

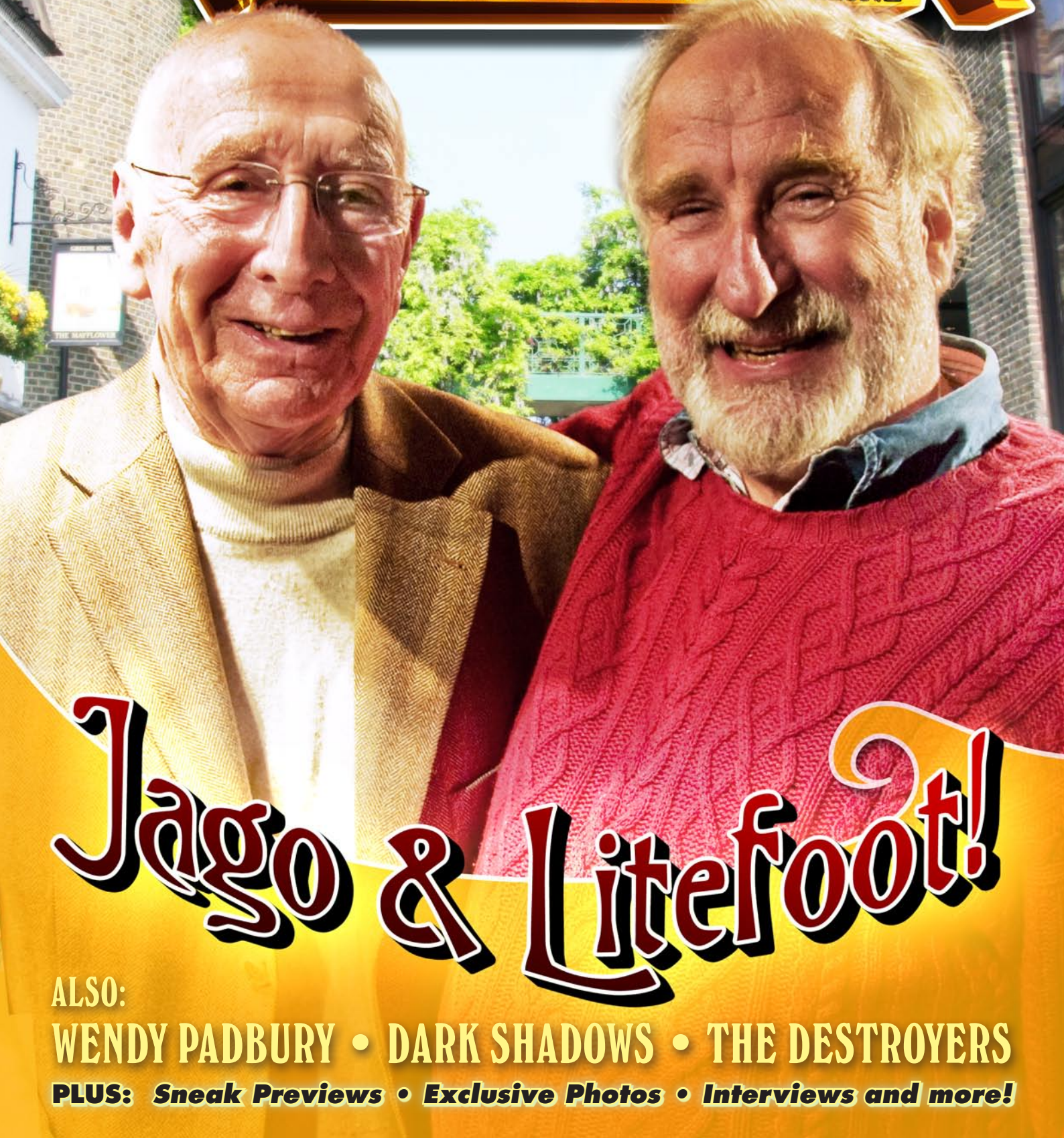
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ISSUE #16 JUNE 2010
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EDITORIAL

One of the many joys of this job is that I get to do a lot of conventions. It's a great opportunity to get out there, meet the people who buy our CDs, and chat about the stories and the ranges. And it's a wonderful chance to be reacquainted with our actors again, and just have a bit of time to chat and catch up. We had a lot of fun at the recent Utopia convention in Chipping Norton, where people finally were able to see that Ken Bentley does exist! Really, he does! And soon we'll be at Bad Wolf in Birmingham – the Big Finish table will be staffed by myself and Richard Dinnick, and Sarah Sutton and Lisa Bowerman will be signing CDs. Nyssa and Benny at the BF table! We hope to see many of you there... (for details, see the ad on the inside back cover.)

Mention of conventions brings me to a little tale that makes me chortle. You see, we were hugely busy at Utopia. And help came unexpectedly from young Callum, who helped us no end throughout the weekend. At our table, we had this huge poster designed by Alex Mallinson – it's gorgeous, depicting the Big Finish Doctors and all their companions. A brilliant, dazzling work of art. Anyway, signing nearby was Tracey Childs, who plays the Seventh Doctor's companion/enemy Klein.

Impressed by the poster, Callum scuttled off to Tracey and pulled her over. "Look at this!" he enthused. "You are part of the **Doctor Who** universe." Tracey was indeed very happy, and burst into a broad grin.

"Mind you, your picture's really small compared to all the others," Callum added.

Tracey's face collapsed into a feigned steely stare. She had that Klein look – the one that can destroy entire timelines – and swivelled on her heels, marching away.

Tracey and Callum – here's to you. I'm still chortling now.

David Richardson

Right: Callum helps out a grateful Paul Wilson and David Richardson



SNEAK PREVIEWS AND WHISPERS

Short Trips on audio

The **Doctor Who** short story collection isn't dead – it's just moved to a different medium! Welcome to **Short Trips** on audio, and each two-disc release will contain eight short stories, all read by famous **Doctor Who** actors. Confirmed so far for the first four volumes are Katy Manning (reading the Third Doctor stories), Louise Jameson (reading the Fourth Doctor), Colin Baker (reading the Sixth Doctor stories) and Sophie Aldred (Seventh Doctor). And – even more excitingly – Colin is making his debut as a **Doctor Who** audio writer, penning *The Wings of a Butterfly* for the first release.

