named it – I think it's a really lovely, fitting end for her. But I've said before that I think I'm in slight denial; I don't really think it's ended.

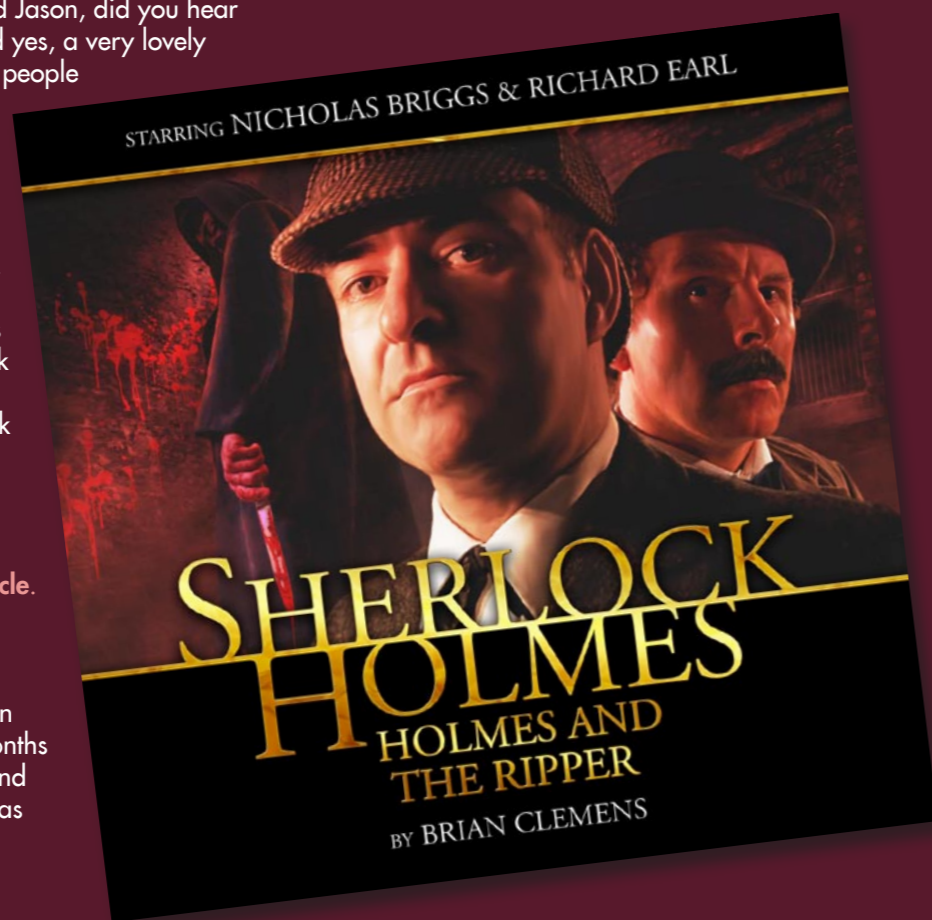
And you'd be right, as she's returning in a **Companion Chronicle**. I just got the script this morning so I haven't actually read it, but it sounded like a brilliant premise when I was actually talking to John Dorney, the writer, a couple of months ago at another convention – I spend my life at conventions – and he was

telling me the idea. Charley meets the Toymaker and the Doctor is actually a ventriloquist's dummy and we were sniggering about this and thinking what a brilliant idea it was that Charley gets to manipulate the Doctor. I quite like the sound of that. I haven't read it so I don't know any more than that, but it's a two-hander with David Bailie. So that's a very different thing; I'm looking forward to doing a **Companion Chronicle** and they seem to be a much-loved and brilliant little series, so I'm very chuffed that Charley gets to have one. I'll just manage to squeeze it in before I go on tour, and it'll come out just as I end my tour. Tiny plug, tiny plug.

Go on, give it a big plug.

