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MIRANDA RAISON &
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ON A VOYAGE
TO REMEMBER**

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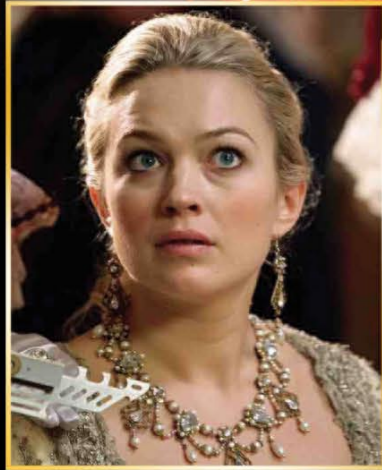
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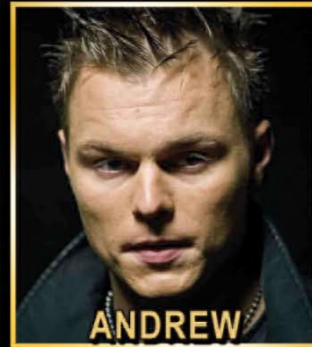
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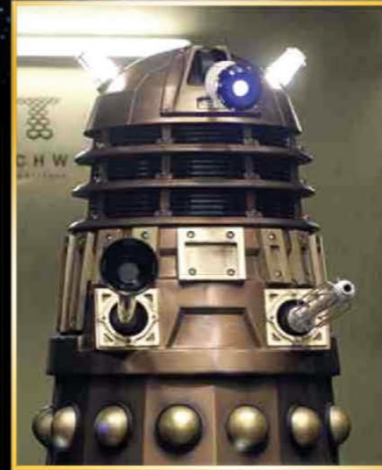
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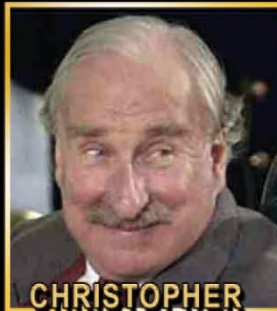
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EDITORIAL

I've just finished writing the scripts for the last two stories in the fourth and final Eighth Doctor series! As you may know, for over three years now the Eighth Doctor, played by Paul McGann, has been appearing in a special series of adventures standing apart from our main range of Doctor Who stories. Previous to that, the Eighth Doctor was part of the main range, but when BBC Radio 7 approached us about having a new series of adventures with a brand new companion, we created Lucie Miller and a whole new strand of adventures ensued. As you may know, the fourth series started back in December with *Death in Blackpool*, in which the Doctor and Lucie parted company. The series continues this July with *Situation Vacant*, when the Doctor must choose a new travelling companion. But as the season progresses, more and more bizarre things happen to the Doctor, culminating in the two-story finale I've just finished writing.

All the other stories are in the bag and in the sound design and music phase. But the

development of the finale is something that script editor Alan Barnes and I wanted to plan meticulously. Now we're ready to go into the studio with it. I won't give away too much here, but it's a truly shattering climax to a series of stories that began so long, long ago with *Blood of the Daleks*. Alan and I have set out to give you a full-blooded drama with no punches pulled. The title of the penultimate story, if revealed here, would give far too much away, but I reckon I can tease you with the title of the final story. It's... *To the Death*.

But never fear, the Eighth Doctor will not be gone from Big Finish. We're already planning for his return to the main range. As for what will take the Eighth Doctor seasons' place in the schedules... well, we've got some rather juicy plans we're working on.

Right... I shall stop being a tease and simply get on with writing up said juicy plans.

Nick Briggs – executive producer

SNEAK PREVIEWS AND WHISPERS



Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles: The Invasion of E-Space

Thirty years after he wrote *Full Circle* for the TV series, Andrew Smith returns to *Doctor Who* for a **Companion Chronicle**. And, fittingly, it's performed by Lalla Ward as Romana, and fits snugly into the E-Space trilogy between *State of Decay* and *Warriors' Gate*. The story finds the travellers trying to find their way out of this new universe while, to their surprise, actually discovering that a warlike alien species has found its way in.

AVAILABLE IN OCTOBER

Doctor Who: Situation Vacant

The fourth series of Eighth Doctor adventures continues, after a few months grace to allow us all to get over the sudden – and very upsetting – exit of Lucie Miller. But who can fill the mammoth hole that Lucie has left in the Doctor's life? That's the question without an answer, as a collection of four hopefuls step into the frame in the hope of becoming the Doctor's new companion. It's the most important day of their lives, and it's a journey to remember. And only one of them will be stepping into the TARDIS by the time those end credits roll...

AVAILABLE IN JULY

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DIRECTOR'S DIARY

Dark Shadows returns in July for *Kingdom of the Dead*, a new four-part story. Darren Gross was in the director's chair, and here he guides us through Big Finish's most ambitious **Dark Shadows** project ever...

Los Angeles, day one, and we're moments away from the start of recording on a cold morning in Burbank. A giant script: over 220 pages, four episodes and dozens of peaks, valleys, revelations and reversals. You need a cast that can deliver consistent performances, understand the script and take direction. Thankfully, we are blessed with a stalwart bunch of actors who can turn it off and on like a water tap. ▶



◀ Most of our recording sessions utilized only three or four members of our talented cast at a time, but *Kingdom of the Dead* has several complicated ensemble scenes, which we saved for the final recording day. On our last day we had eight actors, and there was much hopping in and out of the booth. All of the bigger sequences were recorded on this day, with the maximum ensemble scene featuring six of the cast in at one time.