You'll probably be familiar with some of the other writers, including Andrew Cartmel, Simon Guerrier, James Moran and Kate Orman. But there are plenty of new names in the mix too, as editor Xanna Eve Chown has selected many of them from the **Short Trips** Writers' Opportunity that was held a few months back. This is their first published work – read by one of their TV heroes!

Short Trips on audio makes its debut at the end of the year, with subsequent volumes published every three months.
AVAILABLE IN NOVEMBER

Jago & Litefoot: Series Two

Series One is only just dropping through the letterbox (or downloading into folders), and already the sequel is well underway. Christopher Benjamin and Trevor Baxter have recorded the second run of this sublime spin-off, for which the wonderful David Collings joins the principle cast as Gabriel Sanders. Events take a darker spin this time around, as tragedy strikes close to



home and the irrepressible investigators face up to a mad scientist, a deadly funfair event and a family with a dark secret. Available for pre-order now!
AVAILABLE IN JANUARY 2011

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KINGDOM COME

Jack-of-few-trades Alex Mallinson was in studio for the recording of **The Daleks: The Destroyers**.

David Richardson, producer of the **Lost Stories**, and indeed quite a bit of Big Finish's output, is impossible to say 'no' to. I've tried, but he's a steely man more akin to a Bond villain than a producer. If you've heard him on the podcast then you'll probably think him a mild-mannered, soft-spoken gentleman. How wrong you'd be. I'm only half joking. He's the perfect mix of unyielding professionalism and infectious enthusiasm. He exudes such a quiet excitement for everything he does that one is just swept along by it. That said, I'd have been a fool to say 'no' to a chance to fill a small role in **The Daleks: The Destroyers** – Terry Nation's pilot script for a proposed American Dalek series, adapted by Nick Briggs and John Dorney.

Predictably, the cast was a delight and the small size of my role enabled me to spend more time in the green room listening to them. One expects actors to be garrulous but nothing prepared me for the wonderful Jean Marsh, whose bawdy and mischievous banter is in stark contrast to the stately and regal roles she's famous for. From her politicised upbringing to Wikipedia's premature announcement of her death, she kept us entertained until she was swept back to the booth. Playing both narrator and Sara Kingdom kept Jean busy most of the day. Luckily, co-stars Alan Cox and Chris Porter were just as outgoing. Alan last appeared in the 2004 audio *The Roof of the World* and this was Chris's fourth Big Finish in recent months. He also voiced the sinister Smilers in TV **Doctor Who's** recent *The Beast Below*.

Lisa Bowerman, who needs no introduction, called me in for my first scene. I was to be playing David Kingdom, Sara's younger brother. When I told Jean this, her expression clouded for a moment and she politely asked "Don't I kill

you?" She did, of course, slay her other brother, played by Nicholas Courtney, in 1964. It hadn't escaped me that I was following in such hallowed footsteps. I won't say if I survive or not!

One thrill was denied me though. Thinking this was to be my first scene with the Daleks I was twitchy with excitement, but it turned out Nick Briggs wasn't available that day so John Dorney provided stunt Dalek duties. Earlier I'd done the same, and standing in for Nick is a frightening thing. Although John did a valiant job, it wasn't quite the same. It probably sounds disingenuous, Nick's my boss after all and editor of this very magazine; but the experience made me appreciate the job he does. We all imitate Daleks, perhaps in order to demand something from our spouses – I know I do – but the real thing is such a finely balanced performance that you don't know it's wrong until Nick's not doing it. Just as when you watch *Day of the Daleks*, or when that Imperial Dalek confronts Ace and the Doctor in part two of *Remembrance of the Daleks* and bizarrely states that they will be 'Ex-Tumin-Ay-Ted', the Daleks lose some of their power when they don't live up to our expectations.

In this story, though, they are as vicious as ever. The striking opening scenes have them at their most impassive, truly implacable. Alan, Chris and I doubled as doomed extra characters and the script demanded we 'twist and writhe' under their merciless fire. I was instantly reminded of the early episodes. Raised in the Eighties, I was used to a diet of vivid effects and thunderous music, but I've come to appreciate those Sixties serials with their utterly unearthly soundtracks and the strange horror of the early exterminations: the gun stalk spitting viperishly and the screen burning negative. I've no doubt *The Destroyers* will conjure up that era again.

The Daleks: The Destroyers is out in December as part of *The Lost Stories: The Second Doctor Box Set*.



Chris Porter, Jean Marsh and Alan Cox prepare to face the Daleks



A THEATRICAL IMPRESARIO AND A FORENSIC PATHOLOGIST WALKED INTO A BAR...

Christopher Benjamin and Trevor Baxter chat to Paul Spragg about the first season of adventures for those venerable Victorian sleuths, *Jago & Litefoot*

Let's start at the beginning. How did you feel when asked to perform last year's *Companion Chronicle*, *The Mahogany Murderers*?

CB: Oh, it was wonderful. What was it, 30-odd years [since their first appearance in *The Talons of Weng-Chiang*]? We just fell back into the old routine, into the same parts. I hadn't actually seen Trevor between, though I'd spoken to him on the phone. So it was really a wonderful reunion.

TB: This is actors, we click back immediately as if there's been no time between us at all! We remembered all the laughs we had and all the fun we had and everything and he's a joy to work with. Such a good actor.

Was that rapport there immediately when you met on *Talons*?

CB: I think so, yes it was. We had good times together and lots of fun off set. I think as actors we have an immediate rapprochement and there are not many actors who are difficult to get on with. And that's the great thing about being in the profession.

TB: We're both actors, we pretend to like each other! [laughs] That's why we all call each other darling, so we don't have to remember each other's names! Actors have that facility – particularly, I think, the older actors – because we did a lot of rep and things like that where you were constantly meeting new people, fresh casts, and it was quite frightening and quite nervous, so you had to develop a nobility to seem relaxed and composed, and confident and composed can become the reality. So for Christopher and I to meet up again, we both knew what we wanted to do with our parts, we both respected each other's way of working and just slotted in.

