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ISSUE #17 JULY 2010
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THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE



NEW CREW!

Who will join the Eighth Doctor in his travels? We meet the candidates...

OLD CREW!

MARK STRICKSON CHATS ABOUT THE NEW ADVENTURES OF THE FIFTH DOCTOR, TEGAN, TURLOUGH AND NYSSA

DARK SHADOWS SPECIAL!

BEHIND-THE-SCENES OF THE NEW FOUR-PART, FULL-CAST EPIC: KINGDOM OF THE DEAD

PLUS: Sneak Previews • Exclusive Photos • Interviews and more!

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EDITORIAL

As I write this, my impending wedding is less than 72 hours away. So excuse me if I'm in a strange state of mind... but to be frank, it's probably not just the wedding that's having an effect on me. We've just had some new flooring put down at home and I think the adhesive they used is giving off some kind of alien, mind-altering aroma. Now that's an idea for a story! *The Smell of Evil...* Hmm...

Aside from that, I wanted to take this opportunity to say a big thanks to everyone at the Bad Wolf event a few weeks back. The Big Finish team had loads of fun and in particular, I really enjoyed the company of Ian McNeice, who was making his first convention appearance. It was also nice to see Arthur Darvill turn up. He looked a little scared and was probably quite unnerved to see photographs of himself in a Roman costume on sale (since the convention was taking place a week before *The Pandorica Opens!*). But that's all in the past now, as is the outrageous channel switching the hotel officials performed in the bar, just three minutes before the end of that Saturday's *Doctor Who* episode! Yes, they were turning over so that everyone assembled (*Doctor Who* fans!) could watch England

play football. No doubt that seems strange now as, surely, by the time you're reading this, England will have already been defeated and sent home again. (Ducks for cover!)

And, of course, one of the best things that came out of that convention was this daft photo.

Right, back to the Fourth Doctor scripts for me!

Nicholas Briggs



SNEAK PREVIEWS AND WHISPERS

The Seventh Doctor Trilogy

The big news is... Hex is back. For a while at least. The next Seventh Doctor trilogy begins in September with *Project Destiny* by Cavan Scott and Mark Wright, in which young Thomas Hector Schofield and his friends meet up with Nimrod and the Forge. One thing is certain: it's not going to end happily.

October sees the release of *A Death in the Family* by Steven Hall, in which the two surviving members of the TARDIS crew come to terms with the tragic loss of their friend. And, amid all the drama, two familiar faces are back in their lives: Maggie Stables returns as Evelyn Smythe, while Ian Reddington (*Doctor Who: The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*) brilliantly takes on the role of the villainous Word Lord. We're quietly confident that this story is going to be very popular with fans!

We're off to Alaska for *Lurkers at Sunlight's Edge*, a dark and scary story by Marty Ross (*Companion Chronicles: Night's Black Agents*). We can announce that the guest stars for this story include Michael Brandon (*Dempsey and Makepeace, Doctor Who: The Stolen Earth*) and Stuart Milligan (*Jonathan Creek, Doctor Who: Dreamland*).

It's going to be a mini-series to remember!

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FRESH PRODUCER

Big Finish mainstay Paul Spragg embarks on his first project as producer and tells **Vortex** how he feels about it.

Absolutely terrified. That was my main feeling on the first studio day of **Highlander** series two, recording opening story *Brothers* by Scott Andrews. I've been in studio before, interviewing people for this very magazine, but there's always been someone else nominally in charge, so all I have to do is turn up, have a chat, then go home again. But this was different. For the first time my name was going to be on the sleeve as producer, and I didn't want to make some kind of hideous mistake first time out.

I arrived at the studio on time. So far so good. My actors, in this case Valentine Pelka, who would be playing Kronos, and Toby Longworth, playing Dilijan, turned up on cue. Fantastic! James Swallow, representing the writing contingent, was willing to read in occasional lines and die on demand. And I'd printed out the extra scenes from the other **Highlander** plays so we could record a few extra lines from Valentine to drop into other plays in the series. And there was the first issue. As was gently explained to me, by doing what I'd hoped would save both time and trees, what I'd actually provided was a random document with a bunch of scenes from assorted plays, none of which could be easily married up with director Ken Bentley's scripts, all neatly marked so he could tell the actors which page to turn to. Whoops.

A frantic scrabble around for full scripts produced the right number, thankfully, and we were able to proceed, but it didn't bode well for the rest of the day. Thankfully, after that everything was smooth sailing. Valentine was both a delight to work with and a consummate professional, and both he and Toby played off each other magnificently, creating an instant chemistry between two wily warring villains.

The following day was the turn of Richard Ridings, returning to the role of Silas. After another early faux pas by me because the 'find' I'd run on the scripts to locate all Silas's scenes had somehow skipped over some (thankfully, Ken had spotted and scheduled for them), it was another great day's recording. Richard gave it his all, determinedly tackling some very large tranches of complex narration alongside repeated demonstrations of one of the

most evil laughs in the business – and this from the man better known to the youth of today as the voice of Daddy Pig in children's animation sensation **Peppa Pig**. I like to think that one day a **Peppa Pig** viewer will discover Richard's **Highlander** work and be thoroughly unsettled.

At the end of the week, a slightly gentler day brought the magnificent Tracy-Ann Oberman to the studio, playing Violetta, a woman who has a big impact on the life of one of the Horsemen. Sailing through James Moran's script (which had me on the verge of tears in places), she then proceeded to take on a second role with vigour and enthusiasm, switching from good to evil in a matter of minutes. Alongside her, the unbelievably talented John Banks showed his range with three supporting roles and a variety of other voices, both for short lines and a host of violent demises.

Now, a short time later, with Peter Wingfield's Methos lines recorded in Los Angeles, we're gearing up for the final day of recording. Marcus Testory has made it safely to the UK from Germany, and is staying with Richard Ridings. Tomorrow he'll be recreating the role of Caspian, with Toby Longworth back in one final time to torment him. Will the Horsemen triumph over their nemesis or will they be forced to admit this is one battle even they can't win? You'll have to wait until January 2011 to find out when the second series of **Highlander** is released as a box set.