"I can't quite hear you..." is probably what John Karlen is saying, as he seemed to have a cursed set of headphones that refused to stay put. We would have the problem sorted, have them seated properly, and turn around five minutes later to find that they had turned themselves inside out again. In the background, yours truly ponders the script. Writer Eric Wallace noticed that I only seem to wear red shirts when directing, which I assured him was coincidental, though I don't think he was convinced. If I was directing **Star Trek** audio dramas, it might be a bad omen, since, as is well known, the characters in red shirts on that always die horribly. What would be the **Dark Shadows** equivalent? Psychedelic frocks? Mini-skirts? ▶



◀ When recording the audios, we usually work in two or three-page sections, which an actor, possibly Kathryn Leigh Scott (Maggie), has spread out across the music stand, to save us from that bugbear of recording: the dreaded sound of pages turning being caught on mic.



▶ In this shot Andrew Collins is reading-in for our new character, Seraph, and playing one of several scenes with him and Jerry Lacy. About half of our sessions were recorded at Private Island Trax in Hollywood (where season one of the audio dramas and where most of the **Dark Shadows** dramatic readings were done), the rest at a studio in Burbank called Action Audio & Visual. Happily we were able to use my preferred engineer, James Barth, for all of the sessions. Spirits were extremely high on this day, and at one point Andrew kept cracking everyone up, as the absurdity of having to play Barnabas and Seraph in the same scene became too silly for words.



It conjured up the moment in **Bananas**, where Woody Allen acts as both defendant and attorney. After a few takes I stepped in and read, so that Andrew could focus on being Barnabas.



As the Sixth Doctor and Jamie drop in on the Titanic, Colin Baker talks Tonto, Time Lords and Torquay with Paul Spragg

SEA SIX!

Welcome back, Colin. You're practically living in these studios at the moment, what with the **Lost Stories** and now the pairing of Sixy and Jamie. How's it been doing the latest trilogy of stories?

Fantastic! I am constantly amazed how they keep managing to find new and original material that maintains the standard, to be quite frank. We'll be having number 200 before you can blink! I can't think of any stories I've done that would be called run-of-the-mill or ordinary. They're all good and a lot of them are fantastic and some of them are superb, and they're getting better all the time. There seems to be a never-ending supply of writers with new ideas. They say there's only, what, half a dozen stories in the world and you rearrange the words? Well, they're being rearranged fantastically and I love coming in and doing them; I look forward to it!

What's it been like, changing from India Fisher's Charley to Frazer Hines' Jamie?

Well, of course, you're used to that, aren't you? As an actor you're always working with new people. And they're all kind of family. I've never worked with India before, but I've known her from various events I've been at over the last decade and always got on well with her. I've worked with Frazer before, of course, on *The Two Doctors*, so I know Frazer well. And this is a clever story. I don't want to say too much about it...

Did you meet Frazer at conventions, prior to working on *The Two Doctors*?

I might have done the odd convention but I certainly hadn't met Frazer until he turned up to do *The Two Doctors*. So that was the first time. Location filming is a great way to get to know anybody and we had a great time over in Seville. It was the only what people might call 'cushy' number, in terms of going somewhere nice and filming, in the whole three years I did **Doctor Who**. I never got to go to Blackpool. *The Ultimate Foe* was at Camber Sands. They're not exotic locations! So Frazer and I got to go to Seville, where he won the heart of a local Spanish lady, and we had to endure that, him mooning over this poor girl... but it was great fun.

What's the Doctor's relationship with Jamie in these stories?

Well, the thing about this story is it does bring out something about the Doctor which is kind of uncomfortable. That the Doctor, over the years we have seen him in his adventures, has deposited a large number of people back into lives and is seemingly able to walk away and leave them behind without giving them another thought. It's quite uncomfortable to play that, because there is a scene where Jamie says, 'Were you not interested in what happened to me? Didn't you care?' There's the whole thing of the memory wipe by the Time Lords and all

of that, and the fact that during the Third Doctor's time he was marooned on Earth. But that aside, as soon as he was free again, why didn't he just go and check? But then, if he can go back to any time at all, you can go back to a second after you left them and check, and bring them back again. So in a sense he's never deserting anybody because you can go, pick them up, a thousand years later for him but the following day for them. But he doesn't. Interesting, isn't it?

Perhaps it's all part of a need to move on.

I think it's more to do with the fact that the programme needed to move on! [Laughs] A new actor was cast as the Doctor and the companions wanted to leg it and do something else. So we made a virtue of that.

I guess that's been touched upon a little in the new series with Rose.

It's been done all the time; every time the Lone Ranger and Tonto rode away from the town. But he did leave them in a better state than Doctor Who has left some of his companions over the years.

Is there a sense of 'chickens coming home to roost' for the Doctor, then?

There is an element of that to it, yes. There's also that wonderful aspect of finding things in the canon way back that merit further investigation and see where it takes you. And, as always, the Doctor is prey to two things. One is a third party trying to make him do something, and the other is the fact that the TARDIS tends to, thank God, throw a spanner in the works and not do quite what it's supposed to do. Because if it always did what it was supposed to do, the adventures would be quite short!

So, tell us a little bit about the stories. *City of Spires...*?

