

FREE! ISSUE #18 AUGUST 2010 **BIG**
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VORTEX

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EIGHTIES REVIVAL

Peter Davison on regaining his old crew and losing the plot

**PAUL
MCGANN**

on the last days of the
Eighth Doctor Adventures

**BARNABY
EDWARDS**

on Textbook Stuff

GRACELESS

with Simon Guerrier



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EDITORIAL

Yes, it's me, dear reader! Ol' Briggsy is up in Nottingham making marvellous theatre, so I'm here manning the fort. Oh, the power. I could do anything. I could cast Alan Carr as the Daleks, and Nick'd never know till he got back! Bwah-ha-ha-ha-ha!

All right, I've had my fun. Actually, last night this job reduced me to tears. That wasn't me going over the edge after months of seven day weeks and fourteen hour days. In fact the tears came about because of the best possible reason. You see, I was listening to the final edit of *Find and Replace*, a **Companion Chronicle** performed by Katy Manning which is due out in September. There's this wonderful, pivotal moment when Jo Grant... well, I won't spoil it. But it's beautifully written, and Katy really goes for it, giving a performance so emotional and raw and truthful that I found it hugely affecting.

And I realized that many of my favourite stories have been very emotional ones. *The Suffering* had me blubbing when I heard the edit, with those amazing scenes with the suffragettes, performed by Maureen O'Brien and Peter Purves. *Death in Blackpool* left me feeling sad and melancholy.

Legend of the Cybermen brought a tear to my eye, especially in that sublime final scene. And *The Guardian of the Solar System* had me reaching for the tissues.

You see, the wonderful thing is, even though I spend most of my working hours producing these stories, I can still enjoy them as a listener. It's one of the very best things in a wonderful job when that final edit comes in and one is left with a rousing sense of pride in the production.

And I'm so very proud of *Find and Replace*...

David Richardson



Alex Lowe & Katy Manning

SNEAK PREVIEWS AND WHISPERS



Colin Baker & Nicola Bryant prepare to explain all

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GRACELESS

In issue 15 of *Vortex*, I explained how the mini-series *Graceless* came about. On 31 October, while we were at a convention in Florida, Big Finish big cheese Jason Haigh-Ellery asked me, Simon Guerrier, to continue the story of Amy and Zara from the Key 2 Time trilogy. Here's what happened next...

OUTLINE

Jason asked me to pitch him a series of three one-hour stories with a limited cast. By the pool the next day and on my flight home I scribbled ideas in my notebook, all kinds of things that might happen to the girls and how they might develop.

That's always a manic, free-wheeling process. Ideas are the easy bit, you can just throw everything into the mix. But making the ideas work – structuring a plot, then writing up a script – is where it gets tricky. I guess it's like the difference between thinking someone is sexy (the idea) and getting them to snog you (the execution). See how thrilling and heroic I make writing sound.

By 7 November I had a rough, page-and-a-half outline for three episodes, called *Falling from Grace*, *The Storm* and *Things As They Are*. Outlines show the bosses what the story will feel like, how it will play out and what the major revelations will be – and make it easy to change course before a lot of the hard graft has been done. For example, the second story was originally set in the late 18th century and ended with Amy and Zara prisoners of the 'equivalents of Torchwood or The Forge', including 'William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft (parents of Mary Shelley)', who would then be crucial to the finale. Jason wasn't convinced, and I quickly came up with something else.

On 16 November, at a launch party for Rob Shearman's now award-winning anthology, *Love*

Songs for the Shy and Cynical, Jason and I discussed my new, improved outline. We also agreed that Mark Wright would produce the series. The next day, I supplied Mark and Jason with a revised, two-page outline, the setting of story two 'a town in the late 18th century – think *Poldark*'.

The following evening, the three of us met to hammer out the last details, and discussed whether having a lead character called Amy who used to travel with the Doctor would mean we would forever have to explain in all our publicity that no, she wasn't the one from TV.

By the end of that meeting, I had the bare bones of the series agreed and deadlines for each of the three scripts.

WRITING

Then it was just a matter of lashing myself to the desk and typing the damn things. I'd got roughly a month to write each one, around my other freelance commitments, and would deliver them on the last days of December, January and February.

There are lots of practical things to worry about when you're writing audio plays. You need distinctive settings with the characters moving and doing things, to disguise the fact it's all made by actors standing in little recording booths. You try to keep the scenes to no more than three pages (partly because it helps the pace, partly because you can't fit more than three pages on the stands in the booths). You try to make every scene end with things having changed for each of the characters, while keeping their immediate desires and fears clear to the listener. You worry about names and technobabble that might trip up the actors, and how simply and vividly you're making everything. You also have to step away from the machine sometimes to feed and occasionally wash. A wife and cat and other bits of work vied for my attention.

Once the scripts are in, the producer – and maybe other people – spot spelling mistakes and other errors and ask awkward questions. Lines of dialogue or whole scenes might come apart under scrutiny, everyone pitching in to make the script as polished and robust as possible. Mark worried about how Abby and Zara felt about things happening around them, David Richardson wouldn't let me fudge the mechanics of the time rings.