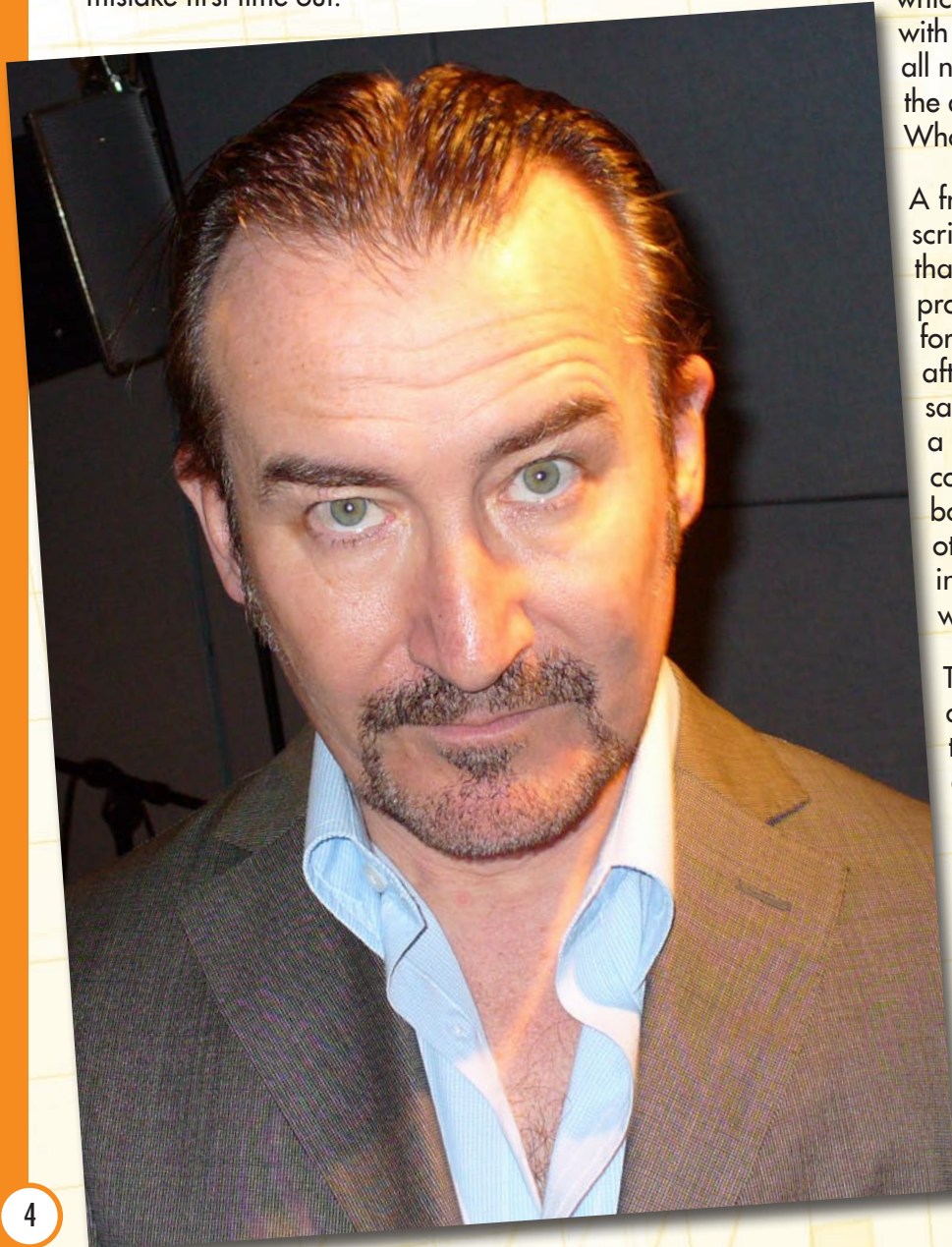
And what have I learned about being a producer? Always have plenty of scripts. Be ready to rush for water or a hot lubricating drink at the drop of a hat to help your actors through the trickier tongue twisters. Always have a fan in your bag in case it can be used in a photoshoot. But, most importantly, if you've got a fantastic team of people working with you, your job will go far, far smoother. So thank you to everyone involved in **Highlander's** second series so far: Jim, Scott, James; Ken, Darren, Toby H-R; Valentine, Rich, Peter, Marcus, Toby L, Tracy-Ann, John; David and Nick for their advice and help and Jason for letting me loose on a range of my own. I might still get the producer credit but I couldn't have done it without any of you. You're all awesome.

Opposite page: Valentine Pelka, right on cue.

Left: Toby Longworth and Richard Ridings prepare to ride out.

Above: Tracy-Ann Oberman, fan favourite.

Highlander - Series Two is released as a box-set in January 2011





**WANTED: ONE ARTICLE,
SLIGHTLY SMUDGED, GSOH**

This month, the Eighth Doctor seeks a suitable person to join him on his travels. Dan Berry meets the candidates for a Situation Vacant

Placing the Ad

How did this unique story come about?

Barnaby Edwards, casting director: We thought: the Doctor is without his beloved Lucie, so how would he go about getting a new companion? Alan Barnes came up with the idea that he might put an ad in a newspaper or something, and because I'm a completely vacuous person and watch *The Apprentice*, I suggested something similar to that with four likely candidates, one of whom would join him.

Nick Briggs, executive producer: Jason Haigh-Ellery [executive producer] wanted to do a four-part story with four different companions where the audience voted on which companion they wanted. But logistically, in terms of production, that would be a nightmare, so every time he suggested it, we gagged him!

How would you describe the tone of the story?

NB: It seems sort of quite light and jokey to start with, with all these characters being annoying and argumentative, and the Doctor is cast in the role of the schoolteacher of a naughty class! But then the tasks that are set for them to perform are real, life-threatening situations – a great big robot walking down the street, people disappearing – and when that's sorted out, it gets even more nasty, as you find out what the agendas of the potential companions are!