That's the story when I meet Jamie, back in the Highlands, and suddenly I find myself in the middle of a pitched battle in Scotland, Redcoats and hairy Scots having a bit of a punch-up and I'm forced to go and meet their leader, Black Donald, who turns out to be Jamie. He's changed his name to Black Donald to be a chieftain in the Highlanders but he doesn't have any memory of the Doctor. So part of the story's about the Doctor trying to get him to remember but then there's all these funny things going on with this strange mythical creature called Red Cap that has vast speed and great strength, who is dragooning the folks of the Highlands and digging for oil.

And the second story with Jamie, who's gradually going along with this, because he's interested and is starting to believe that he knew this Doctor before but still can't remember, we're on a ship called the Titanic. They think they're going on holiday on the Queen Mary with first class tickets but in fact it's the Titanic and it's on *that* day, of course, but things get a bit peculiar.

It also works as a counterpoint to the last set of more emotional stories. This has its emotion as well, because what the Doctor learns about himself is interesting.

Once again you've had some big name guest stars; who have you most enjoyed working with? Charlie Ross, of course. Charlie I know well, I've bumped into him at quite a few conventions, very funny man, great comic and a very good actor, and he's playing Rob Roy.

Both Frazer and I were weak at the knees, as indeed was David Richardson, producer of these epics, at meeting Miranda Raison. I'm a great fan of *Spooks*, and Miranda Raison is that wonderful... well, she's not short-haired any more, but the one with the short hair and the piercing blue eyes. And those eyes are for real! She really has got those eyes! She's just unbearably gorgeous and also a very fine actress. She's great and normal and funny; it's always a relief when people you think are good on telly are actually decent folk too.

And, of course, in *City of Spires*, we had Georgia Moffett, daughter of somebody who played a part involved with *Doctor Who* once. Can't remember his name. Davidson or something. But him, anyway. [Laughs] I knew Georgia when she was four years old, when she was at school with my daughter, Lucy, and they were in the same class. So there were two girls in the same class whose father was Doctor Who, which made it quite ordinary really, which was probably quite a good thing for both of them. So, having seen Georgia over the years, I knew she was a good actress, but she's really quite impressive, is Georgia. She had a child

when she was quite young, and she's managed to cope with that, bring him up on her own, and combine that with forging a career and learning how to do a difficult job, of acting. Well, I like to pretend it's difficult anyway...

She played the part of Alice, it was the wife of the engineer who created the City of Spires, and she was just fabulous to work with, great fun and a lovely girl. And lovely to meet up with her, as an adult, having known her as a child. We even went on holiday once together, the two families, down in Torquay.

Did Peter pretend to regenerate into you halfway through to confuse the kids? [Laughs] No, we never did that! I was doing a play with Georgia's mother and my wife and my other daughter, then one, came down and stayed for a few days. They had a nice time together. Happy memories.

Then there's *Legend of the Cybermen*. We've got our executive producer, Mr Briggs, strutting his stuff in silver foil. It's just a fun romp. We've got Wendy Padbury, every boy's dream of a companion, the wonderful Zoe, who's all bright and cheerful. And, of course, Wendy was my agent for about five years before she packed it all in and went off to live in France. I just adore her. Having Wendy around makes it all worthwhile.

And finally: how much have you been tormented by Frazer? Constantly! Frazer is like a gadfly, buzzing around in your ear. I'm having a very good time!

The Sixth Doctor and Jamie trilogy continues this month with The Wreck of the Titan.

Dan Berry chats to the guest stars of *The Wreck of the Titan*

ALEXANDER SIDDIG • MIRANDA RAISON

Hello, Sid. This is your second *Doctor Who* story for Big Finish, after you were in two Paul McGann episodes... Yeah, although I never saw [Paul]. I did see this amazingly beautiful other *Doctor Who* girl, Sheridan Smith. She's gorgeous. Brilliant. She was fantastic, so brightened the whole day when she was here, just as Miranda is shaping up to be brightening the whole day being here today! Which is amazingly misogynist, but what the hell!



You did a pretty controversial guest spot on *Spooks* – the show that Miranda's best known for.

Yeah. I haven't seen a lot of *Spooks*, but I know she's done that for ages. I did an episode with Matthew MacFadyen, but I don't think she was on the show then – though I do know she's a household face. I don't really know much about anybody else, because I don't work here much – I've just finished an English movie, but it was the first I'd done for 20 years! I'm really just not in the loop!

You were saying in the green room that you watched a lot of *Doctor Who* as a child...

I watched it like, you know, proper! As kids, we'd wait for that show to come on every week. I started off with Jon Pertwee and then Tom Baker – they were my Doctor Whos. And I loved them both – we had long discussions about the various benefits and coolnesses of each Doctor, like we would about Sean Connery and Roger Moore as James Bond.

You also mentioned that your family were friends with Tom Baker...

Yes, so he was a bit of a hero! But I was kind of blasé about it, when he came round. I was like, 'Hi, yeah, hi, I'm Sid, nice to meet you, yeah, whatever...'

You famously spent seven years on *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*. Are you a fan of Sci-Fi, or is it something that's just happened to recur in your career?

Yeah, I love it! I watched *Star Trek: The Next Generation* before I got the job on *Deep Space Nine*, and as I say, I watched *Doctor Who*, so I must love them, even if I'm not always prepared to admit it! I think they occupy a really great place, especially since the 1960s when kitchen sink drama became the norm, and I think it all became a little bit boring. I quite like the craziness of Sci-Fi, and the imaginative capabilities of it.

Hi Miranda! This is your third brush with *Doctor Who*, and your second using an American accent...