I am playing Joan Sims in **Stop Messing About**, and we are touring pretty much everywhere it seems, from January 25 to the final week of June, and if you go to stopmessingabout.com, you will be able to find all the tour dates; it's a live performance of the Kenneth Williams, Joan Sims, Hugh Paddick and Douglas Smith 1960s radio show, so lots of fnarr-fnarr gags and lots of jokes about Kenneth Williams being a little bit gay. It's beautifully written, it's very funny, it's written by the people who wrote **Robin's Nest** and the original radio series, so it's hilarious; Robin Sebastian, who's playing Kenneth Williams, is absolutely brilliant and I'm really looking forward to it! It starts rehearsals on January 18, so I'll sneak in with a **Companion Chronicle** just before. So suddenly I'm a busy bee, which is great!

Sherlock Holmes: *Holmes and the Ripper* is out this month



As an occasional subscriber (a new one coming very soon, honest), I do find it awkward to shuffle the finances around in order to manage a full six or twelve-month payment in one go. Have you ever thought of doing monthly subscriptions via direct debit?

Now, I know there are costs associated with this, but this might be offset by the increased revenue. I'm sure others such as myself would happily commit to more than one range, if we were only paying for that month's discs/downloads at a time.

And, yes, I know I could do this through, say, 10th Planet, but I'd rather give the money straight to yourselves (nothing against Derek, mind!). Just a thought.

Mike Davey

Nick: Thanks for your loyalty, Mike. We continually review ideas about subscription methods. At the moment, it is better for us to have subscriptions where the funds are paid to us in advance, as this gives us vital funds to back upcoming productions. The approval terms of our licence with the BBC and our marketing strategies require that we work at least six months in advance of release, and in order to do this, we need a strong source of revenue well in advance of release dates. But we will continue to explore other options for subscription payment. Thanks for raising this matter again.

Dear Mr Briggs,
May I first say thanks for *Blue Forgotten Planet* and the way you have ended Charley's stories. However, I myself, along with others, were hoping Charley would find her way back to her Doctor, the one she loved, or even maybe meet him with his new companion, which would have been good had that been Sheridan but as we know there is to be a new companion with Paul. Well, back to *Blue Forgotten Planet*: having listened to it many times now, I realise you have left Charley with the Vyrrans, who seem to be good aliens. I am, in the back of my mind, hoping Charley will reappear with the Doctor in a later episode. It also seems funny just as Charley has grasped the way the TARDIS works and its wonders and how she has now grown to enjoy being with the Doctor again that like Lalla Ward she has become much liked and is missed. I must also say the latest instalment of the **Companion Chronicles** with Lalla Ward was excellent; I wish she also would come back and do more of the **Gallifrey** stories. Maybe Charley and Romana should work together, as we all know Romana is also a Time Lord in her own right. Anyway, this was just to say they were both brilliant and I hope we have not seen the last of either of them.

Kind regards
John McEvoy

Nick: Thanks, John. I wanted to end the Charley storyline in a way that I felt was believable, given the peril she and the Doctor had been subjected to, and to be true to the whole issue of the web of time, which has been such an important part of her storyline. We are currently exploring possibilities for future adventures with Charley. There are currently no plans to return her to the Eighth Doctor, but one should never say never in the world of **Doctor Who**.

I was just looking over your Christmas sale page and noticed that I could get some of the same titles that were 'on sale' cheaper if I just got them in the 'Big Finish for a Fiver' section of the site. This does not seem like much of a sale to me. For example, to buy all three series of **Gallifrey** in the 'Fiver' section costs \$126 (\$9x14CDs). However in the 'Sale' section, buying the three-series bundle costs \$130.61. Not that \$9 US is an unreasonable price to pay for a CD, but selling the same products at the same or even slightly higher price in the 'Sale' section seems a bit like false advertising to me.

Sincerely,
A concerned customer
CJR

Nick: I put my hands up. This is a calculation that we had not thought of. For UK customers, for whom postage and packing is free, the sale is clearly a better deal. The postage costs would be less in the sale if you bought them in smaller packages. I realize this is an inconsistency that unintentionally discriminates against our US customers, and I would like to give my unreserved apology here. It's something we'll look out for in future. Many thanks for raising this.