CASTING

Once the bosses are happy with the scripts, the writer takes more of a back seat. Mark and director Lisa Bowerman booked our stars – not easy when Ciara Janson (Abby) and Laura Doddington (Zara) are such busy actors. For all sorts of practical reasons, we recorded story two on 17 March and stories one and three over the weekend of 24-25 July.

I chipped in some suggestions for the casting of other parts – Fraser James for Marek after I'd worked with him on a documentary in March, Michael Keating after I bumped into him on a train. I've learned to trust Lisa's ear for casting, and it's a thrill to hear clever people bringing my silly words to life. Suddenly it's not a Word document on my computer; it's a group effort I'm just a part of.

I'm not really required at the recording days, but it helps when there are questions about lines of dialogue (or the whole premise of the series), plus I get the lovely lunch.

At 5.17pm on Sunday 25 July, director Lisa Bowerman sat back in her chair behind the great control desk and announced we'd finished recording.



Ciara Janson and Laura Doddington as Abby and Zara

POST-PRODUCTION

Then, I carried away the marked-up scripts and DVDs of the sound files for the sound engineers (normally the producer's job, but Mark Wright has fled for a much-needed holiday). Things are already moving – the next day, David Richardson emailed me and Mark with Jamie Robertson's theme tune. There are discussions about where we'll launch the series and who'll do what events. But otherwise I'm done, and just wait to hear the final versions...

Graceless is out in November

Paul McGann tells Paul Spragg what he's learnt from his time playing the Eighth Doctor so far...

You've had a pretty relaxing day today. I've done ten minutes! It bucks the trend, I tell you. And I've been listening to my son do his thing, ply his new trade. It's nice, it's good. I've enjoyed it.

Yes, we gave you a later call time, yet you arrived bright and early with Jake [who plays the Doctor's great-grandson Alex] in tow... Because I was his chauffeur! The only guarantee of his getting here was if I got him up and gave him a poached egg and sausages and put him in the car and drove him here. I'm a father first, Time Lord second.

How have you found the fourth and final Eighth Doctor series?

Watershed events seem to have been happening thicker and faster. With Sheridan [Smith, Lucie] it seems like yesterday she started and now she's left. We've only just said ta-ra to the last

incumbent and it's all a bit sad and sentimental. We've had some good adventures. The last bunch of stories has been... one might say I would say this, but I always feel that they improve. They feel like we're getting better at them. Not just doing them but enjoying doing them as well. This morning I've hardly recorded anything but I've sat in the booth listening, and there's a good spirit, you know? That's important. I feel the last year we've just had a laugh doing them. And it's not a bad guiding principle. If we have a laugh, then maybe people will enjoy them when they listen to them.

I'm really into them. And I spent spring – at least our spring – over in Australia/New Zealand meeting people, doing a couple of conventions, and people love 'em. Everybody loves 'em. And the age range of people who are into them, Big Finish, it's really reassuring. Kids are buying 'em and getting into 'em. Seven, eight-year-old kids: it's fantastic! And 68-year-old kids as well. And it's great that they're popular as well; when I'm over doing those things, and particularly when I have to do stage appearances, the audience are always having

to fill me in like a big crib sheet because I can never remember! Typical actor, you learn your part, you forget your part, you learn the next one. It's Time Lord amnesia.

We're pleased we can give the Eighth Doctor the life he never had on TV.

I'm glad too. The Eighth Doctor was six weeks shooting, one TV appearance 15 years ago, so by volume there's rather little to go on, it's quite thin. There was this one film. And he sort of hung on in there. But he's there in the pantheon. During the last year he's even reappeared briefly in flashback on some of the new TV stuff. And I have to say, just on a personal note, I was kind of relieved because it wasn't so long ago – just a few months ago, in fact – sat there with Jake, and Jake was looking on some web-related thing and he said, 'Ere, Dad, there's some thread or something, apparently they're going to de-canonise you'. It's like being made a saint! And I said, 'Really?' and he said, 'Yeah, you're gonna be decommissioned'. So you never quite know. Anyway, a couple of weeks later there I

"Jake said, 'Ere, Dad, there's some thread or something, apparently they're going to de-canonise you'"

was on the telly, but without trying to give you the impression that one hangs on thinking that one is either in oblivion

or there at the party, it was nice to know that the Eighth Doctor is still part of things. And I think we can – I say we, that's the royal we – I think there's plenty to come. I'm really happy doing Big Finish, because it's kept us going and it's kept us in it. That's the beautiful nature of the character and the programme anyway. It's never over. Where there's life there's hope.

You've also been working with Carole Ann Ford as Susan again.

I'm enjoying going back – you can't really say that in **Doctor Who**, can you? – going sideways to the stories involving the great grandson and granddaughter. I'm fascinated by the history, the idea that Bill Hartnell first appeared with a granddaughter.