Obviously, they're so different. At the same time, though, Myra Selfridge is relatively similar accent-wise to

Tallulah [from TV episode *Daleks in Manhattan*] so she might sound familiar, even though they're quite different characters. But working in television there's a lot of waiting around, and with someone like Tallulah, who's such a ball of energy, you can't relax too much. Here, we're in our jeans and jumpers and you just find it – it's all in the voice.

I don't want to sound too pretentious about it, but it's all in the breath too. I was standing in the booth next to Colin and I was looking at him, thinking how much

we all move around – more than we probably would do on screen! You have to conjure things for yourself, especially since we haven't got the sound effects, so it's almost a more exciting place to be, imagination-wise.

Is it more or less enjoyable to have that extra challenge; having to dig deeper to find the character?

I don't know which is more or less enjoyable. I think they just appeal to different sides... As an actor, it's so exciting to have a character like Tallulah, with all the costumes and make-up and stunning sets, so that is fun in itself. You have so much to help get you into it on screen. You have more time, you have the read-through, you get to meet everybody, and you have the sets and costumes and things. With this, you come in and you have to bite the bullet; if you don't go for it straight away, you've blown it. It's good practice as an actor, but also good life practice, getting stuck in and giving it your all.

Sid's said he was a big fan of *Doctor Who* as a child. Did you watch it growing up?

I was never a big fan as a kid, but I did watch it. I remember finding it quite creepy. Ace was the companion when I was little, in the mid-1980s. I loved her and Sylvester McCoy, but never grew up knowing too much about it, but then getting the part of Tallulah was exciting.

Barnaby [Edwards], who is directing these, was a Dalek when I was there, and there was a moment in the underground tunnels when everybody had gone for their coffee breaks. I was in these ridiculous heels and a leotard so I decided to stay there, and it was just me and a Dalek in the corridor. I had this weird, seven-year-old sort of moment, where I just waded to the Dalek – and the Dalek waded back! Barnaby was in it, and he made the plunger wave! He said that quite a lot of the time people have a moment with the Daleks!



The Cast of the Titan: Matt Addis, Alexander Siddig, Miranda Raison, Colin Baker, Christopher Fairbank and Frazer Hines



WITHOUT A GRACE

Simon Guerrier introduces **Graceless**, in which Tracer twins Abby and Zara return...

'Explain **Graceless** to the fans,' commanded my bosses, 'and how it came about.' Easy, I thought, it's the fans who made it happen.

Saturday, 31 October 2009. I'm in Florida at a **Doctor Who** convention. Big Finish big chief Jason Haigh-Ellery is using me as a human shield on a panel where we're quizzed about our work.

A particularly shining example of all that's best in humanity raises a nervous hand: 'When are there going to be more stories with Amy and Zara?' Amy and Zara, for those not paying attention, first appeared in last year's **Doctor Who** audio adventure *The Judgement of Isskar* – which was written by me. Amy's a living Tracer, built by beings called The Grace to track down half the segments of the Key to Time. Nice but naïve, Amy was only a few minutes old when she met the Fifth Doctor. But lucky for her that she did, as she is easily influenced by anyone around her.

Amy's twin sister, Zara, was not so lucky. She'd been built to the same pattern as Amy, and had to track down the other half of the segments. But rather than being influenced by a nice bloke like the Doctor, she struck up with an old rogue called Zink. Soon she was opening up a black hole on an unsuspecting Mars and all sorts of other unsavoury stuff.

After three adventures with the Fifth Doctor – and a **Companion Chronicle** in which Zara met the Seventh Doctor's friend Ace – it looked like the Tracer twins' story was over. Amy was off to Gallifrey to learn more about her powers. Zara, renouncing her wicked ways, left to live happily ever after with a nice chap called Pargrave.

Jason and I mumbled that we'd consider the idea. After the panel, more wise specimens of humanity came up to ask about Amy and Zara. Some listeners, we noticed, really took the two girls to their hearts. Jason and I were both keen to work more with Ciara Janson and Laura Doddington, who play Amy and Zara. You meet good, talented people who are fun to work with in this business and you cling on tight.

So Jason took me out to dinner to discuss how a series might work, with the girls getting into trouble what with having no Doctor to guide

them. We swapped ideas to and fro across the table and quaffed inexpensive fizz. Obviously, it's not quite as simple as that. Dinner and fizz were just the start of the process, Jason testing the idea in principle without having to make a commitment. I then had to pitch ideas and outlines before the series was fully greenlit. A mini-series is still an expensive thing to produce, so these things are never decided lightly.

We needed good, new stories to tell, about these two characters specifically. What would be the point if we could tell the same adventures with Iris Wildthyme or Bernice Summerfield? (That's no slur on either of those fine ladies, whom I have written for on previous occasions.) So I had a couple more meetings with Jason – and the producer he assigned me, Mark Wright – before we got to contracts and money.

As with **Benny** and **Iris**, there will be no **Doctor Who** elements in **Graceless**. It's its own, standalone series. Jason explained that it's good for Big Finish to have a stock of characters all its own, running alongside its licences. It makes the company more secure. Standalone characters can inspire devoted followings. Bernice lost the Doctor as far back as 1997 and is still going strong today. More importantly, without her going it alone there would be no Big Finish today.