I am a recent big fan of **Dark Shadows** and I received *Dark Shadows Reborn* as a gift. I haven't had time to listen to the Dramatic Readings but I was wondering if there will be more CDs that have the full cast together? I think it would be great to have Alexandra Moltke back for a recording or two. I've listened to these four CDs over and over again and I just love it. Please produce more.
Thank you.
Chris Odell

Nick: It is certainly our intention to produce more. Big Finish's **Dark Shadows** producer is Stuart Manning. The series is something very close to his heart and he works incredibly hard to make sure everything is perfect with regard to scripts and sound design. This can sometimes mean that productions are severely delayed, so if you want more **Dark Shadows**, I suggest you track him down and chase him with a big stick...

I was just enquiring about your **Vortex** magazine. I am unable to download it as I only have access to the internet at work and from a visit to a Forbidden Planet in Manchester I discovered actual print versions.

I buy my copies of your **Doctor Who** releases from Forbidden Planet in Leeds, and unfortunately they have never got in the actual print versions of your mag. My question is (if possible) could I obtain back copies of **Vortex** mag and how am I able to get future copies?

Regards
Marc Ofner

Nick: The main point of **Vortex** is to encourage people to buy direct from us, because this is better for our budgets, so it is unlikely it will be made available elsewhere unless some kind of co-advertising deal can be done.

The Colin Baker stories are my favourite. I'm an American (Des Moines, Iowa) and a long-time **Who** fan, especially of the Colin Baker years!

Just a thought: Doctor #6 meets Bill Bryson! There, if you so desire, take the idea and run with it. I offer it freely, with no strings attached, and absolutely no expectation of any kind of payment or credit. It's your idea now. It's just an idea, after all, and up to you to flesh it out if you wish. This would be fun. I bet you could get Bill Bryson to do it.

Mark Lambert

Nick: Well... It's certainly an idea. Can't quite see where the drama would lie. There are arguably some interesting similarities between Mr Bryson and the Doctor. His love of travel, for example.

Hello! I just wanted to drop you a line and say thank you for making the **Sherlock Holmes** series available to a yank like me! I have a **Sherlock Holmes** book, movie, comic, and finally audio drama collection that defies rational explanation and when I saw your talented group were going to add to the Holmes pastiche I was very excited! I'm ordering *The Last Act* right now and you can bet when the other two are available for download purchase I'll be in line for those as well! Thank you so much! I really love Big Finish's products. I have all the **Doctor Who Unbounds** and four or five of the **Dark Shadows** and just enjoy them so much! It is so very awesome that you are tackling the world's greatest literary detective and his faithful companion. Thanks again and I hope you all have a very merry Christmas.

John R Roach

Nick: Thanks, John. There'll also be a free **Sherlock Holmes** adventure for you soon: a dramatic reading of *The Speckled Band*, Conan Doyle's favourite!

PAUL FINCH

This month sees the release of *Leviathan*, the third of the Sixth Doctor's *Lost Stories*. *Vortex* talks to its co writer, Paul Finch...

When did you first become aware of the script of *Leviathan*?

I knew that my dad had written *Leviathan* way back in the 1980s. Both he and I had been lifelong fans of **Doctor Who**. My dad had been writing for TV for a long time when Colin Baker, a friend and acquaintance of his through **The Brothers**, was cast. From that point on, Dad, who'd always toyed with the idea of putting proposals forward to **Doctor Who**, became determined to write something for the show. When *Leviathan* was commissioned, he was absolutely delighted. I was at college at the time – I remember him phoning to tell me.

I had some involvement with it myself, even at that early stage. I was studying mediaeval history as part of my degree and, given the subject matter of *Leviathan*, my dad bombarded me with questions regarding the finer details of life in the Middle Ages.

I was home on holiday when the script was green-lit. I remember reading through it, and thinking it was going to be something special. Even to my relatively inexperienced eye, it had an epic feel. And then of course, totally out of the blue, it was cancelled, simply binned. Various things were going on at the BBC at the time to which I wasn't party. Years later, I assumed that it had been axed as part of the famous 'missing season', but I've now learned that this wasn't the case. From what I hear, it was scheduled to be included in an earlier slot, but became a victim of budget cuts.