When one stands there on stage on your tod, yakking to 300 serious **Doctor Who** fans, sometimes it's electric because you ask these questions about the mythology and there's people out there with degree-level knowledge

After
Eight

about such matters. I'm always amazed that people out there have timelines, essays in their head about what happened when and to whom. I never understood it to start with and was never a fan anyway as a kid, I just watched the other channel, I watched the football! But I've really grown to be seriously fascinated, as much by the people, by its adherents, as the stories themselves. I'm kind of a newfound... I don't know if I can call myself a fan, I don't know about anything, I couldn't even get an O level in it, let alone a degree in it! But the last couple of years in particular the penny's really dropped about it.

And next up, you'll be back sharing the main range with the other Doctors. It sounds like one of those projects where they try to introduce wild animals back into the veldt! 'We're going to be putting you back in with the giraffes.'

Have you watched much of the current TV series? If I told you I don't keep a television, would you believe me? Because it's true, I don't watch TV. I rarely know what's happening on telly. What's more, I'm often introduced to people, particularly actors, that are really hot on the telly and I don't know who they are. People say

"We're going to be putting you back in with the giraffes"

to you, 'Do you know who that was you were just talking to?' Not a clue. Ten years ago, I just stopped watching TV. I watch sport. I enjoy watching football matches and the like. I think it's because I know it's gonna end. There'll be a final whistle. Whereas with television it seems to be never-ending.

I saw a couple of minutes of Matt Smith because I was curious to see what he looked like, and he seems typically mercurial, inspired. I watched quite a few on computer. I thought David Tennant was fantastic. A real shot in the arm, just what the thing needed, somebody that consummately brilliant but also somebody that really believed in it, that was also a real fan. But it's all there, that sort of quicksilver comic but serious attack that he had.

You could make the case that some of that speed came from your ebullient performance as the Eighth Doctor.

I think with the Eighth Doctor, even though it was over so quickly, it was a pilot, so it had a function to fulfil. He was quickly in extremis, and there were keynote things, bases he had to hit. There was hardly anything that was reflective, perhaps quieter. We didn't really get all of the colours. But I know what you mean; there have been times since where I've watched the actors and of course, it is the same character. Even Chris Eccleston. Chris has got a very expert light touch; he's not renowned for it, but I watched him a couple of times and thought that's some of the best work he ever did. Chris doesn't do charm easily, but he did when I saw him.

He does tend to play dark roles most of the time.

He's much more than that. He's gotta be enjoying it, though. He's like all of us, he's gotta enjoy doing what he's doing and when he does it really shows. But every now and again, I've seen McCoy do things, I've seen Colin Baker do things, and it's the same. I don't know how it happens but it's the same character. Their responses are the same, their heart – hearts – are the same.

There are some moments where Matt Smith is very like Patrick Troughton.

But that's kind of great, isn't it? If he was able to do it on purpose he is a genius. He's touched with genius, Matt. He's a bit of a force of nature. I've seen him before, I've seen him in the theatre. He's a very brilliant actor, Matt Smith. And he's never better than when he doesn't quite know what he's doing. I mean that respectfully. He's purely instinctive, and I hope they just give him his head and let him do what he wants to do.

David Tennant is such a brilliant technician. Again, I say that with due respect, he's a wonderful classical actor, but technically he's dead on. You could get it in one with him, he's like that. But I'm not sure Matt could always do it first time. It might be sixth time, but it's extraordinary, you know? He's one of them. So with Matt you might have to wait for it, but it's worth waiting for. He's got that otherworldly thing, Matt Smith, the appeal, the look of him. He looks splendid. I was slightly concerned when I read the first press release, it seemed he got the gig because of his hair; I remember doing that, I got the gig because of my hair! Anyway, he's on his way with it and he's still in his twenties, so there's a long way to go for him.

Bill Hartnell, the first Doctor Who, he was my Doctor Who – because I'm older than you think I am! He was probably only in his fifties in the 1960s, I'm guessing, but he seemed like an old man. To a child, anyway. He had white hair and so forth. And even Troughton seemed old to a kid, but there was a gravitas to it; you believed in the seasoned traveller. More innocent days perhaps, but their age was respected.

I grew up in a time just after the war really, and most people your father's age, your teachers' age, Bill Hartnell's age, had probably done some incredibly brave thing, so older

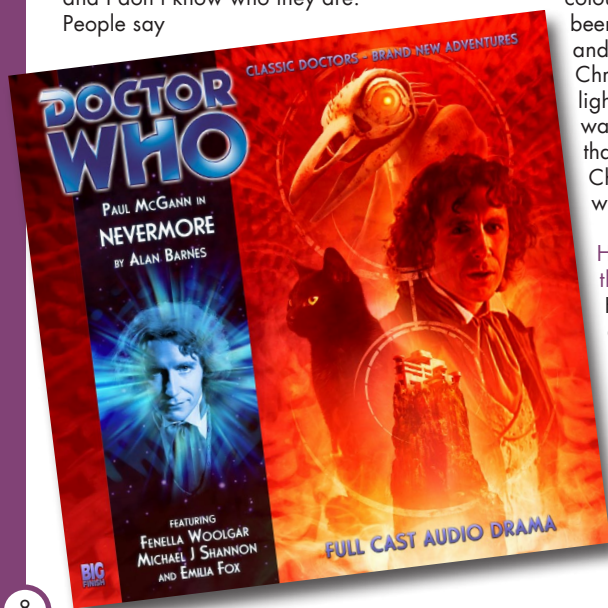


Family business: Jake McGann and Carole Ann Ford

people garnered respect really easily then. We were slightly in awe of them. And Hartnell had that. I remember he was slightly scary and demanded your respect. And Troughton had this rather stern presence, which I love. There's nothing wrong with a youthful Doctor, but every now and again it's good to be reminded that the character's older than you are. He's seen a few things.