CB: I get on so much better with other actors than I do with normal people! Acting is such a stupid profession, just pretending to be other people all the time, and then this incredible insecurity of it; you do one job, you just don't know if you're going to get another one. And these are pressures and tensions which most people [never experience] – although nowadays, in this modern age, people are much more insecure than they were – but [for actors] it's happening all the time; you do a job, boom, and then you think you're never gonna work again. And then something happens. We're not in control of our lives at all. We're working till Monday and how do we know whether we're going to get any more? The suspicion is that there will be more, but you can't live on *Jago & Litefoot* alone!

What do you remember of making *The Talons of Weng-Chiang*?

TB: Quite a lot really. I remember how cold it was filming on the Thames, that was absolutely bitter. I remember liking the script when I read it, very much, and I liked working with Tom Baker, I thought he was extremely good. I liked what he brought to that part. Wonderful dedication and commitment. I liked Louise Jameson, who I worked with subsequently. Christopher and I, we used to get quite giggly at times because some of it's so funny, up in the dragon room and everything, and when you do develop a sort of personal relationship, a twinkle in the eye between each other, it sometimes can be quite tricky, quite dangerous. But I do remember it as a wholly enjoyable experience.

CB: I remember staying out at some hotel in Northampton, and I remember working in the Theatre Royal, which I thought was a lovely theatre and it had real atmosphere backstage. I must go back there one day. And Tom was terribly friendly. He was lovely. I was like a Doctor Watson, both to Tom and to Trevor. They were the ones Jago looked up to.

Have you seen *Talons* recently?

CB: I have done, yes. I don't think I got a DVD. When the tapes came out first, I saw it then. It's a very frightening action [story] apart from one or two moments we all know about, like the great rat, which is a pity.

TB: Well that's, of course, what people remembered it for. At the time it was the giant rat. Whenever I refer to the programme, I always say, well, it's the one with the giant rat! At the time that was the frightening thing!

CB: It's a wonderful story and very frightening, very gripping; it's excellent.

TB: I think it stands up very well. It's remarkable, in fact. It's like a good piece of drama. I was very pleased by it and you never know with your own work what you're like, and when I saw it, with enough distance and time, I thought what I did was perfectly appropriate!

And Jago and Litefoot don't even meet until episode five.

TB: It is extraordinary, isn't it? I couldn't believe it when I was told that, because to me Litefoot is the series.

When I think back to that story, I think of it in terms of myself and Jago but in fact, you're quite right, there was lots before we meet up.

CB: That's always surprised people and surprised us when we suddenly realised we were only in the last little bit! It was interesting how well they were created as characters. I suppose they're a fairly traditional double act, aren't they, the posh one and the slightly more common one. But it's great fun to do.

Have you always had a fondness for the characters?

CB: I thought I was lucky to get it! It's all luck, isn't it? Who you met, who you happen to know, and I suppose I worked with [director] David Maloney on the Sixties *Forsyte Saga*; he was the floor manager on that and he must have remembered me from it. I did a *Danger Man*, then I got a few episodes of *The*

Prisoner because Patrick McGoohan remembered me from *Danger Man*. We're just drifting, we are in the hands of the gods...

And you drifted into the new series as well, for *The Unicorn and the Wasp*.

CB: I don't think it was anything to do with my previous *Doctor Who*, that was the director, Graeme Harper, and I'd worked for him before on a comedy series and he remembered me from that and thought of me for Sir Hugh.

What was the difference, 30 years on?

CB: Well, you had better quality clothes! There's a lot more money spent on it, a lot more time and it was a much more starry cast because all sorts of big names will queue up to do *Doctor Who*, whereas when we did it we were slightly looked down upon! There were probably a lot of big names they could have cast instead of me, but the big names were all, 'Oh, I don't want to do that'. But nowadays it's quite different. It's become a thing to be in. Which is wonderful, isn't it?

And now here you both are, back for a full season of *Jago & Litefoot* adventures.

TB: If you remember the chat we did at the end of *The Mahogany Murderers*, we were joking that the end was open. And I was simply thrilled when I heard that they were going to continue it. It's lovely to be enjoyed, and I was very thrilled by that. To know that we were going to be able to continue, and then when the scripts arrived to see that they were so good, and such a fulfilment of *The Mahogany Murderers* – I was very, very pleased.

CB: I think they're excellent! And the surprising thing is, it's four different writers. I don't know how they can all write in the same style, the same vein, and know the characters so well, because each time you

get to read it, you're still the same Jago even if you've got a different writer.

Did you find it hard to get back into the character?

TB: Not really, no. The mind is very odd, isn't it? It's all still lodged there. It is quite amazing because it was a very long time ago. But I didn't, partially because it was very well written, it got the character very well, but we didn't watch the DVD or anything, either of us. We just knew who we'd been and they were still there, and they'd just slot back immediately.

Does the audio nature of the stories make you forget time has passed?

TB: That helps. I suppose I was in my forties when I played it, but I'm the right age now, really! It's very strange.

CB: We might be a bit too old now for it, but we're much nearer the right age for those characters than we were in '76. I was born in December '34, so in July '76, I was 41. I would have thought they were both in their fifties.

TB: The great difference is, we all had hair. We were much more hirsute...

Are you pleased with this new series?

TB: I've read all four, and I think they're wonderful because *The Mahogany Murderers* was tremendous fun, very exciting, and these go into an even greater dimension and mystery. These are further development of the character. There's more scope with these, and these other characters in it as well. Though *Mahogany* was lovely because it was just Christopher and myself, it's good to interact with other characters, which is what we're doing in these. It's more like a proper play as opposed to a duologue.

What about character development?