Paul with Colin Baker at the *Leviathan* recording

Whichever is the truth, my dad was very upset. I've said it before and I'll say it again: it was the biggest disappointment of his professional career. Not just because *Leviathan* wasn't made, but because I think he'd hoped it would serve as a springboard for him writing more **Doctor Who**.

Leviathan didn't disappear completely. When the 'missing season' was novelised, I suggested that Dad put it forward for adaptation as a **Doctor Who** book, but he wasn't interested. By then he had an idea to turn its prime conceit into a full-blown science fiction novel that had nothing to do with **Who**. He never actually got round to fulfilling this ambition – he was too busy with his TV work, though he kept the idea alive for a good decade and a half before it finally faded.

Could you tell us a bit about your father's career as a writer?

My dad's career was quite remarkable in that it spanned over four decades of British television. It was all the more remarkable given that there was no literary tradition in his background. By origin, our family were Lancashire coal miners. When my dad left school he went straight into the RAF.

He discovered he could write when he started penning articles for forces newspapers, and after returning to civilian life he became a proper journalist, working for various newspaper titles and finishing up as features writer for *TV Times*.

While my dad was working as a journalist, he was also writing short stories and stage plays. He sold his first television play, **Rodney Our Intrepid Hero**, to the BBC for **Play for Today** in 1969. This brought him to the attention of the legendary Jack Rosenthal at Granada, who asked him if he'd like to write a trial script for **Coronation Street**. Dad jumped at the chance, and went on to write for the **Street**, on and off, for the next 20 years, and scripted over 200 episodes. But there was almost no limit to his range. He worked on numerous other popular shows as well. In the 1970s, he wrote for dramas like **General Hospital** and **The Brothers**, crime thrillers like **Softly, Softly**, **Hunter's Walk** and **Public Eye**, comedies like **The Life of Riley** and **The Squirrels**, and children's TV like **The Tomorrow People**.

In the 1980s, there were almost no quality shows that he wasn't writing for: **Juliet Bravo**, **Bergerac**, **All Creatures Great and Small** and **The Bill**. He devised and wrote more of his own series around that time: **Murphy's Mob**, which was hugely popular, **Flying Lady**, which reunited him with his good friend Frank Windsor, and a one-off TV movie, **Good as Gold**, which was filmed in and around our home town of Wigan. In the 1990s, he wrote for **Families**, **El Cid**, **Heartbeat** and **Hetty Wainthropp Investigates**.

In the 2000s, he wrote stacks of TV animation and for the new CGI **Captain Scarlet**. He also made the switch into movies at this time, though the pinnacle of his career was probably **Goodnight Mr Tom**, which deservedly won a BAFTA in 1999.

It's difficult to talk about my dad's career without it simply sounding like a list. The various programmes I've mentioned here are only about half of his back-catalogue. There were so many others, and he never had any intention of retiring. He was working right up to his death in 2007. At his funeral, his agent said to me that my dad had been one of the most prolific writers British TV had ever seen.

How did you come to approach Big Finish with the idea of doing *Leviathan* as a *Lost Story*?

Early in 2009, a most unlikely event occurred. I was shopping with my wife and I happened to spot the latest issue of *DWM*, picked it up and – as if the hand of fate was guiding me – flipped straight to an article concerning the 'missing season'. Apparently Big Finish was looking for the lost stories, with Colin and Nicola reprising their classic roles.

I decided to get proactive. According to the article, Big Finish was still looking for one or two scripts, so I reasoned there was a chance. I'd already written a **Doctor Who** short story for BF in their anthology *Destination Prague*, but I had no actual contact there. Thankfully, I was able to get in touch with Tom Spilsbury, editor at *DWM*, and he put me in touch with David Richardson, who was producing the missing season. All of this seemed to happen very quickly, but then another problem arose. I'd in effect contacted Big Finish, trying to interest them in an old **Doctor Who** script, without even knowing if the script still existed. My dad had been dead over a year by then, and I had no clue where it might be. My mum and I searched her house thoroughly. We found all sorts, but no **Doctor Who**.