There's even been times you become disillusioned, there's no youthful innocence about him – this is from my O Level **Who** history. But as I understand it, the turmoil, the trouble back on his home planet, the things that happened have left their mark. And that's important. It's someone who's witnessed things, who's seen life and death. It's important, that. We love the eccentric quicksilver Doctor Who, we love the comic, but often it works best when it appears that he's trying to disguise some pain, there's something very poignant about it. And that was very present when I was growing up. You couldn't have a Doctor Who any more than you could have a vampire character, say, as they're the current vogue, who was just blithe, breezy. You couldn't. A Time Lord has to be also deep and dark. I like that. I like the idea of that.

The Eighth Doctor Adventures continue this month with *Nevermore*. The Four Doctors will be available at Christmas to all customers whose subscription includes December's **Doctor Who** main range release



Peter Davison is back in studio, and loving returning to the role of the Fifth Doctor once again. With one caveat. "Oh, I enjoy it. I just don't enjoy this bit where you ask me to talk about the stories; this one particularly because last week Janet [Fielding] wasn't here and I've had to go off a couple of days because I'm doing this show – **Legally Blonde**, Savoy Theatre, may be still running," he plugs without pausing for breath, "and so it's even more confused than normal!"

"Even when it's perfectly normal and chronological I don't understand the stories because it's too quick. So you're going to ask me, 'What do you think of this story?' and I'll go, 'I've no idea'. I don't know at any point in any day which story I'm doing, to be honest with you! Anyway, go on."

It's not the most auspicious start when your interview subject claims to know next to nothing about the work in progress, but we're going to gamely press on regardless.

We've been testing Davison's acting abilities a fair bit recently; he even played an older and more malevolent version of the Doctor in last year's *The Eternal Summer*. "That's right!" says Davison, the memory coming back. "It probably means I'm getting more versatile in my old age. Or maybe they're just bored with the normal Doctor!" he laughs.

For this trilogy, Big Finish has reunited the Eighties TARDIS team of Tegan (Fielding), Turlough (Mark Strickson) and Nyssa (Sarah Sutton). How does it feel to have the entire gang together for the first time in 25 years? "It doesn't really feel like we haven't been reunited before," muses Davison, "so it doesn't feel like, 'Oh my God, this is amazing, we're back after all these years,' because obviously I've done stories with Sarah, I've seen Mark fairly recently and Janet I've still been in touch with. So I'd sort of, in a way, almost forgotten that Janet hadn't been doing them, weirdly.

"I think the level of abuse between us in the studio has gone up by a factor of ten," he laughs, "so I think it'd be quite funny if they just recorded all the outtakes and put that out as a separate double CD because we've been going at it some. In the nicest possible way obviously."

"You're going to ask me, 'What do you think of this story?' and I'll go, 'I've no idea'"

It's a lovely idea (especially considering the peals of laughter repeatedly echoing from the assorted booths in studio when someone says something inappropriate; Fielding has recently been unable to say any sentence featuring the word 'snake' without giggling).

So the team has been reunited before today but not – and this is the key part – in character. Does it take some of the pressure off the Doctor to have three companions around? "No, it makes it far more complicated! I seem to be in absolutely everything at the moment!" replies Davison in his best faux-annoyed voice, adding, "I don't understand this! I thought I would get great rafts of pages off, it doesn't appear to have worked like that at all! And also it's very difficult to follow, because inevitably – and I'm not sure this is

entirely necessary – we have quite a lot of scenes where I run into a room. And when we were filming it I'd just run into the room, and go, 'Quick, close the door, we've got to take off'. Now I go, 'Nyssa,

Tegan, Turlough, close the door! Nyssa, Tegan, Turlough, over here!' just in case you've forgotten they're there. So we've cut quite a few of them out.

"It's nice to have them there, but I wouldn't say it makes it easier. Besides, now it turns out even Janet and Sarah are confused about which part they're playing. Sarah's now convinced she's playing Tegan. She hasn't got as far as the accent yet.

"Actually, that's one thing that's extraordinary. Janet's accent appears to have got stronger the longer she's been over here. When we did the series in 1984, it wasn't really there except in the actual performance. In the show, the accent was there but in real life she spoke with a very posh English accent. Now it's given way to the broad Antipodean accent."