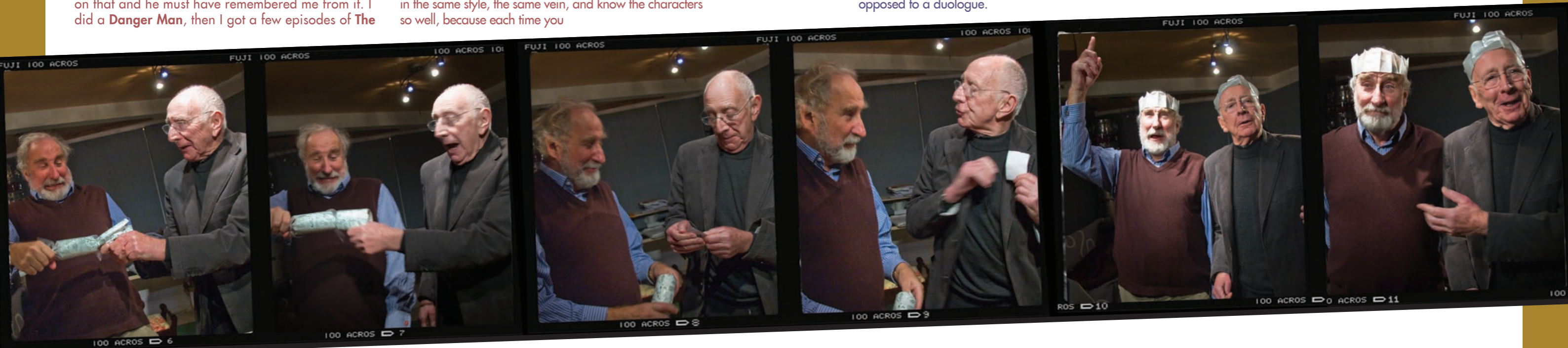
TB: I think what it is is that [Litefoot]'s got greater scope to show various aspects of his character. I think to some extent the skill, the slight loneliness when he talks about not wanting to go back to the cold and empty house. I think you get more of his sense of fun and that jocular rivalry between the two of them, which is good.

You've also recently appeared at a convention.

CB: We both enjoyed it immensely. I hadn't done a lot and Trevor's never done conventions. We'd done odd little signings and other things, but only recently did we do one together. If we go to a convention it's good to have us together; we're so much a double act. And Stephen Thorne, who is in [today's play], goes to conventions and he's an old friend of mine, we were at RADA together, and he said to me, 'I'm doing this convention and I suggested that you might be interested; would you be?' And I said, 'Yes, sure.' So then I said, 'What about having Trevor, would you like to ask him?' and he said, 'Yes, yes!' and so we had a lovely weekend. Well treated, all the fans were terrific, it was good.

There was a feeling of affection. It's lovely to be loved like that. One felt terribly made much of. We were in danger of becoming rather abusive of each other at times, but it was fun and we enjoyed it. It was just nice doing the signings, which can be a terrible grind sometimes, but you meet people and say hello and it's warm and friendly. Especially when you're getting right to the end of your career. The last flickerings of the flame...

Jago & Litefoot Series One is available now



This month's *Legend of the Cybermen* sees the return of Zoe so Paul Spragg caught up with Wendy Padbury to discuss her work on this, *Lost Story Prison in Space* and *Companion Chronicle Echoes of Grey*



Welcome to your first full-cast audio, Wendy! It was three, four years ago that I did a Zoe **Chronicle**, but that wasn't with anyone, obviously. This is probably the first time I've ever worked with Colin. I'm very pleased to be working with Colin, [and it's] always nice to catch up with Frazer as well and renew our partnership, as it were.

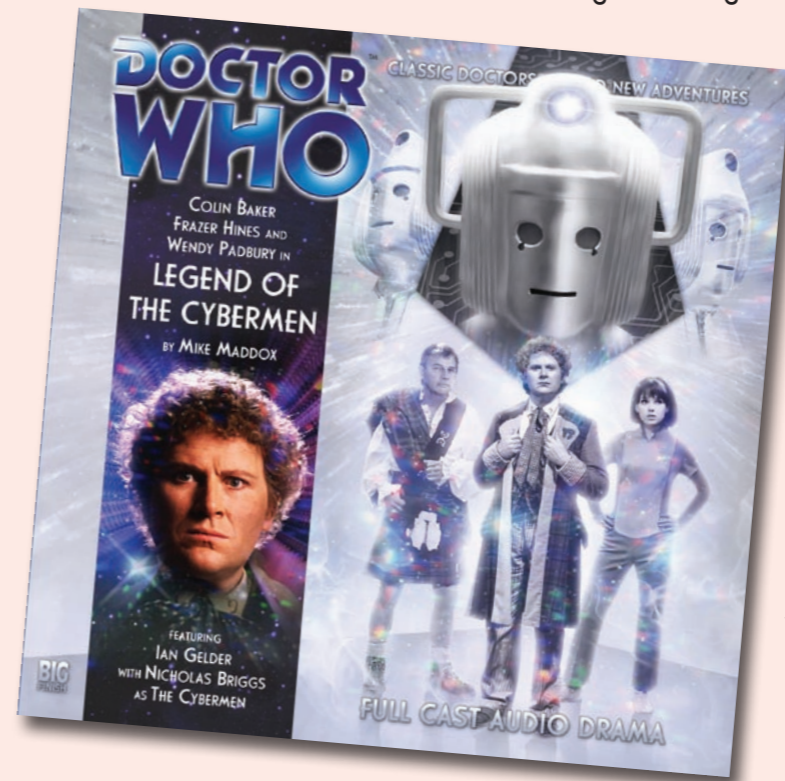
WHEEL MEET AGAIN



How much preparation did you do for *Legend of the Cybermen*? I made a decision to give up acting more than 20 years ago, so it's quite nerve-racking for me to come back and actually do some. I need to be really comfortable before I get here; I certainly don't want to stand in a studio and hold everybody up with my lack of experience over the last 20 years. So I got the scripts about two and a half weeks ago and I've gone through them thoroughly in that period. Possibly, if I was working doing radio all the time constantly, then you wouldn't need that preparation. But I certainly do. I rather like the intimacy of standing really close to a mic and lowering your voice and speaking really quietly rather than that projection on stage. You don't get that in front of a television camera ether; I think it's the intimacy of it that I like. I quite like standing in a little booth on my own with headphones on and peering at people... It just adds to the whole thing.