I came home feeling totally dejected. I remember sitting in my office, wondering what on Earth I was going to say if Big Finish said they were interested. Then my eyes happened to fall on a buff folder on my bottom shelf, covered in dust. I had no idea what it was and, just for a laugh, picked it up and had a look – would you believe it, the entire *Leviathan* script was in there, minus one or two pages from the back. How it got there I'll never know, but again, it was almost like the hand of fate.

That same evening, David Richardson contacted me and asked to see the script. There was no electronic version, but I scanned it and sent it. David came back quickly, saying that he liked it very much and that it would be a perfect addition to the missing season package.

What was it like adapting the existing TV script into audio form? Were there any particular changes required?

It was more of a challenge than I'd expected, particularly given that I had a tight deadline. My dad was a very filmic writer. There was minimal dialogue, and a multitude of stage directions. Without wanting to give too much away about *Leviathan*, there were a

number of set-piece sequences in the original that were almost entirely visual. Both David Richardson and I knew that this was something we had to get around, but we also knew that we had to get around it convincingly, so I had to add more than a few extra lines. But by the same token, we didn't want to lose any of the pace or action, of which there was plenty.

In fact, to be honest, there were times when I looked at the original script and genuinely wondered how a BBC children's television budget could ever have accommodated some of the scenes that my dad had envisaged and the Beeb had okayed. I discussed this with Colin Baker and Nicola Bryant when I was down at the Ladbroke Grove recording session, and both agreed that some of the action scenes were so complex that it was difficult to imagine them being pulled off effectively on early evening TV. Colin wondered if this might have been the reason for *Leviathan* getting the axe – perhaps it was simply too ambitious a project?

Either way, to get around this on audio required a number of consultations between David Richardson and I, but thankfully – as I've found throughout my time working for Big Finish – we were both singing from the same song-sheet. We never had any artistic differences. We knew what we wanted, and that we only had a short time to deliver it, so we got on with the job and it came off for us.

On the upside – and it seems strange but this only occurred to me when I got into the actual writing – audio gave us lots more freedom. I suddenly realised that we could give the story a much bigger sweep. But the real advantage of going audio, I think, has been with regard to the main monster. It's a terrifying entity, a brutal and remorseless slayer of the innocent, but it might have been less so if screened early evening on a low budget TV show. On audio, we've been able to give it full rein – the only limit to the horror now is the audience's imagination.

Did you enjoy watching the story being recorded?

It's probably the best day at work I've ever spent. And I mean that most sincerely. Because *Leviathan* had given me the opportunity to at last work with my dad, albeit posthumously on his part, it had a strong emotional aura for me and a real feelgood element. At 70, my dad had died far too young, and left a massive hole in our family. But resurrecting *Leviathan*, and putting my own spin on it, had enabled me to form a link with him that I never would have imagined a year and a half earlier at his funeral.

As a lifelong lover of *Doctor Who*, I was suddenly smack-bang in the middle of it, and to have a director as good as Ken Bentley occasionally stopping things to ask

my opinion – well, I've never felt so included. And then, to top it all, I went for a drink after the wrap with the cast and crew. What more could a writer ask for?

It was also made special for me, of course, because Colin Baker had been a friend of my dad's, and as a result we were able to chat together like old pals even though we'd never met.

What are you currently working on?

I have various projects on the go, one of which is a **Companion Chronicle** for Big Finish, which I'm absolutely thrilled about. I'm not going to say too much, except that it's a direct prequel to *Leviathan*. I'm now writing the script, the treatment having found favour with both Big Finish and the BBC, so hopefully it won't be long before it sees the light of day. *Leviathan* has really given me a taste for writing **Doctor Who**, and hopefully will prove to be the first of many contributions I make.

I'm halfway through a non-*Who* novel as well, which I was commissioned to write by Abaddon Books for their **Tomes of the Dead** series. I've also just sold a novelette to Steve Jones at Robinson Books for their **Mammoth Book of Zombie Apocalypse**, which will be published next Halloween. My latest book, **Walkers in the Dark** (Ash-Tree Press), a collection of four horror novellas, will be launched at the World Horror Convention in Brighton, in March.