Perhaps she's gone fully method. Or maybe it comes from her extensive stay Down Under where, it should be pointed out, she was born and raised. How's Davison been getting on with his other co-stars? He's admitted in the past to mercilessly teasing Sarah Sutton. "I do enjoy tormenting Sarah, again in the nicest possible way – I'm beginning to sound like Dick Emery! I don't help

Fifth Fight

Peter Davison discusses the reunion of his TARDIS team with Paul Spragg

INTERVIEW

by knocking her confidence; I had to take one of her lines. I think she had to say 'intradimensional' and after the third go I think, I said, 'Shall I say that line?'

"With Janet it's just straightforward abuse, usually based on country of origin. I believe she's just become a British citizen, actually. Why we let her in, I've no idea," he says, grinning. "She was talking about how you have to sit a test, and I said one of the questions should be, 'In an Ashes test match, which side do you cheer for?' Well, she said Australia, so I think we should kick her out! I don't think we should have her here!

"Mark, we're full of respect for each other. I recently did a convention with Mark, and he does sensible things like nature programmes which is all very worthwhile and fulfilling, so I feel out of my depth with him. I can't just insult him like I feel I can the girls. That sounds almost misogynist! I don't mean it like that. Mark's always been trying to kill me; indeed, he's probably trying to do it in this episode as well, except I don't understand the episode, so he may not be. It's post Black Guardian, I know that much."

It certainly is. The tricky thing about reuniting this particular TARDIS line-up is the fact that when Nyssa left, Turlough was still under the Black Guardian's influence. To get round that and avoid some of the baggage that would bring to the trilogy, it was decided that the Doctor, Tegan and Turlough would

meet Nyssa again, only what was a couple of days for them has been 50 years for her. So, has it felt like being back in the Eighties again? "Well, apparently, except I don't look quite the same according to Janet. But then, she doesn't look quite the same either," says Davison.

That's a bit non-specific, what's actually changed? She hasn't got shorter, has she? "I think she *has* got shorter!" laughs Davison, before adding, "She's got *louder*. It's a bit like that thing from **Spinal Tap**. Someone has fitted a volume control that goes all the way up to eleven and I think we should put a limiter on her somewhere that goes no higher than five..."

It's been interesting talking to all four main cast members and being reminded that Davison is the only one who's stuck with a career in

acting. "That's because I'm the only one that can't do anything else, so sadly I have to stick with acting!" he explains with a smile. "I was the miserable failure at school and really I could not do anything else if I tried. Mark has obviously got his nature, real world side to it; Sarah just went off to be sensible and bring up a child, and Janet – she's first of all been an agent and a writer, and now it seems she just pummels us mercilessly with her intellectual inadequacies. I mean talent," he corrects with a grin. Evidently the good-natured insults aren't confined solely to the booths.

There's just time for a proper plug for Davison's show, starring our very own Sheridan Smith, aka Eighth Doctor companion Lucie Miller. "**Legally Blonde**, now showing at the Savoy Theatre – unless it's not by the time this comes out," offers Davison apologetically. And how long's it running for? "It's open-ended, of course, so it could be running in five years, although I think I'm unlikely to be in it in five years. Unless I've gone and then come back. I notice Ruthie Henshall is just going back into **Chicago**, so if it's still running I might go back for a guest appearance. I'm talking in January 2010, and I'm in it for six months and then it's up to me, I suppose. Or them if they think I'm terrible! So we'll see..."

"She's got louder... Someone has fitted a volume control that goes all the way up to eleven"

The Fifth Doctor, Tegan, Turlough and Nyssa trilogy began last month with Cobwebs. See right for release dates



THE STUFF OF LEGEND

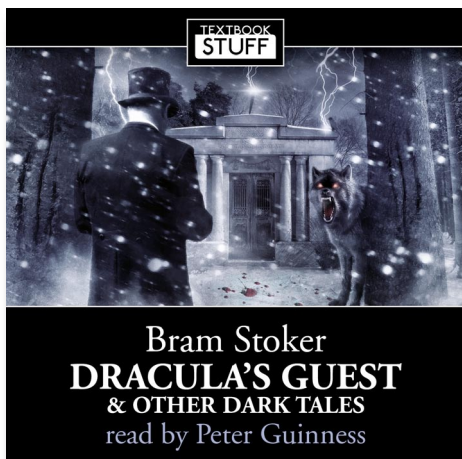
So Barnaby Edwards, executive producer: what exactly is Textbook Stuff, in 25 words or less? We produce unabridged audiobooks of classic literature, brought vividly to life with full sound design and music.

What was the genesis of the Textbook Stuff project?

It all stemmed from the production of **The Phantom of the Opera** which I wrote and directed for Big Finish in 2007. **Phantom** was intended as the first release in a series of full-cast adaptations of classic novels.

Sadly, this Big Finish Classics series never materialized: it was simply too expensive. But during the course of preparing for it I read numerous candidate works including **The Pit and the Pendulum**, **The Signalman** and **Dracula's Guest**.

I couldn't help noticing that many of these stories also appeared in the syllabuses of the main three English Literature examination boards. Wouldn't it be brilliant, I thought to myself, to have unabridged audiobooks of these set texts that were as exciting as a full-cast adaptation like **Phantom**? That way they could appeal both to students and to audiophiles. Three years later, Textbook Stuff was born.