Have you encountered Colin or Frazer at conventions much? I don't do a lot of conventions but when I do, obviously I meet up then. When I did give up acting I became an agent and I had the pleasure of looking after Colin, and Nick Courtney [The Brigadier] in fact, so I was in constant touch with Colin and Nick over the last years that I was an agent. But with regard to everybody else, it really is at convention time. I live in France anyway now, so quite a long way away, but this is a bonus. Not only do you get a job to do and scripts to read and have a lovely time, you get to meet your old mates as well!

It's been a while since you played Zoe, how was it coming back for three new adventures? Really good to go back to Zoe after a break. This particular story, the first one I'm doing, is in the fictional land; it's quite interesting who is real, who isn't, who's a fictional character, who isn't. And of course that, for me, when I read it, was great because it harks back to *The Mind Robber*, which was actually my favourite story. So I was quite excited when I read this one and found that here we were back in a fictional land with Zoe and all sorts of new characters and some of the old characters from the original story. The one I'm doing the next couple of days [*Prison in Space*] is one that I think Frazer had, a lost story. And it's interesting; it's quite sexist, in the reverse way – women rule the world and all that. So that's gonna be a laugh and I'm really going to enjoy doing that one. And then the last one is a Zoe **Chronicle**. I can't tell you about it really, it'd just spoil it all, but it's another very well written story that Lisa Bowerman's directing, and she's directing tomorrow's as well, so that'll be fun because I've never worked with Lisa as a director. She's a mate, so she might not be able to shout at me too much if I get it wrong.



How tricky is it 'finding' Zoe again? Not being a performer any more, I think if I'd continued acting it would come more easily. But I'm very out of the swing of performing, of having a script in front of me, so it's not quite as easy as I think it would be. Frazer works all the time. and Colin and all the others who work all the time, it's natural. It's a little less natural for me and a little like starting again each time. But actually, when the script's well written, it's much easier, because if it's well written they've got the essence of Zoe there and it's really much more easy to get straight back in there. It's quite fun to get back in with Jamie as well, particularly in this story that I'm doing today. I love the fact that I want a hug from Jamie and he doesn't remember who I am. There's all sorts of nice little twists in this one that I really enjoy.

Have you still got that easy rapport with Frazer? We seem to have. The three of us – Pat, Frazer and I – were renowned for having quite a special relationship and I've certainly still got that with Frazer. When I meet Frazer I feel as though we've never really been apart for a year or however long it is. It's quite special. I don't know what it is; I don't know what makes that happen, but it's that indefinable thing of something that just goes on and works really well. Well, that's what I think about it. Frazer might tell you that he can't bear the sight of me and wishes it was Anneke [Wills]!

He's said they used to tease you; is it easier to get your own back now? They did pick on me. But it is so much easier now I'm grown up because I don't care any more! Frazer still hasn't changed one iota from when we did the show and he's still full of the most appalling one-liner gags. Even here, today, he's said a couple and it wasn't just me that groaned. Everybody groaned! He doesn't learn...

INTERVIEW

For *Prison in Space*, of course, you'll be mainly narrating again.

It's surprising and actually makes it pretty difficult for me because there are times when I'm storytelling when the Doctor speaks or Jamie speaks, and I'm going to need to make a hint of it being Jamie and it being the Doctor. Which is not easy for anybody, but it's certainly not easy for me! So that'll be quite interesting; I'll have a long chat with Lisa tomorrow and hope she can turn a knob in the booth and make me sound more Scottish or whatever. I don't know how that's gonna work.

The story tomorrow is Frazer and I, so my workload is not so much. It's the **Chronicles** where I hope I can deliver an essence. I can't do Pat's voice, there's no way; I'm female, I can't get that voice. But he had a speech pattern and a certain way, and I was talking to Frazer about it and he said he can only do Pat's voice when he does the actions, because Pat used to do a lot of things with his face, and fiddle; he was always fiddling. And actually, it works. If you do a bit of fiddling with your hands or scratching your head, and he did quite a few coughs, it's an essence more than an impersonation. I think an impersonation, certainly from me, would be a big mistake! An essence is a better thing than a straight impersonation. Anyway, I might be wrong. Frazer might do a straight impersonation tomorrow and surprise us all...

Is Zoe still developing as a character?

I'm not sure she's developable any more, actually, because she is what she is. She always was this extremely brainy girl who saw things in a certain way, and often told the Doctor she was better than him; she had no humility about her whatsoever! I don't think I can change that or build on that. I guess getting some of the memories back is an interesting one. Maybe with her remembering stuff and going through things, she could become a little more reflective, but I think she as a character, even in these stories I'm doing today, she's not backwards in coming forwards and saying how brilliant she was. I think she's pretty rounded from way back and I don't think there's any need to redevelop her.

In many ways, she's quite similar to the more modern companions.

That's absolutely true. I'd like to see more of the new **Doctor Whos** because I live in France, I don't get English telly, but a couple of fans



bought me a couple of DVDs of David Tennant because I am a massive David Tennant fan, and they were just brilliant. I was half-envious of not being there, but thoroughly, thoroughly enjoyed them. But, by the same token, I'm always happy to be called a classic and be involved in the classic series and I still think that some of our stories stand up really well.

It's a shame so many were wiped as the surviving ones are great.

I think I did better than Debbie [Watling], for instance. A lot of Debbie's stuff is gone. But some of mine survived. They did that brilliant animation in *The Invasion*, I thought that was a clever idea. I really liked it, I liked the simplicity of the animation. They made Frazer look really handsome, which is quite a feat in itself! I am very lucky in that more of mine exist than don't.

To have lost *The Mind Robber* would have been awful.

That would have been tragic, actually. I did the commentary for *The War Games*, and after they sent it to me I didn't watch it to hear the commentary but I watched it just to see the programme properly, because while we were doing the commentary it was quite difficult to assess at the time. But while we were there I was thinking, 'Actually, this is rather better than I remember it'. I think we all thought at the time, 'Ooh, ten episodes, there's gonna be a lot of padding and the story's gonna be a bit iffy from time to time' but I think it stands up really well. It's much better than I remembered.