Who's got your vote for new companion? Or are you going to sit on the fence and not choose?

NB: Asha is amazing – she's a driven go-getter. Theo has massive technical knowledge, and hidden depths, which the Doctor only starts to scratch the surface of in this story. He has a lot of potential. Hugh is cast a bit in the Harry Sullivan role – such a square-jawed heroic chap underneath his bumbling attitude! – but definitely someone who could stand side-by-side with the Doctor and be relied upon to always do the right thing. And Juliet is slightly over-impressed with her own abilities, but she is very determined.

FEATURE

How would you describe *Situation Vacant*?

Niky Wardley (Juliet): It's the Doctor trying to find his new travelling companion. An advertisement is placed, mentioning time travel and all sorts of other things, but all four of the candidates are a bit in the dark about what it will actually entail. It's four people trying to put their best foot forward!

This whole set-up sounds rather familiar from TV...

Joe Thomas (Theo): There are definitely bits where the Doctor is turning from one candidate to the other, telling them exactly how they totally went wrong – 'Don't even get me started on you!' – like Alan Sugar does on *The Apprentice*. There are those odd moments of pastiche, but most of the episode is just an adventure, basically.

James Bachman (Hugh): I wouldn't want people to look at it as 'Doctor Who does *The Apprentice*', because it's not quite that. But if you like *The Apprentice*, it is exactly the same!

Shelley Conn (Asha): It's a really good device to use to create this sense of competition – and the anticipation, and the drama, and the comedy! – but it's still its own piece. It borrows from other things, but is still very much original.

JT: It's definitely light-hearted to begin with, but there's serious peril as well, and I think that stands out more starkly when you've just had a really frothy scene.

Does your character have the qualities to make a great companion?

SC: Yeah! She'd definitely be the right person, but she probably does need to do a bit of learning along the way. But to have the Doctor hone her skills would actually be good, I think.

NW: I think [Juliet] would. She's not very good at taking direction, because there's part of her that thinks she does know best. She's trying to solve it before she's even gone through it, do you know what I mean?

JT: I think [Theo]'s a little bit too keen to show what he can do. He could go either way – he could learn the sort of broader humanitarian skills that the Doctor has, or he might just carry on being slightly pleased with himself.

How do you rate the other candidates?

NW: The four candidates are very, very, very, very different. There's one who's very chirpy and desperate to help in any way she can, but my character is very efficient and pragmatic. Then you've got the bumbling one, and the slightly awkward muttering geek. It's a real mix of people.

JB: I think Asha is a clear front-runner. Juliet has some problems, Theo is too inexperienced and bewildered by everything, but Asha is like a nicer version of all those horrible people on *The Apprentice* who have done the task already by the beginning of the day.

SC: Theo is [Asha's] main partner, who she has the most experience with. She's a bit impatient with him, because he can have a slightly misplaced sense of confidence. The other two: I think she just finds Juliet a bit overwhelming and Hugh a bit bumbly. In her mind, she's absolutely the number one contestant that should take the prize. But whether or not that's true is another thing!

JT: Hugh seems like he's pretty bad. But the two women are both pretty good: Asha is very keen and her heart is in the right place; Juliet does seem very competent and in command.

Everyone seems to be voting for Asha, Shelley.

SC: She does okay, she holds her own – but there's one or two moments where she possibly doesn't speak out as loudly as she should've done, or makes a slightly odd choice. I would say she's somewhere in the front of the pack, though, yeah. I think, if Asha wins, this is a bit of a career for her. She's got the makings of a long-term assistant. I can see them having a few adventures together – I'd like to take her to all sorts of times and spaces...

Doctor Who: Situation Vacant is out this month

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I love your **Dark Shadows** and **Doctor Who** audios!!! However, I was wondering, why don't you list the number of episodes a given **Doctor Who** story has on your website? Some have one, some have two, some have four, *The Game* even has six! But nowhere can I find where it states how many episodes each audio has on your website!

Keep up the good work,
Pat Hendren

Nick: I'm shocked that we don't do that. We should do that! We will move towards fulfilling that request. Many thanks, Pat.

Hey! Big shout from the US! I love the **Doctor Who** adventures, and just finished *Bang-Bang-A-Boom!* I loved how much Patricia Quinn sounded like Magenta, and was wondering why she never taught the Doctor *The Time Warp*. Or he could have taught her. Anyway, have you tried to get Tim Curry or Richard O'Brien in on all the **Doctor Who** fun? I'm sure they'd really love it! Also, how are things going with getting Tom Baker in on a project? I haven't heard much about that, except for Tom mentioning it in his forums a month or so ago.

To keep it short, I love all the audio adventures, and kudos to everyone involved! Glad to see you're all keeping the spirit of the classic series alive!

James Neighbors

Nick: I'll ask around as to whether we've asked them... I have a feeling we asked Richard O'Brien to do something once, and he declined. But don't quote me, I may have just made that up. Tom and I are in touch. I'm writing a script. Several storylines in the pipeline. It's all looking pretty positive. When there's firm news, we will be shouting it from the rooftops... metaphorically, obviously. We can't get up onto our roof here.

Been a fan of all things **Doctor Who** and The Beatles ever since 1963 (lucky me, eh?). It's a total joy to see that so much material from that Golden Age of popular culture survives to this very day, thanks in no small part to the hard and dedicated work of fans themselves! Congratulations to you for all the many and varied productions you create and generate.

Budget constraints, coupled with a desire to collect the DVDs from the new and classic **Doctor Who** series first meant I have been more than a little slow in obtaining Big Finish product; however, with your launch of items for a fiver and annual promotion, etc, I would hope to obtain more gems as time goes on. (I got a lot of the **Short Trips** books series last year, and have most of them still to read!). So thanks guys 'n' gals, hope to order many items in the days ahead. Hope your **Who** licence gets renewed beyond 2012! Well done on getting Tom Baker on board!