Was it always your desire to release via Big Finish?

Absolutely. Without wishing to sound sycophantic, Big Finish fans are some of the most sophisticated listeners out there. They completely understand the way sound can bring a story to life and, moreover, they actively like to be challenged aurally. As far as I know, no one is doing unabridged audiobooks of classic literature with full sound design and music – so who better to help usher in a new breed of audio than the best listeners in the business?

How did you decide what to record, and in what order to release them?

I wanted to launch with two titles which summed up the ethos of Textbook Stuff. Dickens is one of those 'worthy' authors we are all made to study at school and then fail to read thereafter. But he's a brilliant storyteller and I knew that the Textbook Stuff treatment could help make his work come alive in a way no classroom reading ever could. It helps, of course, that **The Signalman** is widely regarded as one of the

world's finest ghost stories!

In the world of poetry, there are many audiobooks on the market, but they're nearly always 'greatest hits' compilations: Wordsworth's *Daffodils*, Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, Coleridge's *Kubla Khan* and so on. Textbook Stuff's Poetry range is designed to embrace these

famous works but also to introduce listeners to poems with which they may be unfamiliar. Edward Thomas, a brilliant but obscure poet, seemed a perfect candidate with which to begin.

Once I had these initial titles, the other releases were easy to slot in.

How did you choose the narrators of each release?

When you read a collection of poems or short stories you get a feel for the author's tone of voice. For example, Edgar Allan Poe comes across as resoundingly gothic with a macabre sense of humour and a huge love of language, whereas Christina Rossetti seems passionate, sincere and possessed of an unusual fairytales quality. Once you have this author's voice in your head, it's simply a case of finding an actor who matches their tone and sensibility – a bit like casting someone to play Bram Stoker or Robert Browning.

Are there any people you are hoping to get on board in the future who weren't available for the early releases?

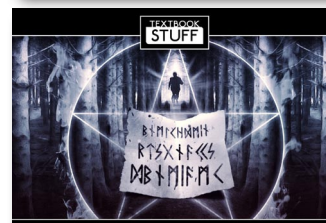
I'm happy to say I got all my first choices for this initial batch of titles. But I have a list of future readers as long as my arm and I fully intend to start working through it!

What are your personal favourites in the Textbook Stuff range?

They're my babies and I love them all. I suppose the ones I'm most fond of are the more obscure titles such as John Sessions' chilling reading of *A Confession Found in a Prison in the Time of Charles II*, Nicholas Pegg reading *Upon Appleton House* or David Soul's tour de force rendition of *A Tell-Tale Heart*.



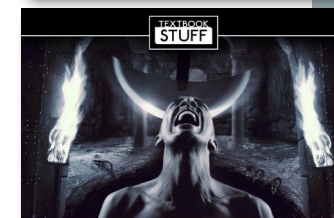
Robert Browning
SELECTED POEMS
read by Martin Jarvis



M.R. James
CASTING THE RUNES
& OTHER UNCANNY TALES
read by Andrew Sachs



Andrew Marvell
SELECTED POEMS
read by Nicholas Pegg



Edgar Allan Poe
THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM
& OTHER MACABRE TALES
read by David Soul

Were you a fan of all the poets and authors featured in the range or have you been turned on to some works that never appealed to you before?

Oh, I was most definitely a fan already. That said, during the course of selecting which stories or poems to include, I came across many I'd never encountered before. Textbook Stuff is proving to be a great educational tool for me!

So what have you learnt about the subjects of the releases that you didn't know?

An enormous amount. For instance, I didn't know Edgar Allan Poe published **The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar** in a medical journal, passing it off as a genuine academic paper. Nor did I know that **Dracula** wasn't the instant publishing sensation we now imagine it to have been.

What's in store for the future?

After September's releases of **Robert Browning – Selected Poems** (read by Martin Jarvis) and **M.R. James – Casting the Runes and Other Uncanny Tales** (read by Andrew Sachs), we'll be taking a bit of a break until after Christmas. But I can confirm we'll be back in 2011 with more Poetry and Horror titles, plus our first non-fiction audiobook. Stay tuned to find out more!

Visit www.textbookstuff.com for full details of all releases

With Nick away, David Richardson and Paul Spragg are going to answer your letters...

Guy, *Holmes and the Ripper* is, hands down, one of the most beautifully produced audio dramas I've ever heard. From the story and the dialogue to the music and sound effects, it truly was a cinematic experience.

I say this coming from a background as a screenwriter and novelist, with a lot of experience in the audio field. I honestly think it's far and away better than the recent Holmes movie and Nicholas Briggs's performance was outstanding.

Can I kiss your ass even more?

Bravo to everyone involved. I certainly hope you have more full cast adventures planned.

Robert Gregory Browne

Paul: And in the month Nick isn't about too! What a shame he'll never know just how awesome he is. On the plus side, at least his head will continue to fit through doors for a while longer.