As with Benny, we worked on standalone stories for each CD but with an ongoing development of our lead characters. Amy and Zara face some very tough decisions in the series, but having lost the Doctor and the Grace, what else is there to lose? Well, there's Amy's name. That came up in discussion at one of Jason's swanky London clubs, as he and Mark Wright looked over my first outline. Wasn't the new TV companion going to be called Amy, they asked? Would we have to explain to every potential customer that no, this wasn't *that* Amy? Names are important, the Doctor told our Amy when he gave her a name. This series springs from the girls not having the Doctor any more. So it became part of the story *and* a good business decision for Amy to become Abby. (She's named after someone we've met at a few conventions.)

We hope you'll enjoy **Graceless**. Do tell us what you think.

Graceless is out in October 2010

I would just like to say how sad I am to see the end of Lucie Miller. She was such a good, alive character, and although she started out as a really stropy teenager I really grew to like her. I think Sheridan Smith is amazing, her voice acting is first class and her sense of timing was spot-on. She will be sorely missed. Can you reveal who will be replacing her?

I wondered if Big Finish has ever considered finding a totally blind companion for the Doctor? I think it's a really interesting concept; she could have a K9 dog for audio feedback so she would know when to duck, scream or when to use her extremely effective laser gun located in her white cane. I just thought I would throw that idea at the team.

Thanks for the many happy hours of audio and for the podcasts. I find them very funny, they really cheer me up and are full of very nice voices, my favourite being Nick himself. I love the banter and how nice Nick is to everyone, he sounds like he's always smiling even when in Dalek mode!

Best wishes,
Lori Duncan

Nick: I am *always* smiling, Lori... but usually out of fear! Paul Spragg and David Richardson are very scary people. I've been asking Steven Moffat to have them play villains in the new series. I think they'd give children nightmares. In fact, they already do, just walking past them in the street. But... ho, ho (big smile), seriously, Lori, I can't adequately express how much I agree with you about Sheridan. But I'll give it a go... She is utterly amazing. She's so much fun to be around and work with and she is, of course, a superb actress. I don't think the industry has quite woken up to just how brilliant she is. The reason we decided that it was time for Lucie to part company with the Doctor was that we wanted her to be remembered as brilliant. There's always the possibility of having a character stay around for too long. Some people, for example, felt that about Charley (although India is brilliant), which is one of the reasons why we gave her a whole new, fresh set of adventures with the Sixth Doctor, which totally reinvigorated her. It's a question of not telling the same stories over and over again. And we feel that we've left Lucie behind when the prospect of the character feeling repetitive was still a very long way off. There's an old adage in showbusiness, that you should leave 'em wanting more. I think that's the best way to go. That said, I miss her dreadfully... and I really did feel massively privileged to work with Sheridan.

Having recently purchased series one to five of **Bernice Summerfield** I discover that much of the plot lies in book releases

(*The Squire's Crystal*, *The Infernal Nexus*, *The Glass Prison* and *A Life of Surprises*) and that they're no longer available and cost a fortune on Amazon! Bit of a cop out, I think. Any plans? A text-only download perhaps? C'mon!

Thanks,
Christopher Forbes

Nick: I shall bring that up at the next production meeting. I just sent your email to Jason Haigh-Ellery and David Richardson so it goes on the agenda!

I thought *The Architects of History* was extremely well done, and enjoyed it even more than the other brilliant releases in the Klein trilogy. It was the return of the character that finally convinced me to subscribe and it's definitely been worth it.

Louise Hughes

Nick: So glad to hear you're on board, and getting more as a subscriber. Well, you know that old slogan.

After a particularly awful week I decided to cheer myself up and subscribed to the **Lost Stories**. Yes, I know it's late but I am a poor student and had to save up.

I have only listened to disc one of *The Nightmare Fair* but I can confidently say that if the rest are as good I will not be disappointed.

You mentioned in a podcast or magazine article that you were going for an Eighties feel to them. To be honest I didn't think you would pull it off, but I was completely wrong. I was playing it on my computer and found myself glancing at the monitor hoping to see the Celestial Toymaker in all his glory. It felt like the first new classic episode for 20 years!

Rambling sleep deprived email over. I'm off to rob a bank and pre-order season two!
Richard Jackson

Nick: We really appreciate your becoming a **Lost Stories** subscriber, but naturally would not condone bank robbery as a way of funding subscriptions. Although if I was on the jury, obviously I would vote 'not guilty'.

I have recently just downloaded the **Doctor Who Companion Chronicle Freakshow** with the offer from *Doctor Who Magazine*. I really enjoyed it, and as a fan brought up on the new series with a selection of Classic Series DVDs, you've done a great job in getting me interested in the Doctor's audio adventures.

As I am purchasing an iPod nano soon, I was wondering whether Big Finish audio stories are available to

purchase in iTunes? **The Lost Stories** range looks quite interesting as I am interested in the 1985 hiatus and the original plans for **Doctor Who's** 23rd season in 1986. If they are, I was going to buy them as soon as possible, starting with *The Nightmare Fair*.

Alexander Noonan

Nick: We are currently not available on iTunes. In order to be able to fund our productions, it is more cost-effective for us to sell direct. As you will understand, I'm sure, when a production company distributes through another party such as iTunes, this other party needs to take a considerable cut of money, which would leave us without the funds to create the productions in the first place.

Just been listening to your March podcast, and wanted to add that the tour of **Stop Messing About** will also be calling at Theatre Royal Bath from Monday 26th April - Saturday 1st May (it hasn't been updated on the play's website yet). Always look forward to the podcasts, great stuff!