Vworp vworp!
Sean Gibbons

Nick: And a big vworp to you too. Glad you finally caught up with us. Look out for Big Finish Day, when there will be lots of other offers!

Further to my previous email re the download extra *The Speckled Band*, may I humbly suggest that *The Man With the Twisted Lip* would be a magnificent follow-up? Like *The Speckled Band* it's a 'complete' story, inasmuch as everything is resolved in under 24 hours.

Robin Rowles

Nick: Robin, thank you. I will bear that very much in mind. I plan to do more than one of these special download releases before I die (which hopefully is a few decades off!), so I will seriously consider this one.

Have just listened to *Death in Blackpool*. I had to email in to say how good it was, and how sad it was. Lucie Miller for **Companion Chronicles**.

Marc Moores

Nick: That's a very good idea indeed. And it was sad to have Lucie leave like that, wasn't it? But we wanted it to be sad, because we're cruel that way. Mwahahaha!

Just being nosey: is there any plan to bring Terry Molloy back as Davros? To be honest I prefer him in audio than I do in the TV series!

Gez Cleary

Nick: Terry is brilliant. We love him. No plans at the moment, but let me get back to you on that one!

I was having a chat to our local sci-fi shop owner last week about **Doctor Who** aliens that were used once. Have you ever considered a story about the Movellans? I think there are a few stories, some of which could be used outside of **Doctor Who**. They could even be used as a new Big Finish, similar to the success of Professor Summerfield.

John Aspinall

Nick: Hmm... were the Movellans any good? I preferred the Daleks... Daleks or Movellans: which is best? Well, there's only one way to find out... Fight!!! Or maybe just rewatch *Destiny of the Daleks*.

I'm a big fan of your work, especially the **Sapphire and Steel** and **Doctor Who** ranges.

I have been thinking of how wonderful it would be to have new **Firefly** stories. I know that you do ranges based on cult US shows **Stargate** and **Dark Shadows**. I'm sure there's a market for more **Firefly**, as the comic book spin-offs suggest.

Is this something you had ever considered? I'm sure that Joss Whedon would be interested in exploring the idea.

Redrick Schuhart

Nick: We'd love to do that. But I would anticipate long negotiations and approvals processes. Still, I'd never rule that out.

I would just like to know if the **Doctor Who Unbound** line is continuing or not. I've really enjoyed it, and hope to see more from the series in the future.

Lucas Nelsen

Nick: There are no plans to continue that range. I think we played out every serious possibility. And I was keen not just to do a series where we kept recasting the Doctor just for the sake of it. There had to be a genuine 'what if?' element to the story. Still, like most things, I would not completely rule it out. Right... back to work on those Tom Baker scripts...

RAISING THE DEAD

Dark Shadows is back this month with *Kingdom of the Dead*, a new four-part mini-series. Writer Eric Wallace talks about what's in store for the residents of Collinwood...

of the Dead, and his goal is to – sorry, no spoilers here! Let's just say he's got some extreme issues that put certain members of the Collins family in a really tough spot.

Ever since the Lorelei sank with Quentin and Barnabas aboard in the finale of *The Rage Beneath*, I've been dying to know what happened next. You too, I'm betting. That's why when **Dark Shadows** producer Stuart Manning approached me about co-writing what ultimately became *Kingdom of the Dead*, I relished the opportunity to help answer this and other exciting questions. What followed during the spring and summer of 2009 were tons of emails, pitches, some bad ideas that got thrown out, many outline rewrites, some fantastic ideas that stayed in, and four inventive and exciting (we hope!) scripts between Stuart and myself.

My initial email conversations took place with Stuart in London, while I was ensconced inside a Los Angeles hospital room where my wife was preparing to give birth to our first child. (No, we didn't name her Angelique!) Stuart had already laid a key piece of the story foundation with his creation of the character Seraph, played by David Warner, who serves as the big villain of *Kingdom*

But there was still a main storyline to craft, subplots to dream up, big moments to shape and new chills to define. And what exactly did we come up with? If you've already listened to *Kingdom of the Dead*, you'll know it's a massive story that shakes up the town of Collinsport big time. You also know it opens a door to future **Dark Shadows** stories in some unexpected and exciting ways. If you haven't yet, then I can say that you'll discover a surprising connection between Oswald Gravenor, our presiding villain in series one, and Seraph. You'll also learn that medical doctors in the **Dark Shadows** world, whoever they might be, always have very bizarre practices. And you might even learn how to dance. No, that wasn't a typo. Dance. Or to be more precise... a devil's waltz? Yes, we aimed for the skies with these stories, upping the stakes and taking the characters in fresh directions. **Dark Shadows** fans, new and old alike, are in for quite a ride.

But back to bringing the dead to life...

One of key things we wanted to do was to make *Kingdom of the Dead* feel more like the original **Dark Shadows** series. Consequently, this series is shorter, pacier, more in tune with the daily soap opera style that **Dark Shadows** followed in the early 1970s. Adopting this style also allowed us to create a more serialized story than the four tales that made up the first series.

After the scripts were completed, it was time to tackle the massive operation of actually getting them recorded. And that's when the real fun began. Two continents. A double-digit cast. Directors bringing the action to life in three cities: London, New York and Los Angeles. Making *Kingdom of the Dead* a reality was a major undertaking. And how did it go?

I was present at the four Los Angeles sessions, and what an experience it was. Day one assembled cast members David Selby (Quentin), Lara Parker (Angelique) and Andrew Collins (Barnabas). Although I had met each before, I had never worked with them in a professional capacity. Let me tell you that watching David work is just exhilarating. The man doesn't just read his lines, he lives each story moment through gestures, facial expressions and emphatic body movement. The result is like time traveling back to 1969, where a young actor first brought the character of Quentin Collins to life in a small ABC studio in downtown Manhattan, and captured the hearts and imaginations of millions of viewers in the process.