Why did you stop making The Master audios? Was Beevers' version not popular enough, or did the BBC veto any further Master audios once the character returned to the screen?

Duke Duke

David: We work very closely with the brilliant team in Cardiff, and we're very careful not to replicate any stories or returning characters that may be returning to the TV series. So it was a case, with the Master, of not featuring him while he was returning in the TV show.

I'm a great enthusiast for Big Finish productions; I just purchased the **Jago & Litefoot** series one set, a couple of **Sapphire and Steels**, and a couple of **UNITs**, and have bought several **Judge Dredds** for my son, who loves them. But having looked at the new ranges, I was wondering if there was any chance of you bringing to life a series that was piloted some years ago and never made (possibly killed off in favour of **Torchwood**).

The pilot story is on DVD as *Dreams of Cthulhu* (HP Lovecraft Film Festival vol 2, originally titled *Rough Magick*) from Lurker Films, starring Paul Darrow as Mr Moon, a sinister agent of the British government against the cult of Cthulhu. A booklet in the DVD release

contains the synopses of a further 14 stories following the Night Scholars, Moon's clandestine organisation. The writer was Stephen Parsons. Seriously, this would make perfect Big Finish material, and it seems a tragedy to me if these stories don't get made.

It would also be nice to see a continuation of the classic Eighties series **The Omega Factor**, which starred Louise Jameson and James Hazeldine, and which never came to a conclusion. **Doomwatch**, too, would certainly bear turning into audio format adventures.

Melanie Smallman

David: Hi Melanie! We, of course, love all ideas but have to be careful that any new projects would have an audience large enough to support the costs of any productions we make. I'm not sure, to be absolutely honest, if any of the above would be viable.

Dear Big Finish bods, can I have...

1) A twelve-month **Sherlock Holmes** subscription with 40% new full cast productions and 60% dramatic readings (*The Speckled Band* was brilliant!!!!).

2) And while we're talking **Holmes** – okay, I understand that an *All Consuming Fire* (Holmes and Seventh Doctor crossover) can't happen (Bah! Humbug!) – but what about a Jago & Litefoot/Holmes crossover?

3) Talking books – I've had Paul Cornell and Mark Gatiss' non-**Who** books on my shelf (**Vesuvius Club**, **Something More** and so on) for ever – can we have talking books of them please?

That'll be lovely – let me know when I can buy them. Thanks!

Tzvi

Paul: Hi Tzvi. Are you trying to kill Nick? A whole year of **Holmes**, plus guest appearances? None of those things you mention are currently being planned but we shall nevertheless pass them on.

I just finished a marathon of all three Colin/Jamie/Zoe episodes and I really enjoyed all three. The plot was complicated but well thought out and kudos as that can't have been easy.

Great to see my favourite Companion pair back together!

But, I have to ask, why do you write the end of these to reset everything as if it never happened rather than with them together?

Maybe they could continue, or not, but the potential is there. You guys did the same to Klein and I mourn the loss of what could have been for her as well.

You already had the hard part explained about how they got their memory back and got tangled up with the Doctor again, and now you'd have to go through it all again to bring them back. I love Big Finish but fewer 'it never happened' stories pleaseeeeeeease.

Also listened to my **Dark Shadows** episode *The House of Despair*. It is really good to have Angelique, Barnabas and Quentin back. Angelique especially has always had something about her; she's complex and strong and not at all a child or a 'yes Doctor/no Doctor' character. She drives story.

She and Barnabas (new Barnabas) are just as fascinating a couple as she was with Jonathan Frid. Looking forward to more **Dark Shadows** and quite a few other series coming up. I can't get them all at once but I will in time.

PS The cameo when Jamie was in the recording booth being told to read a script that would restructure his reality, that was just hilarious.

Alis

Paul: Thanks Alis! And even if certain events never happened, the Doctor will still carry the memory of them, so they're not lost forever...

I've been a subscriber to your various ranges for a few years now, and have been wanting to start listening to the **Bernice Summerfield** audio stories. Unfortunately, they only seem to be available on CD, so I was wondering: will they ever be available to download? As an American fan, the downloads have been a fantastic way of getting your audios at a cheaper price, and without having to pay transatlantic shipping. It also saves space since I don't have a huge number of CDs around my house. I see that the first six seasons of **Benny** are available as part of your summer sale, but it'd be great if I could just get them as downloads.

Thanks, and keep up the good work.

Brian Sebby

David: Hi Brian! It's something we're looking into, but there's no concrete news yet I'm afraid.

Paul: Back to sending out scripts for you, David, and replying to enquiries for me. Normal service will be resumed next month...

JOHN DORNEY

John Dorney reveals the writing process for **Companion Chronicle** *Echoes of Grey*

Writing *Echoes of Grey* mainly involved me going for lots of walks through parks in Bromley, working my way through various ideas and concepts. I had a fairly open brief – I think it was pretty much just the word 'Zoe' – and from there it was scrambling around for inspiration. Various elements came together – certainly, I thought the amnesia was a gift. Any time you have some hurdle that should make the telling harder (be that the companion having no memory, being dead, or the simple lack of visuals of an audio play), you have to view it as an opportunity to do something interesting.