Doctor Who: Legend of the Cybermen is out this month. Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles: Echoes of Grey is out in August and Prison in Space is out in December as part of the Lost Stories - The Second Doctor Box Set

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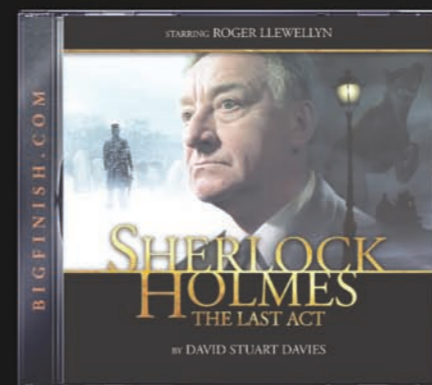
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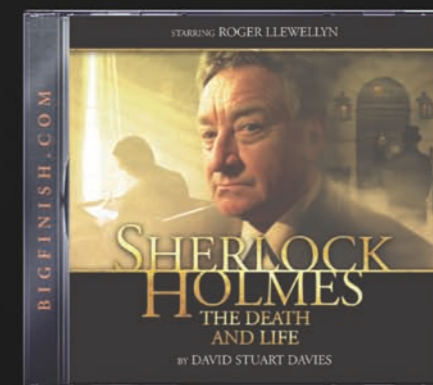
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BACK IN THE SHADOWS



Dark Shadows star Jonathan Frid returns to audio for the first time ever in *The Night Whispers*. We go behind the scenes of this special new audio drama.

He was a pop culture icon in the 1960s, TV's first reluctant vampire, and this month, for the first time in nearly 40 years, Jonathan Frid is back playing Barnabas Collins in *The Night Whispers*, one of the most hotly-anticipated **Dark Shadows** audio dramas ever.

Released from his coffin nine months into **Dark Shadows'** original run, the character of Barnabas saved the show from the brink of cancellation, bringing a huge new audience. Initially conceived as a short-term villain, the lovelorn vampire quickly became one of American daytime television's most popular characters, capturing the audience of a generation of young viewers. Soon, Jonathan was receiving fan mail by the truckload and was regularly mobbed at personal appearances.

"We wanted to work with Jonathan from the very start," says **Dark Shadows** producer and the story's writer, Stuart Manning, "Over the years we'd approached him, but he always declined, having been retired in his native Canada since the 1990s. But I always hoped that one day we might tempt him back. Suffice to say, it's been an honour to finally get to make that happen, and it's truly wonderful to hear Jonathan recreate Barnabas."

"I'd always resisted the idea of playing Barnabas again," admits Jonathan, "but having recently watched some of the old shows through fresh eyes, I've been surprised to discover many wonderful moments and some fine acting, even from yours truly. The idea of revisiting Barnabas in an older incarnation on audio had me intrigued."

"It was always going to be an older version of the character, cured of his vampire curse and reflecting on a long life of regrets," says Stuart. "Jonathan suggested a two-hander play featuring John Karlen as Willie, which was a great starting point. It was a challenge developing the script, because the format really needed us to get into Barnabas's head. He was always a very taciturn character, with so much left unsaid, so it was rewarding to tackle some of those unanswered questions."

"I listened to Jonathan's narration on the original 1969 **Dark Shadows** soundtrack album on a loop whilst writing, trying to capture his speech patterns and vocal tics. I began to think of the breadth of Barnabas's lifespan and experiences, and wondered what it would be like to be a survivor of so much tragedy, adrift in a strange modern time. The day-to-day business of the original storylines meant that this aspect of the character was rarely touched upon, but it presented so many possibilities that it soon became a key part of the story."

"The other driving force in the story was Barnabas's relationship with Willie, which began with enslavement in the early days, eventually settling into an uneasy companionship. John Karlen and I had talked about this during one of our earliest recordings, and I remembered him saying that Willie had suffered too much to ever consider Barnabas a friend. That was a really valuable insight, and exploring that lingering resentment between them was really interesting."

With the script completed, the Metalworks Studios in Toronto was the location for two days of recording in April, with Jim Pierson in the director's chair. "Getting Jonathan Frid into a recording studio to reprise the character of Barnabas Collins after nearly 40 years was

an incredible feeling," says Jim. "Despite the passage of time, it was immediately clear that he still possessed the voice of the vulnerable vampire and he was able to bring back all the humanity and pathos that makes Barnabas such a great tragic figure."

In another coup for the production, legendary film actress Barbara Steele rounds off the cast as Celeste, an intriguing new character from Barnabas's past. "During the development of the script, it became clear that we needed a third voice to set things in motion," says Stuart. "Although it's a relatively small role, we really wanted to pull out all the stops and cast someone special. I loved Barbara as Dr Julia Hoffman in the 1991 **Dark Shadows** revival and that rich, haunting voice of hers was just perfect. I really hope we can work with her again. It's a superb performance."

So what does *The Night Whispers* have in store for listeners? "I see it very much as an end point for Barnabas's character," says Stuart. "In our regular full-cast audio dramas, he has a new lease of life, played by the brilliant Andrew Collins, but it's great to hear the classic Barnabas in a brand new story. I hope listeners will enjoy paying a rare visit to Barnabas and Willie one stormy evening at the Old House, as the cold of night draws in..."

Dark Shadows - The Night Whispers is out this month



Opposite page and this page top: Jonathan Frid as Barnabas Collins
Above: Jonathan returns to the studio for *The Night Whispers*

My name's Paul Hanley. I'm a comic artist over here in the States (I've worked on Moonstone Books' **Buckaroo Banzai** series, amongst other things). I do a lot of DW fan art on the side. Lately I'm working on portraits of the 'alternate' Doctors, and I thought I'd pass this along as it might be of interest to Mr Briggs. I would've sent these a few weeks back when they were finished, but I had entries in the **Short Trips** and Fifth Doctor opportunities and didn't want to look like a suck-up (though considering I didn't make the cut, maybe I should have, eh?).

Keep up the good work! And how 'bout some Sontaran stories sometime???