If anyone wants to know more about my work, I don't have a website as yet, but I've finally got over my technophobia by starting a Facebook page. Please pop in any time!

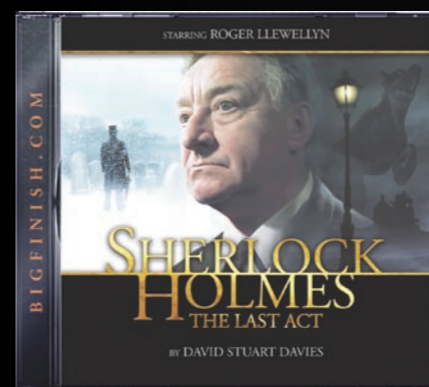
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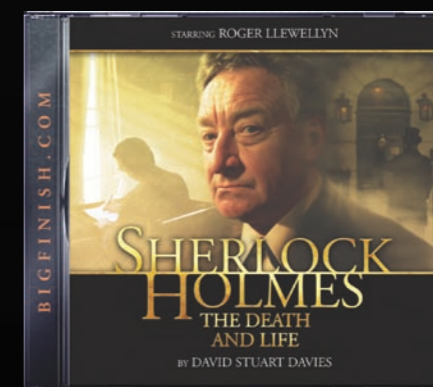
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Paul Spragg on... Up

It took me ages to find time to go and see Pixar's latest animated feature, but I'm so glad I did – and in glorious 3-D too! Right up there with their best work (the **Toy Storys**, **Monsters Inc**, **WALL-E**), **Up** pulls together a ragtag group of incredibly likeable characters and sends them on an unlikely adventure into the sky and on to the wilds of South America. As gorgeously and painstakingly animated as we've come to expect, it's an amazing experience that's happy, sad, scary, silly and... squirrel! Where was I? **Up**: a work of animated genius. I have only just met it and I love it.

David Richardson on... Rachel Getting Married

I bought this on Blu-ray as a little impulse buy, and it's become one of my favourite films. This intimate and raw movie follows recovering addict Kym (Anne Hathaway) as she returns home from 10 years in rehab to attend her sister's wedding. Anyone expecting a fluffy rom-com is in for a big surprise, as Jonathan Demme's beautifully-performed movie explores the dark and tragic heart of this tortured family. Shot on video, it's like a documentary about people who are falling apart. Outstanding.

Alex Mallinson on... Where the Wild Things Are

Despite having no great like or dislike for the book it's based on, I was hugely looking forward to this film as I admire Spike Jonze immensely. Then rumours of studio interference emerged, the film was delayed and my expectations withered away. In a way, I'm glad they did as I approached this without any emotional investment. I sat down with my partner, Alice, along with four other people in a cinema with broken air-conditioning... and was hooked from the first 30 seconds. What unfolded was so achingly beautiful, so emotionally involving that it seemed to be made specifically for us. This isn't really a film for children or adults in the traditional sense. It's for adults who refuse to grow up, and possibly for children who are wise beyond their years. It is utterly remarkable.

Paul Wilson is... Legally Blonde

Oh my god, oh my god you guys... On Saturday I went to the first preview performance of **Legally Blonde**, starring our very own Sheridan Smith. Who knew she had such a wonderful voice? I didn't, and I have to say that I was completely amazed when I heard her belting out some very catchy and funny tunes the whole night. The whole show was everything a musical should be: bright, fun and entertaining and quite sexy. If you get the chance then you must go and see it, and not only because Sheridan is in it, but because you will have an amazing night out.

Jason Haigh-Ellery on... The Thick of It

W*nk, b*ll*c*ks, c***, tw*t... These are all words used to hilarious effect by Malcolm Tucker, the snake-eyed anti-hero of the BBC's funniest series in years. It's not the words, it's the attitude connected to the words that makes the difference. **Yes Minister** if it was script edited by Tarantino. Magnificent.