Whether it was the sheer bravado of David's performances or something else (inspired writing?

Naaaaah...), the other actors responded with equal enthusiasm, turning an ordinary recording session into a full-blown piece of daytime theatre.

And then Lara Parker laughed.

Or was it cackled? Cut loose with a sinister howl? Unleashed a bray of cruelty disguised as mirth? That was Angelique's trademark exclamation in times of sinister triumph, and here it was, live and uncensored. Could anything be more exciting for a **Dark Shadows** geek turned professional scribe? David's Quentin was the object of this wickedly delightful scorn. Soon, he and Lara were verbally sparring – playing off each other like the veteran pros they are. Watching as our scripts were not only brought to life, but taken to another level, I wished there had been cameras rolling. This was Quentin and Angelique at their best, and you'll hear it throughout *Kingdom of the Dead*. But I know what you're thinking. Hold on – aren't Quentin and Angelique allies? Why are they arguing if Seraph is the real enemy? You've just hit on one of the secrets contained within the new story arc, one I won't spoil any further. However, I will add that best friends make the worst enemies, and recording it makes for great drama.

It's easy to think that, with two **Dark Shadows** veterans sparring at the top of their game, Andrew Collins, the relative newcomer to the **Dark Shadows** family, might feel somewhat lost. But if you heard his debut performances as Barnabas in series one (and if you didn't, shame on you!), then you know Andrew can hold his own with the best. Get ready, folks. This time, Andrew takes his performance of Barnabas Collins to a whole new

level. The result is so intense and electrifying, you won't believe what happens.

I know. You want more hints as to what's in store. Well, let's just say Barnabas has new enemies of his own, and you'll be surprised to discover who they are. He also has a new victim. And just who receives the vampire's eternal kiss from our favourite tortured blood drinker? Sorry, I'm not telling! But I will say this: beware the forests of the Collins estate.

Our beloved taskmaster, director Darren Gross, was in charge of keeping everyone on track, focused and motivated. And what a job he did. How he keeps every scene in the final scripts (a massive 224-page undertaking) and is able to instantly point out what each character's motivation is at a given moment is beyond me. But that is Darren's gift – total recall. And yes, I'm jealous.

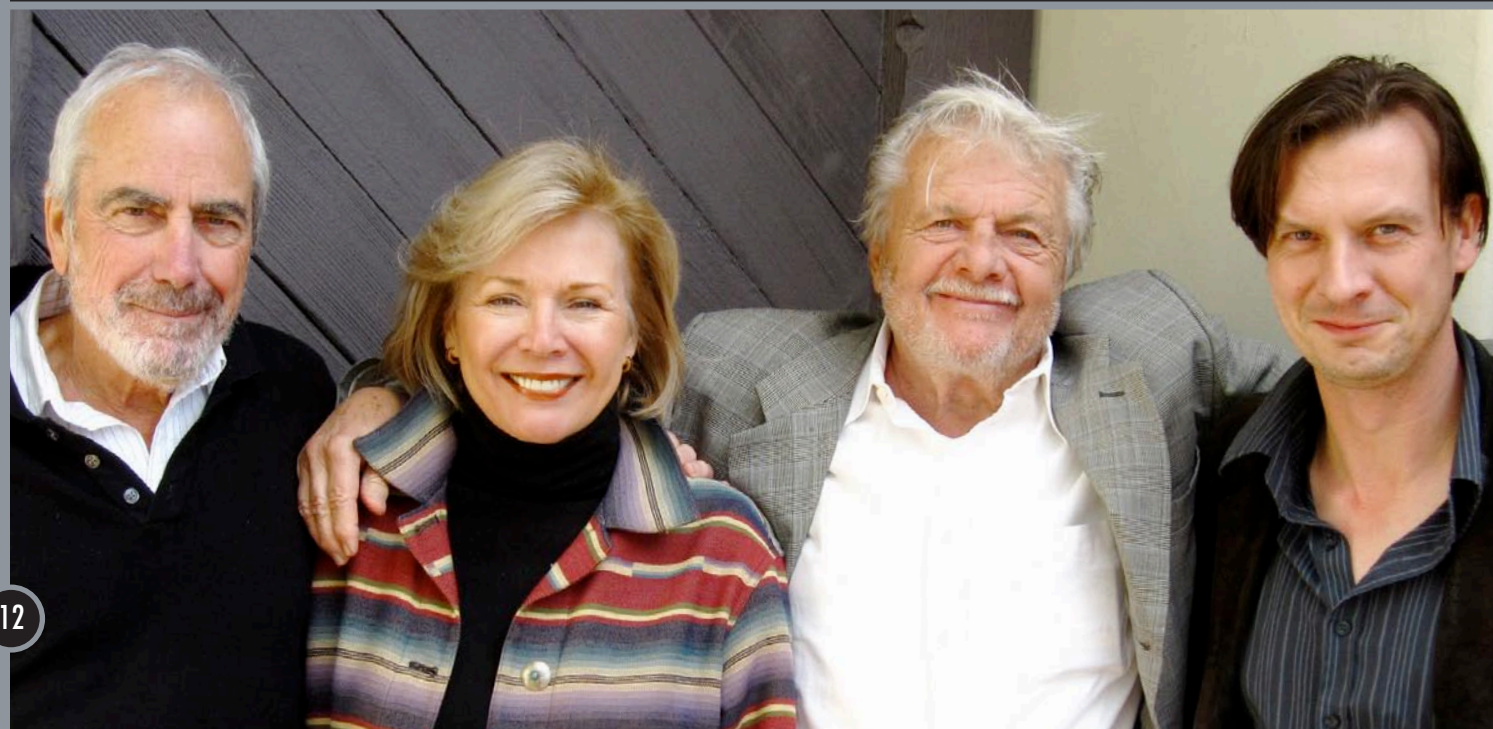
You'd think with all this madness going on that having even more fun during a **Dark Shadows** recording session would be impossible. Not true! Like all jobs, the best part of the sessions was lunch. And no, I don't mean the meals themselves. I mean the stories told by David, Lara and the many other cast members as they regaled myself, Darren and recording engineer extraordinaire James Barth each afternoon. Did you know Lara participated in Vietnam War protests during the show's original run? Or that original Barnabas Jonathan Frid attended a Halloween party at the White House in 1969 during the Nixon administration? And that's just scratching the surface. Each lunch hour became a journey through world history told by people who both lived through it and – via a pop culture phenomenon – helped define it in their own unique way.