Matt Bragg

At Gallifrey One this year, three of my friends and I who have just recently gotten into cosplay decided to dress up as four of Big Finish's best known audio companions: (from right to left in the photo) Erimem, Evelyn, Hex and Charley. We met Jason and Nick while in these outfits, and they asked us to send them a picture. I would've sent one sooner, but since I was the girl who foolishly forgot her camera, it took me this long to track one down. This one was taken on Brian Colky's camera (who was our Hex). I was Charley. Sorry the quality's not better, but it's the best one I've found so far of the whole group. If you guys would like me to send any better ones I find (if I get the photographer's permission, of course), let me know.

Thanks so much for creating such inspiring characters!

Julie Jekel

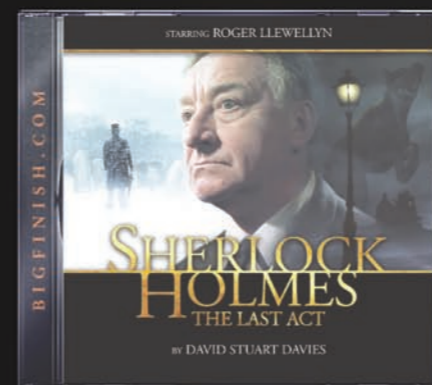
Nick: Thank you for brightening up our letters page. It was quite a thrill to meet you all. It never occurred to me that people would dress up as audio characters, but I've encountered the phenomenon a couple of times now, and I think it's fun.



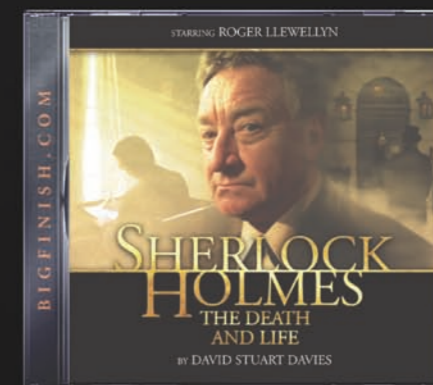
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A WHALE OF A TALE

Pat Mills discusses the voyage undertaken to get this month's **Lost Story** *The Song of Megaptera* into the studio.

How did *The Song of Megaptera* first begin life? It was a **Doctor Who** story submitted to the BBC back in the days of Tom Baker and Peter Davison.

Then known as *Space Whale*, the script editor Chris Bidmead liked it and it was commissioned for TV. It went through numerous versions, partly down to the changes going on with the TV version of **Doctor Who** at the time and partly

down to my own inexperience as a writer. It was eventually accepted for TV and then some months later they changed their minds and cancelled it. With the benefit of experience, the key to the whole thing was to have an appropriate template/role model. I find this essential in all forms of creative writing to stay in the tramlines of what is expected. At that time there wasn't a good role model – the character of the Doctor was going through considerable and ongoing changes and it was hard to judge what was actually appropriate.

Probably the nearest role model at that time would be the fast action thriller style that Eric Saward was writing, notably with the Cybermen. But I think they weren't actually out when I was revising and the pacing and tempo of other **Who** stories was very different.

A key factor was the Captain. I believed it was feasible for him to be a working class character as he was the captain of a factory ship. Eric Saward the script editor didn't think this was appropriate and he was never happy with my alternative. I think the audio version shows that it is feasible to have a working class captain, not least through the casting. But of course it was a very long time ago and views on working class heroes and villains were very different then.

How many drafts were written in total?

I would guess about seven. Often very different to each other because the castaways inside the whale were always changing. And the companions. I think it had Tegan, Nyssa and Adric (or Turlough) at one point. That's a lot of companions in a story primarily suited to one companion.

Why do you think it never reached the screens?

I know from other things I've written over the years that if an editor or a producer wants something to happen it will, and if he doesn't, it won't. He will find reasons which are valid enough, but they're not always at the heart of why he is saying yes or no. A golden rule was pointed out to me by a BBC script editor at a script writers workshop

I attended shortly afterwards. I pass this on to aspiring writers if they're not already aware of it or haven't figured it out. Holding a post-mortem on *Space Whale*, I explained all the foregoing to him and then he interrupted me: 'Was the commissioning editor the editor who cancelled it?' 'No,' I replied. 'That's why,' he said. 'Don't look for other explanations. You would have stood very little chance of getting it through.' Actually he said, 'no chance' but I'm sure there must be exceptions.

How did you feel when Big Finish approached you to adapt it as one of the **Lost Stories?**