Nick Briggs on... The IT Crowd... on BT Vision

So, technically, I'll be waxing lyrical about two things this month. I'm a recent convert to the old hard disc digital TV thing. We opted for BT Vision, as Virgin had proved to be utterly useless on the customer services front. And, in short, BT Vision has changed my life in probably exactly the same way that Virgin and Sky would have done. You can pause live TV and record two things at once and it's all really easy to do. Well, you know all that already. With BT, you can sign up to various free packages, but by far the best bit is having access to the BBC iPlayer, 4 On Demand and all that. You also have access to their 'best of' or 'classics', which means that I've finally been able to catch up with **The IT Crowd** properly. A very silly sitcom that got off to a rocky start, but if persisted with becomes absolutely hilarious. Seek it out immediately.

Toby Hrycek-Robinson on... Krautrock: The Rebirth of Germany

In the 1970s German bands like Can, Faust and Neu! made some truly extraordinary and uncompromising music. I worked with many of them, and delighted in this chance to see them growing old disgracefully – still whacking concrete mixers and the like for sonic effect. I spent much of the hour marvelling at how grey and decrepit they all now are before reminding myself to check a mirror!

Alan Barnes on... Fighting Fantasy gamebooks

Obviously, I've long since put in the skip such childish things as the **TSR Monster Manual**, self-painted Citadel Miniatures hobgoblin armies and back numbers of *White Dwarf*. But a few weeks back, one of my boys chanced upon a copy of **The Warlock of Firetop Mountain** in the Oxfam shop in Summertown and... well, bedtime reading hour has since been replaced by a frenzy of dice-rolling, Creature Encounters, 'To go west, turn to 274' and, with tragic regularity, 'Your mission ends here.' In real life I'm a 'Skill 5, Stamina 4, Luck 0' kind of guy, but in the Citadel of Chaos or the Forest of Doom I've become a plate-armoured, potion-quaffing, broadsword-wielding demigod. Not that I've fallen so far as to begin adventuring without the boys, but I've seen the **Steve Jackson's Sorcery!** series in the East Oxford Oxfam, and they'll be a bit hard for six-year-olds, so...

Barnaby Edwards on... Secret Army

As some of the more keen-eyed observers of my casting directorship may have detected, I have a weakness for the cast of the BBC's classic World War II serial **Secret Army**. Clifford Rose, Terrence Hardiman, Nigel Lambert and others have all graced this wonderful series, which ran to three seasons from 1977 to 1979. **Secret Army** is second only to **I, Claudius** in its genius: characters you care about, intelligent scripting, complex plots. I urge anyone who has yet to experience its manifold pleasures to buy it immediately. This is the sort of television the like of which we will never see again.

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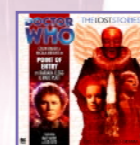
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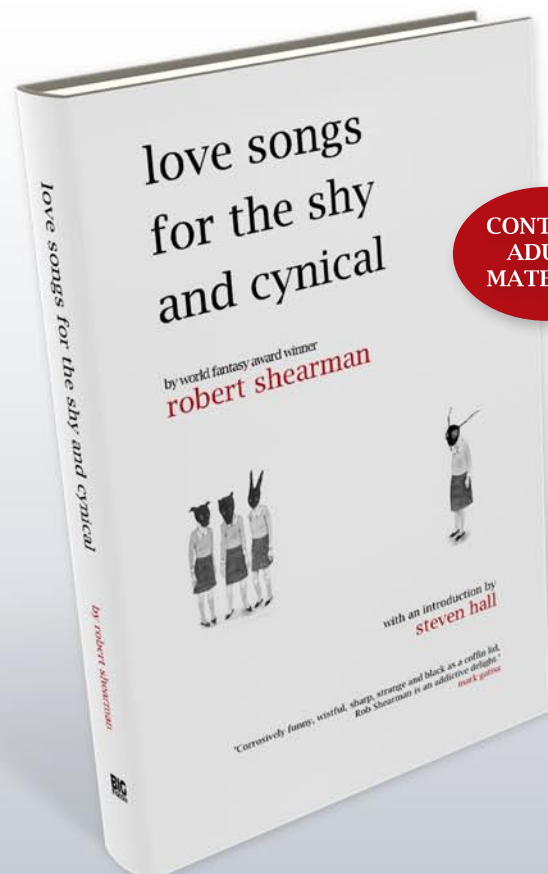
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