Three more recording sessions were held over the next month. During them, I was privileged to meet more of the wonderful **Dark Shadows** cast – both classic and 'next gen' – as they brought our story to life. Among the moments I'll never forget are: Jerry Lacy (Trask) and Jim Storm (Sheriff Haggerty) exchanging heated, scripted barbs about a supernatural menace and then joking with each other between takes; father and son David and Jamison Selby's (Ed Griffin) pure joy at getting another chance to work together; Kathryn Leigh Scott's (Maggie Evans) uncanny ability to cut loose with a terrifying scream on cue for as many takes as necessary, and of course... John Karlen (Willie Loomis). Anything he does. Anything he says. The man doesn't just spout history, he is history – a funny, charming, living example of it. John's the kind of guy who lights up the studio, bringing out the best in the cast – as both actors and as human beings.

The recordings are done now. The Big Finish team has been hard at work for months, cutting together takes, editing sound effects and adding music. Oh, and that neat four-disc package? Stuart designed that himself (Stop being an overachiever, dude!). I sincerely hope you enjoy *Kingdom of the Dead* as much as myself and all the other talented people putting it together did. It's truly been a labour of love. All that remains now is for you to sit back, relax and enjoy the darkness.

Dark Shadows - Kingdom of the Dead is out this month

Below from left: Jerry Lacy, Kathryn Leigh-Scott, John Karlen, Andrew Collins, David Selby, Lara Parker, Ursula Burton and David Warner





CAPITAL AFFAIR

Quentin acquires a new partner-in-crime with this story, Cockney showgirl Rosie Faye. Were you writing the role with Louise Jameson in mind? Lou's a mate of mine and a fantastic actor. When I came up with the idea for *London's Burning* I knew that the second voice would need to be played by someone really, really good. It needed to be an actor who could be a bit theatrical and melodramatic but who would also take it seriously.

We meet two different incarnations of Rosie too... Exactly. We needed an actor who could convince as both the younger and older versions of Rosie, along with playing various other characters as well. But, most of all, it needed to be an actor who could go deeper and discover the real woman behind this loud showgirl.

Quentin Collins is on the trail of a supernatural killer in *London's Burning*, this month's **Dark Shadows** Dramatic Reading. Writer Joseph Lidster reveals what's in store...

You've written for several Big Finish ranges. What made you want to write a **Dark Shadows** audio? It'd been a couple of years since I'd written my last audio drama, *Torchwood: In the Shadows*, and it's a format I love working in, so I'd missed it. I'd also really got into the original **Dark Shadows** and it was something I really wanted to be involved in.

What about the **Dark Shadows** format appealed to you?

What's not to love? It's got horror and camp and vampires and werewolves and gypsies and bonnets and parallel universes. It's just a fantastic idea for a series.

Was your approach to **Dark Shadows** different to your other writing?

Capturing the language of **Dark Shadows** was tricky, because I usually try to make my writing feel real. I want the dialogue to sound realistic and for the story to feel like it's set in the real world. But you can't really do that with **Dark Shadows**. I'd never suggest that you shouldn't take it seriously, but it's an essentially melodramatic world. And that was great fun, but also a real challenge to write for.

In a nutshell, what is *London's Burning*? It's a big old romp in Victorian London with lots of mysterious deaths in the fog. Although there's continuity, you don't need to know the **Dark Shadows** mythology to follow it. Plus it's got a fantastic song, which you'll soon find yourself singing along to!



Top left: David Selby. Above: Joseph Lidster, Louise Jameson and director Nigel Fairs

DARK SHADOWS



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TRIPPING YARNS

We go behind the scenes as the **Short Trips** range is revived in audio form, with Sophie Aldred encountering a surprise visitor...

It always feels very special when different eras of **Doctor Who** come together. When past meets future, or present meets past. And there's a feeling of that in so many ways in our audio **Short Trips**, which bring together an absolute galaxy of stars to read the short stories.

The series launches in November with Volume 1, which contains eight stories, each read by an actor with a special link to an era of the series.

These readers will continue through the first four volumes, which come out at three-monthly intervals. Just look at the names involved – William Russell, David Troughton, Katy Manning, Louise Jameson, Colin Baker, Sophie Aldred, India Fisher, plus one other to be confirmed – each reading a story linked

with their era of **Doctor Who**. And there's even a story written by Colin himself – *The Wings of a Butterfly* will be included on Volume 1.

If the cast list wasn't exciting enough, there was a behind the scenes treat on June 18 when we came to record Sophie's four stories for the range. We were due to start at midday as the BBC had the studio booked for the first half of the day. Imagine our surprise when we turned up to find Karen Gillan – Amy Pond herself! – emerging from a sound booth, having recorded some material for the online interactive game.