Paul Hanley

Nick: Paul! Thank you so much for the illustration. We will sacrifice some letters to give it pride of place on this page. Sorry you weren't picked in our writers' opportunities. It's a sad fact that some people are bound to lose out, but if you have a real passion for writing, don't let this one set-back put you off. And, do you know, we might well be doing something with the Sontarans in the not too distant future.

Thank you so much for the free *Speckled Band* download. A beautiful reading of one of the best SH stories and a personal favourite. Kudos!

Robin Rowles

Nick: Really glad you liked *The Speckled Band*. I'm planning another **Sherlock Holmes** free download, probably to coincide with the release of our second **Sherlock Holmes** series later this year.

Is there any chance of having a download version of *Embrace the Darkness* available. The Eighth Doctor stories surrounding it are all downloadable.

Shaun D Wilson

Nick: Shaun, this should be available and it is an error that it is not. I will ask Paul Wilson about this right now and get it sorted. In fact, I've just emailed him about it between these two sentences!

The **Holmes** productions are top notch – not that I expected anything less from Big Finish. I've been a Holmes fan for decades, both canon and non-canon stories. I'd never heard of Roger Llewellyn prior to this, but he's outstanding. My appreciation to all involved.

Peter Munroe

Nick: Cheers, Peter. Yes, Roger is truly brilliant, isn't he? If you ever get a chance to see his shows live, take it! It's a breathtaking experience.

I was just wondering, is there any particular reason that there are sixteen different icons for downloading **Sherlock Holmes: The Speckled Band** in my account? I mean it's not a huge deal, but it's a little disconcerting, and it seems to have forced out the icons for downloading several of the older stories. Similar things have happened before – two of everything, etc (I still have two *Museum Peace Extra* icons. Awesome story, by the way). I've never really minded. But sixteen just seems a trifle excessive. Any explanation?

Kathleen Jackson

PS Loving the new Jamie series by the way.

Nick: I'm at a loss to explain that, Kathleen. I will ask Paul Wilson about it. I'm afraid the free download to all subscribers of all ranges and anyone who had purchased the **Holmes** releases from us didn't turn out to be as smooth as I'd been led to expect. It turns out that it was something massively difficult for our downloads system to cope with. You would, for example, receive a free download of *The Speckled Band* for every qualifying reason. But even if you subscribed to everything, I can't think why you got sixteen! That's ridiculous, isn't it? Big apologies for that. I will await Paul Wilson's explanation and in future will probably concentrate freebies at narrower groups.

Hey, guys! Just letting you know I signed on because of the **Stargate Daniel/Vala** coming stories. Great! I'll be on board for all of them. Really appreciate this. I miss them! Also will add note and link to latest website: spacegypsies.com. We fangirls do so you don't have to! We will send the word out on all the sites/Twitter, etc. Very excited about this!

Spacegypsy1

Nick: Glad you're on board for **Stargate**. It's going to be really exciting!

In the TV episode *Survival* Ace becomes part Cheetah person. My little sister wants to know how come you ignore the powers that gives her.

Charles Buchanan

Nick: I think Ace lost all those powers, as did the Seventh Doctor... otherwise they'd both have been going round with strange eyes and talking about fighting and dying like animals at the end of the story!

I was just emailing to see if there is any possible future of seeing **Sliders** adventures through Big Finish?

PS Love your **Stargate** line and very much looking forward to the new direction.

James Sparrow

Nick: No plans for **Sliders**. Sorry to disappoint.

I have said this a ton of times, but it never seems enough: thank you all for enriching my life with the **Doctor Who** audios. I love them! I was thrilled to learn that **Gallifrey** was coming back – it has been my favourite spin-off series far and above anything else.

I was hoping to entice you to include the music from all three Sara Kingdom stories as a 'subscribers get more' feature. If you would, I promise to purchase a year-long subscription. I am itching to make that commitment, and that would be all the incentive I would need (has this worked yet? At all? Just a little? Knew I should have taken that hypnosis concentration...).

Given that Nick certainly seems to be the one in need of the most help – perhaps counselling sessions to boot? All joking aside, I really would love to have that incidental music – it is so hauntingly beautiful.

Dr Kevin A Osten

Licensed Clinical Psychologist

Nick: Can I tell you about my childhood?



Artwork © Paul Hanley

Paul Wilson on...
Setting Up Downloads

As I went through the audio files for this month's downloads it occurred to me that I have listened to about 800 hours of Big Finish in the last few years. What impresses me is the sheer volume of audio content that we have put out – 800 hours works out to be about 33 days, which means that I have spent over four weeks of my life listening to Big Finish. Not a bad way to spend a month really, is it?

Alex Mallinson on...
Blake's 7

There's something about TV at the moment that just doesn't do it for me. It might be the persistent, hammering music, constant flashbacks to remind me of plot points I do actually remember, and endless plot arcs which almost all fray into nothing. So my girlfriend, Alice, and I have been looking backwards for televisual entertainment more and more. **The Prisoner**, **Edge of Darkness**, **I, Claudius** and now **Blake's 7**. It's wonderful to see it through her eyes. Everything is new. Between them, Terry Nation and Chris Boucher crafted something special. I won't dwell on the flaws, we all know them; instead I was gloriously reacquainted with the vivid characters and the snappy dialogue. I marvelled at how 50 minutes could actually contain scene-setting and plot, twists and suspense. And Avon! With his effortless put downs, dirty fighting style, fashionable misogyny and vulpine grin. What a guy. And the music! I'd forgotten what a joy Dudley Simpson's score is. Alice was entranced. 'I like a man who knows his cello,' she remarked mysteriously. But best of all, if it can hold her attention for the next three series... SHE HAS NO IDEA HOW IT ENDS! I can't wait to see her face!

Toby Hrycek-Robinson on...
Outnumbered

Three series in, and I finally caught an episode of this delightful sitcom about a London couple failing to adequately deal with their unruly kids – not entirely dissimilar to my own situation! Allowing the child actors to improvise many of their lines adds a wonderful realism and excitement to the performances.

Jason Haigh-Ellery on...
Being Ridiculously Busy

I am now scheduling when/if I can eat between meetings and I'm considering whether or not I have the time to go swimming on Saturday morning, as I have a meeting at 8pm and need to get a load of things done for it. Time goes so fast when you're ridiculously busy... Goodbye!