So I looked for things I could do with the memory angle, and things that could only work with Zoe – and one of the first ideas I had involved Zoe meeting someone she'd met whilst travelling with the Doctor, someone she now had no memory of, and that person having to remind her of the time they met. It seemed to me to be something quite promising.

And there were all sorts of little elements that built onto that further: I read up on all the character notes, watched lots of her episodes. Part of the plot was inspired by reading about one particular continuity error, but my clever solution to it was cut at a late stage... I won't say any more than that for fear of looking even more geeky than I already do! Eventually, I'd got a concept which I sent through to David Richardson. He suggested some tweaks that improved the story no end and I reworked it into a fun shape.

I started to break the story down into absurd detail at this point. After a few weeks, David emailed to ask when I could

provide a two page synopsis – I told him I could send him a thirteen page one that afternoon, which he gently declined. When I was working the synopsis into a full script I did a word count of the outline and compared it to how many words I had left to use – it was half the length. For every word in the outline, I could use two in the final script. That's how detailed the synopsis was. I'm rather proud of the end result.

Apparently Zoe is darker in this story. I didn't really notice until I got to the studio and everyone talked about how melancholic and elegiac it was. I suppose it's my background as a playwright. I want to lock a story onto a strong emotional core, something real. Zoe's departure from the series back in the Sixties always felt sad and tragic to me, so I suppose it just felt natural to run with that. She truly does have a lost childhood.

It's been over a year since I wrote the script, so I can't remember too much of the process, but I think there were elements from *Fear of the Daleks*, where she is, after all, seeing a psychiatrist, and the desire to make something to contrast with Jonny Morris' brilliant script for Jamie, *The Glorious Revolution*. There he has Jamie having lived a happy and successful life since his departure.

But he never was the sharpest tool in the box. How would it affect a child genius with perfect memory?

Echoes of Grey is out this month



FORTHCOMING RELEASES

AUGUST

- Doctor Who** – *The Whispering Forest* (1.37, Fifth Doctor/Tegan/Turlough/Nyssa)
Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – *Nevermore* (4.03, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – *Echoes of Grey* (5.02, Second Doctor)
Dark Shadows – *Kingdom of the Dead 2* (2.2 Full cast audio)

SEPTEMBER

- Doctor Who** – *The Cradle of the Snake* (1.38, Fifth Doctor/Tegan/Turlough/Nyssa)
Doctor Who – *Project: Destiny* (1.39, 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 – *Resurrecting the Past* (11.1)
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)

OCTOBER

- Doctor Who** – *A Death in the Family* (1.40, 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 – *Escaping the Future* (11.2)
Dark Shadows: Kingdom of the Dead 4 (2.4 Full cast audio)
The Big Finish Companion by Richard Dinnick – Volume 1 (hardback)
Mervyn Stone 1: Geek Tragedy by Nev Fountain (Hardback)
Mervyn Stone 2: DVD Extras Include: Murder by Nev Fountain (Hardback)
Mervyn Stone 3: Cursed Among Sequels by Nev Fountain (Hardback)

NOVEMBER

- Doctor Who** – *Lurkers at Sunlight's Edge* (1.41, 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 – *Year Zero* (11.3)
Graceless – Box Set (Abby & Zara, 3 episodes)
Doctor Who: Short Trips – *Volume 1* (2 CDs, various readers)

DECEMBER

- Doctor Who** – TBA (1.42, 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*)
Bernice Summerfield – *Dead Man's Switch* (11.4)
Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – *Quinnis* (5.06, First Doctor)
Doctor Who – *The Four Doctors* (Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Doctors; Main Range subscribers only)

JANUARY 2011

- Doctor Who** – TBA (1.43, 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, Fifth Doctor, 2 discs)
Jago and Litfoot – *Series 2 Box Set* (Four full cast adventures)
Highlander – *Series 2 Box Set* (Four enhanced readings)

FEBRUARY 2011

- Doctor Who** – TBA (1.44, Sixth Doctor/TBA)
Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – TBA (4.09, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – *The Perpetual Bond* (5.08, First Doctor)
Doctor Who: Short Trips *Volume 2* (2 CDs, various readers)

MARCH 2011

- Doctor Who** – TBA (1.44, Sixth Doctor/TBA)
Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – *To the Death* (4.10, Eighth Doctor and TBA)
Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – *Boundary Conditions* (5.08, Second Doctor)

APRIL 2011

- Doctor Who** – TBA (1.45, Fifth Doctor/Tegan/Turlough/Nyssa)
Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – *Thin Ice* (2.3, Seventh Doctor and Ace)
Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – *The Sentinels of the New Dawn* (5.10, Third Doctor)

MAY 2011

- Doctor Who** – TBA (1.45, Fifth Doctor/Tegan/Turlough/Nyssa)
Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – *Crime of the Century* (2.4, Seventh Doctor and Raine)
Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – *Ferril's Folly* (5.11, Fourth Doctor)
Doctor Who: Short Trips – *Volume 3* (2 CDs, various readers)

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