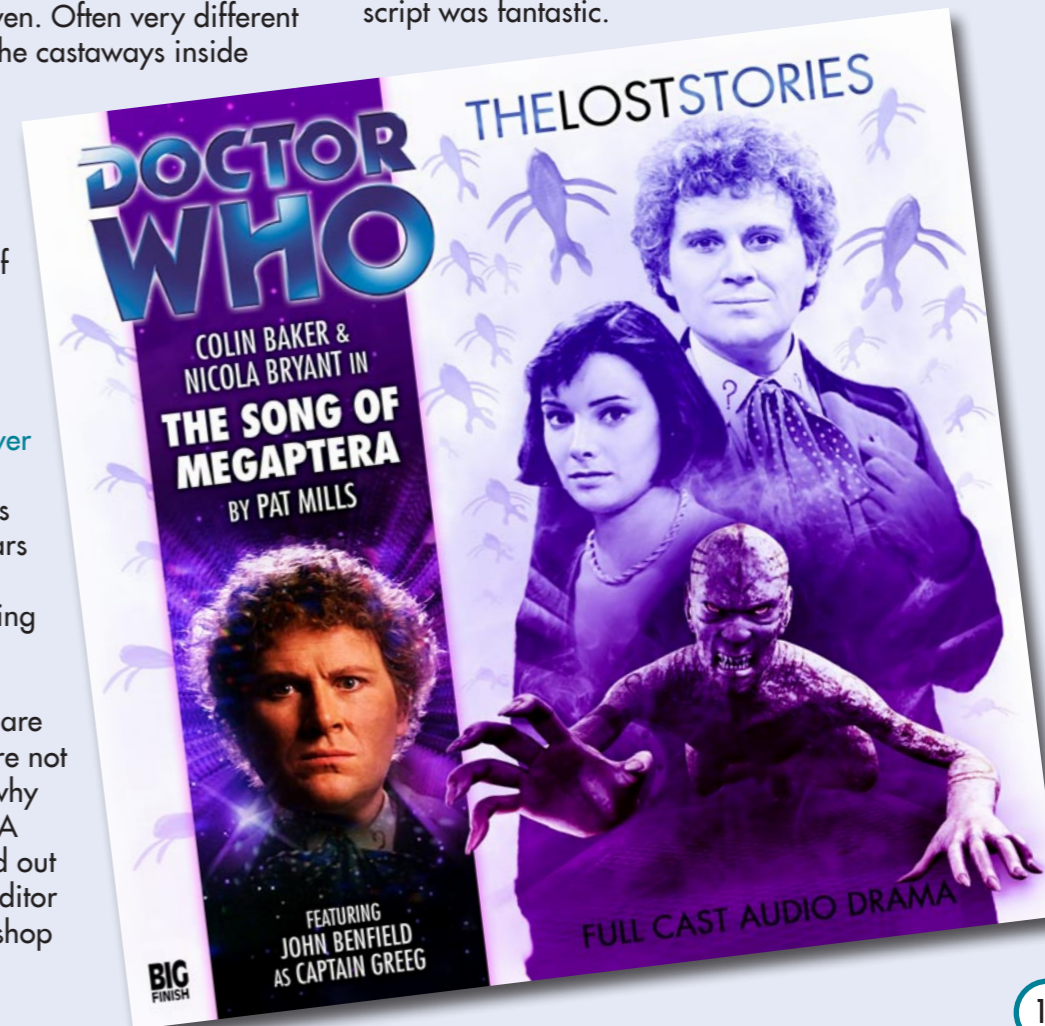
Delighted, because it's a great story that deserves to see the light of day. These days its fast pacing and sparser dialogue is far more valid than it was back then – for instance, the Bourne films have a fast and furious tempo that would have been unthinkable years ago.

Why did you choose to go with the Sixth Doctor and Peri version?

The final TV version before it was cancelled was written for Colin Baker. It's worked out very well because I found Colin's input on the audio script was fantastic.



Mills and his crew. Clockwise from top left are: Alex Lowe, Neville Watchurst, John Benfield, John Banks, Pat Mills and Toby Longworth



He really cares about what he's doing, the characters and the story. I feel really privileged that he played the Doctor in my script.

What was the process of adapting it to audio like?

It is different inasmuch as everyone needs characterising. In TV, security guards can just go round with guns. For audio, they need personality too. And there is one huge advantage audio has over TV: the factory ship can be a mile long! There's an unlimited SFX budget for audio. Provided the characters adequately describe scenes, they can be huge and awesome.

Was it fun attending the studio recording?

Yes – and so exciting seeing all these great actors bring the story to life. Especially Colin Baker. He picked up minor glitches in the plot and dialogue and was very proactive in suggesting alternatives. I really appreciated his positive feedback on the story.

Are you satisfied with the production?

I haven't heard the final version yet, but – judging by the studio recording – I'm sure it's going to be great.

Are there any marked differences working on, say, one of the **Lost Stories** to doing one of the **Eighth Doctor Adventures**?

Not really. I think because the TV story was already in existence and pretty polished, I was given more leeway, perhaps. Although I was having to recreate the story from memory because I only had a very early TV draft to refer to. I'd thrown all the others away.

What are you working on now?

I've just signed off on draft seven of **American Reaper** – a screenplay for Xingu Films who did **Moon**. It's an SF action thriller and this draft has been greenlit to go out to directors – which means there's probably only about seven drafts to go. I'm joking – there's probably loads more! So although it was a tough experience endlessly rewriting *Space Whale*, it was a baptism of fire that has served me well over the years and given me lots of stamina. It taught me that I had to get used to rewrites and still keeping my edge, finding ways to put new energy into each draft. I think there's lots of new energy gone into the audio version of *Space Whale* and I can't wait to listen to it.

Doctor Who: The Lost Stories - *The Song of Megaptera* is out this month.



The Space Whale is snared by the mile-long Orcas, but the TARDIS hurtles to the rescue! Artwork by Alex Mallinson

Alex Mallinson on... Falling Over

I fell down the stairs yesterday, and as I lay on the hard cellar floor, swearing loudly with a throbbing ankle, I remembered how much fun accidents were. There's that odd sort of pain that makes you want to laugh and cry simultaneously, the moment of cold shock which gives way to a glittering endorphin rush that enables you to hop to your feet and carry on. Accidents and their resultant scars are ready-made twitters and stories. I love the scar scene in **Jaws**. We're all Chief Brody, wondering if our appendix scar will qualify. I once fell into some broken glass which, from a distance, made it look like I'd had a Chinese character tattooed onto my cheek. Probably not a very flattering one. My favourite was when I plunged chin-first into a car's exposed wheel hub in Soho and the paramedic said it looked like I had 'a second mouth'. Not that I need one. The first one is big enough. So I'll shut up now.