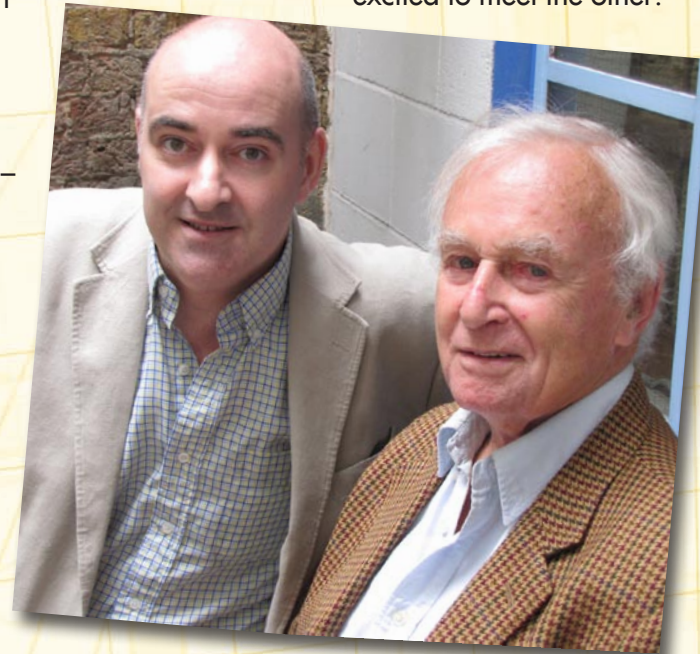
"I was so excited to meet Karen and curious as to just how much she would be able to tower over me,"

says Sophie. "Lots, is the answer! As she emerged from the studio I introduced myself. 'I'm one of the old girls', I said, 'I played Ace!'"

"'You were Ace?' gasped Karen, wide-eyed. 'Can I have my photo taken with you?' I was so amazed she even knew who I was, considering that she was born the year I started playing Ace!"

"I was a little embarrassed to be at such close quarters, being a little sweaty from doing my daily run, but by chance I had put on my 'Chicks Dig Time Lords' t-shirt which was given to me by an American friend. I got Karen to sign my t-shirt, later realizing that of course I'll never be able to wash it again! And I had to get an autograph for my 10-year-old, Adam, who has just started watching **Doctor Who** after all this time and whose only assistant is Amy Pond. The only downside to meeting Karen was the realization that despite still playing a 16-20-something-year-old Ace, Sophie Aldred has definitely got older!"

And so emerged the photo opportunity we'd been secretly hoping for. David Richardson was on picture duties, snapping away with Karen and Sophie's mobiles, and then with the Big Finish camera. And so we ended up with a lovely shot of Sophie and Karen together – each of them equally excited to meet the other!



Above left: Katy Manning. Above: Nick Briggs and William Russell. Opposite page: Sophie Aldred and Karen Gillan.





MARK

Mark Strickson talks dragons, accents and the return of the early Eighties TARDIS team with Paul Spragg

First of all, thank you for coming back to this country, Mark. My pleasure. I came for the weather! [It's a freezing day in December.] I came for my Mum's eightieth birthday and she was really, really pleased to see me, because in the rulebook for sons it says, 'You will be there on your mother's eightieth birthday and there are no excuses known to humankind that will get you out of this'. So I left New Zealand on Boxing Day, spent two days with Mum and Dad, then I came down here, did two days, spent four days with Mum and Dad, then here five days this week.

What's it like being back with not just your Doctor, Peter Davison, but Janet Fielding (Tegan) and Sarah Sutton (Nyssa) too? It's really lovely. It was my idea actually; I was doing a **Companion Chronicle** and it's very hard working on your own. It's quite nice, but it's not the same, and I said, 'Couldn't we do one with all of us? Peter and Janet

and Sarah and I?' Because we all get on very well and there's an energy there that you don't get otherwise. And it's quite interesting; on television we had a problem when we had three companions, no companion had a decent part. Every TARDIS scene you had one line; you never got to say very much. But we all had very different characters; Sarah's character, Nyssa, is a bit goody two-shoes, and Tegan's character is sarcastic and rude and Australian and wonderful, and Turlough is evil and sarcastic and a bit bitter about life. And when you do these – what I call 'radio' – ones, just the spoken word, that works really, really well. You can write the lines specifically to highlight those different facets of the characters.

So does Turlough have a major role in the stories? Absolutely! Everybody has a decent role and that's the good thing. Turlough, I always thought, was a great character. He doesn't need to evolve, he just needs more challenges. That was the problem when I was in the programme, he wasn't challenged, but in this he is severely challenged, to the extent that he's at one point [*oh, but we're not giving that away just yet – Ed*]. This is the wonderful thing about radio; you can do anything!

What have been your favourite Turlough moments from this trilogy?

Well, I've been beaten up even more than usual. I've lost count of the amount of times I've seen 'Ow' written in the script! Everybody seems to beat me up and lock me up – and I get shut in a cage with freaky animals around me. Very much in the style of the show!

Which Turlough is featured in these stories?

It's the normal Turlough. He doesn't get influenced by the Black Guardian much. He's not a mover and shaker. Well, he sort of is; I get to lock the Doctor out of the TARDIS, so that's a nice moment. [And Peter] has to do all the things that **Doctor Who** assistants have to do, he has to scream, squirm around on the floor in pain, all those sorts of things. As an assistant you have to do that as part of your daily job, but the Doctor doesn't do that so it's great to see him suffer!

Do you ever go back and watch your old stories?

The answer is no, but yes. Because I've done some commentaries and I've watched them again because you need to remind yourself. I am surprised how good they are. I remembered them

MY WORDS

Have you often met up with the others in the intervening years?

Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Peter a lot; I don't do that many appearances because I am quite busy with my other producing hat on. I have a proper job that keeps me involved 48/49 weeks a year so I don't have a lot of time off. And historically I'm in weird places like Australia or New Zealand or somewhere even weirder, so it's harder for me to get to places. But I do do conventions whenever I can, so I've seen Sarah at those, and Janet; Peter and I for some reason have bumped into each other a lot. Last year we did two appearances together in New Zealand; Peter had a holiday in New Zealand so that was really nice, we had some quality time together. It's quite interesting because obviously several years have passed since we were in **Doctor Who** – about 25 – and Peter and I are now clones of each other; we both wear reading glasses and are grumpy old men! There's only five years' difference [in age].

as not being so good, both in terms of the stories and the acting. It's amazing when they put the new CGI on, so for example *Enlightenment*, the one where we were on our boat going through space, the new CG on that is just stunning. In the original I threw myself off the ship at one point, and this net comes out to get me and it was just awful. In the new version, it's just great and it looks like it was made yesterday.