Alan Barnes on...
Furniture

Not the flatpack kind, but the doomy and doomed 1980s band, whose utterly marvellous debut album *The Wrong People* – originally released for about three minutes in 1986, before their record company went bust – has finally, incredibly, been released on CD for the first time. Those of a certain age will know the hit *Brilliant Mind* – but chances are you won't know about the extraordinary pleasures of, for example, *She Gets Out The Scrapbook*, which ranks alongside *How Soon Is Now?* as one of the strangest and most miserable singalong anthems ever recorded ("Did we really, really live like this...?"). I interviewed them as a student, while they were touring the just-as-good second album, *Food, Sex and Paranoia*; my questions were cretinous, but they were really nice about it. So, because I'm just as desperate to see *F, S & P* reissued, I urge all Big Finish listeners of taste and discernment to buy this record now!!!

David Richardson on...
The Life of Pi

I've resisted reading this book for years, because the sleeve notes just put me off. The story of a boy and assorted animals lost at sea in a raft... How could that be remotely interesting? But, after a recommendation, I finally picked it up and read it in a couple of sittings. Yes, it is about a boy and some animals on a raft. But... golly it's characterful, and thrilling and tense. And it has one of the best endings I've read in a book for years.

Paul Spragg on...
Season Finales

Summer's almost here, repeats will be filling the schedules for the next few weeks, so you know they're coming: the season finales. More of a US than UK institution, they provide an opportunity for TV series to set up the next year and, in many cases, put characters in life-threatening jeopardy, either in the episode or at the end, leaving viewers on tenterhooks for months waiting to see if their favourite character has a contract for another year... I mean 'lives or dies'. And the US series go all-out too. A gunman in a hospital, serial killers on the loose, shock revelations about parentage, a world-ending apocalypse, relationships forged or broken, bullets, explosions and even, in one show, fixing a wonky step. It might not seem much, but it's been a story arc for the entire season. I'll be glad of a summer break to recover...

Barnaby Edwards on...
the Clerihew

Nicholas Briggs
Sometimes wears wigs.
But to play the great detective,
A deerstalker's more effective.

FORTHCOMING RELEASES

JUNE

- Doctor Who – Legend of the Cybermen (135, Sixth Doctor/Jamie/Zoe)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – The Macros (1.8)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – Solitaire (4.12, Eighth Doctor)
- Jago and Litefoot – Series 1 Box Set (Four full cast adventures)
- Dark Shadows: Audiobook 12 – The Night Whispers
- Dark Shadows: Audiobook 13 – London's Burning

AUGUST

- Doctor Who – The Whispering Forest (137, Fifth Doctor/Tegan/Turlough/Nyssa)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – Nevermore (4.03, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – Echoes of Grey (5.02, Second Doctor)
- Bernice Summerfield – Resurrecting the Past (11.1)
- Dark Shadows: Kingdom of the Dead 2 (2.2 Full cast audio)

OCTOBER

- Doctor Who – A Death in the Family (140, Seventh Doctor/Ace)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – Deimos (4.05, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Invasion of E-Space (5.04, Fourth Doctor)
- Bernice Summerfield – Year Zero (11.3)
- Dark Shadows: Kingdom of the Dead 4 (2.4 Full cast audio)

DECEMBER

- Doctor Who – TBA (142, Fifth Doctor/Nyssa)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – TBA (4.07, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – The Second Doctor Box Set (2.1 – Prison in Space & The Daleks: The Destroyers)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (5.06, Doctor TBA)
- Doctor Who – The Four Doctors (Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Doctors; Main Range subscribers only)

FEBRUARY

- Doctor Who – TBA (144, Sixth Doctor/TBA)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – TBA (4.09, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (5.08, Doctor TBA)
- Short Trips: Volume 2 (2 CDs, various readers)

JULY

- Doctor Who – Cobwebs (136, 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 – The Guardian of the Solar System (5.01, First Doctor)
- Dark Shadows: Audiobook 14 – The Doll House
- Dark Shadows: Kingdom of the Dead 1 (2.1 Full cast audio)
- Dark Shadows: Kingdom of the Dead Box Set (2.1 - 2.4 Full cast audio)

SEPTEMBER

- Doctor Who – Cradle of the Snake (138, Fifth Doctor/Tegan/Turlough/Nyssa)
- Doctor Who – Project: Destiny (139, Seventh Doctor/Ace)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – The Book of Kells (4.04, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – Find and Replace (5.03, Third Doctor)
- Bernice Summerfield – Escaping the Future (11.2)
- Bernice Summerfield – Present Danger (Short Story Book)
- Dark Shadows: Kingdom of the Dead 3 (2.3 Full cast audio)

NOVEMBER

- Doctor Who – Lurkers at Sunlight's Edge (141, Seventh Doctor/Ace)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – The Resurrection of Mars (4.06, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – The First Doctor Box Set (2.1 – Farewell, Great Macedon & The Fragile Yellow Arc of Fragrance)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – A Town Called Fortune (5.05, Sixth Doctor)
- Bernice Summerfield – Dead Man's Switch (11.3)
- Graceless – Box Set (Amy & Zara, 3 episodes)
- Short Trips: Volume 1 (2 CDs, various readers)

JANUARY

- Doctor Who – TBA (143, Sixth Doctor/TBA)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – TBA (4.08, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (5.07, Doctor TBA)
- Jago and Litefoot – Series 2 Box Set (Four full cast adventures)

MARCH

- Doctor Who – TBA (145, Sixth Doctor/TBA)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – TBA (4.10, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (5.09, Doctor TBA)

EVENTS DIARY

June 11-13: Bad Wolf
David Richardson (producer),
Lisa Bowerman (Bernice
Summerfield/director) ►
Convention guests include

Nicholas Briggs (Voice of
the Daleks, BF executive
producer), Christopher
Benjamin and Trevor Baxter
(Jago and Litefoot)

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Trevor Baxter signing Jago
and Litefoot Series One at The
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COLONEL CURBISHLEY



DAVID TROUGHTON
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IAN MCNEICE
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