俳句 Barnaby Edwards on... Haiku

Doctor Who haiku
Are harder than Drashigs' teeth
Try your own this spring

Jason Haigh-Ellery on... Over the Rainbow

In the footsteps of a load of Nancys, Josephs and Marias, Lord Andrew Lloyd-Webber is on the hunt for a Dorothy to star in **The Wizard of Oz**. It's a tried and tested format and a big ratings winner. It's also good entertainment, as all the finalists can sing and dance and have a pretty good acting head on their shoulders.

Okay – from the off, I'm completely biased. My friend Lauren is in the final ten. If she's out by the time you read this, it was a travesty of injustice. If she's won – well, go and see the show: she's brilliant!

Alan Barnes on... Wonders of the Solar System

I always hated Physics the most. Easily the beardiest, tweediest science, with added Maths – I swear, even the textbooks smelled of old men's pipes – I switched off altogether early in the Third Form, and I was actually excluded from taking the O-Level, for fear (I presume) of damaging my posh school's pass rate. Professor Brian Cox, on the other hand, loved Physics, and the genius of his approach is to locate his tour of the Solar System on the ground, showing the processes shaping (say) Saturn's rings at work in an Icelandic lagoon, or in the Sahara. After five weeks of his boundless, uncynical, awestruck enthusiasm, I too heart Physics, in all its beardy, tweedy, old-men's-pipeyness.

David Richardson on... Matt Smith

When I saw the BBC's Sally Lockhart mysteries, I was really struck by the cast – particularly JJ Feild, Hayley Atwell and Matt Smith. JJ and Hayley have both worked for Big Finish; Matt... well, we did try for him. I think it was around 18 months ago. And he wasn't available. But I suspect that he already knew he was the Doctor, and coming in to play a guest role for us might cause some sort of Space/Time implosion. Or something.

Did you see Matt in **Party Animals**? Brilliant. And he's walked into the role of the Eleventh Doctor and created something really special indeed. He owned the role from the very first scene of *The Eleventh Hour* – quirky and vibrant and alien and humane and just so infinitely interesting. Two episodes in and he's another one of my favourite Doctors. I'm impressed.

Paul Spragg on... South Park

Remember when **South Park** was everywhere, with endless merchandise and constant media attention? Well, it's still on. And the beauty of attention having moved elsewhere is that Trey Parker and Matt Stone can continue to do what the hell they like and get away with it. This week saw transmission of the 200th episode, which is essentially a greatest hits of the show. When Tom Cruise, now working in a factory where he packs fudge into boxes, enlists 200 celebrities who've been insulted by South Park to file a class action lawsuit against the town, it looks like the only hope is to hand over Muhammad so that the celebrities can steal the Prophet's power not to be abused by the public. Meanwhile, Cartman learns that he may have been lied to about the identity of his father...

Brilliantly, and knowingly, reusing long-gone characters and old plotlines (people keep asking, 'We're not doing this again, are we?'), the whole thing culminates in the return of the mechanoid Barbra Streisand from way back in the first series, now in full CG. It's insane, it's satirical, it's unapologetically brazen, and it's magnificent.

Toby Hrycek-Robinson... Van Gogh: Painted with Words

With every word spoken by Benedict Cumberbatch as Van Gogh sourced from letters to his younger brother Theo, this docu-drama successfully avoided a simplistic 'mad as cheese' portrayal of him, revealing a sophisticated, highly intelligent and civilised man all too acutely aware of his social ineptitude.

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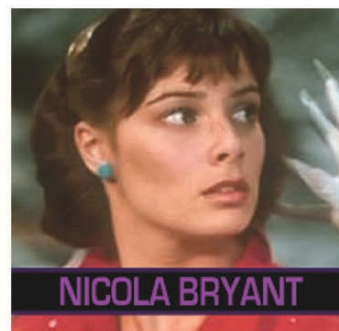
JEAN MARSH



DEBORAH WATLING



FRAZER HINES



NICOLA BRYANT



with...

MICHAEL GOLDSMITH
"The Waters of Mars"

GEMMA CHAN
"The Waters of Mars"

WARIS HUSSEIN
Director

ZIENIA MERTON
"Marco Polo" & SJA

DANIEL KING
"The Unicorn & The Wasp"

PAUL RICHARD BIGGIN
"Turn Left"

ANTHONY LEWIS
Torchwood

DAVID SPENSER
"The Abominable Snowmen"

VICTOR PEMBERTON
Writer & Script Editor

plus...

THE LOST STORIES

Big Finish will be discussing the production of their latest series with
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which include Bed, Breakfast and Dinner.
Hotel Guests will also be able to use all onsite facilities including a state of the art Gym, Sauna & Steam Room, Swimming Pool, Billiards Room, & access to the historic main house and grounds.
Rooms are limited and we suggest booking before 14th March to guarantee yourself accommodation.

For those travelling by public transport, the nearest station is Charlbury which has direct services from London Paddington and Oxford. Utopia will be providing transport to and from the venue at selected times during the weekend, otherwise it is only a short journey by taxi!

For more information, latest guest announcements and to purchase tickets and accommodation please visit:

www.utopiaevent.co.uk