The funny thing is, people say **Doctor Who** is so good now – and it is so good now and I love it – but when I first came back, which I think was about four years ago, when David [Tennant]'s first season was on, my mother watched it. When I was in **Doctor Who** my mother watched the first few episodes and I said, 'Did you enjoy them, Mum?' and she said, 'Well, yes, you know, you were good but it's not really our sort of television'. And this time I came back my Mum said, 'Have you seen any of the new **Doctor Whos**?' and I said,

'Yeah, yeah, I have'. I said, 'What do you think of it?' And she said, 'Oh, it's much better than when you were in it!' So my mother now watches **Doctor Who** and didn't watch it when I was in it!

I work in the field of documentaries, and if you saw a documentary made 25 years ago and one now, the CG's incredible in them. Twenty-five years ago we didn't have that; you had to be able to act, you see. It was all down to the actors; now anybody can do it!

Couldn't you use CG instead of going near dangerous animals on documentaries?

I couldn't possibly comment on that! I just made a film on komodo dragons, and they are big lizards. They are huge. Biggest lizards in the world. And just before I got to Komodo Island, a boy had been killed by one and, I have to say, I almost tripped over one one morning. It was just outside the hut where I was staying and that was about as close as I have ever wanted to be to being killed on a remote island by something very nasty. What's interesting is that my life now is a bit like being in **Doctor Who** only it's for real! I really do get chased by monsters!

Do you prefer making documentaries or acting?

I really enjoy acting. It wasn't a conscious decision to give up acting; in the late eighties I got extremely worried about the world and saving the world, so I went off and did a zoology degree, and I suppose I thought I might do some wildlife presenting. I didn't know what I was going to do, to be honest.

By chance I came back to London and I wrote three films. Two of them were commissioned and I ended up working for a company called Partridge Films in Bristol, and the first film I ever directed was a film called **The Ten Deadliest Snakes in the World**, with a guy called Steve Irwin that many people might know. Because of the success of that film I became a sort of 'name' director overnight in the genre of documentaries, and I haven't stopped working since.

And I have to say, it's been an amazing adventure. I get to do really cool things, but I also get to get really horrible diseases! But I have worked all over the world. At one point I put a suit back on and became Head of Programmes at Oxford Scientific Films, and I quite enjoyed that but I missed going out in the field and so I gave that up. Four weeks later I was in a helicopter with the sides off it flying to Sierra Leone just after the war and I thought, 'YEAH!!!!!! I'm back!!!!!!'

It's impressive to have two separate careers, both of which you love.

Actually, I am getting a bit old. I'm being quite serious. For the sort of work I do, physically it gets more and more tiring every year. So I'm looking forward to coming back to acting when my body eventually gives up the ghost.

You seem happy to be here acting again.

This is like being back in Television Centre 1. This is great. I've really enjoyed this week. And I think people will enjoy them when they listen to them. There's a huge amount of energy and you'll know that we're enjoying working together.

Has the dynamic changed?

Janet isn't obsessive about doing the *Guardian* crossword any more, and she's stopped knitting, which was very, very irritating in rehearsal, the click of needles – we had to chuck her out in the end. We look a bit older but we're all just the same.

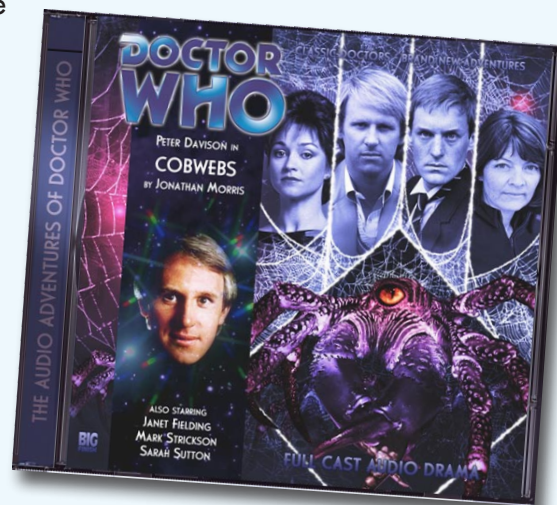
Janet has become even more Australian! This is very interesting. I can't do an Australian accent! I am crap at it! I have no idea why I can't because I can do regional English accents, I can do a Scottish accent, I can do all sorts of things; I'm very good at accents. But I can't do an Australian accent to save my life and I've lived there about eight years! You've got to want to acquire it and I didn't really want to acquire it!

My partner is a New Zealander and I can't understand a word she says sometimes if I don't see her lips move! I'll be in the car driving, looking ahead, and she'll say something to me and I won't have a clue what she said! It's a very strange part of the world.

So does your heart lie in New Zealand or the UK?

I'm very happy to keep swapping over. I think I'm about to move to Singapore for a year, which is in the middle, so that's quite good really.

The Fifth Doctor, Tegan, Turlough and Nyssa trilogy begins this month with Cobwebs



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 guests appear subject to work commitments. for full terms and conditions and more information please visit our website

FORTHCOMING RELEASES

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 – The 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)
- After the Break-Up by Carrie Sutton (Paperback)

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 – Prisoner of the Sun (4.08, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – Peri and the Piscon Paradox (5.07, Sixth Doctor)
- Jago and Litefoot – Series 2 Box Set (Four full cast adventures)
- Highlander – Series 2 Box Set (Four enhanced readings)

MARCH

- Doctor Who – TBA (144, Sixth Doctor/TBA)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – To the Death (4.10, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (5.08, Doctor TBA)

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)
- The Big Finish Companion by Richard Dinnick – Volume 1 (hardback)

DECEMBER

- Doctor Who – TBA (142, Fifth Doctor/Nyssa)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – Relative Dimensions (4.07, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – The Second Doctor Box Set (2.2 – 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)

APRIL

- Doctor Who – TBA (145, Sixth Doctor/TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Thin Ice (2.3, Seventh Doctor and Ace)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (5.10, Doctor TBA)



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