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## JAGO & LITEFOOT RETURN!

JUSTIN RICHARDS ON THEIR LATEST ADVENTURES

**PLUS! MAGGIE STABLES • NICOLA BRYANT  
EDDIE ROBSON • DAVID RICHARDSON**

# ACT III 22 - 23 - 24 APRIL 2011



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LALLA  
WARD



WENDY  
PADBURY



LYNDA  
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CHARLIE  
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## EDITORIAL

I just wanted to take a moment to thank our brilliant mail order staff properly. I wonder if any of you can remember a different time, about a year ago, when it seemed like we were living in a different universe. Mail order delays, our forums buzzing with complaints...

Well, the appalling weather over the last few months aside, you may have noticed a change in recent months. Paul Spragg, David Richardson and I certainly have noticed. For reasons too painful to go into here, we were having a lot of trouble with our mail order service and, to be honest, we kept letting our customers down very badly. But with the arrival of two new people in 2010, namely (and in alphabetical order, because they're both as vital as each other) Adam Williams and Alison Taylor, everything has changed. Suddenly, all the complaints have vanished and, as I say, leaving the appalling weather to one side, everything is running smoothly. The reason for this is quite simple: Alison and Adam are both brilliant at their jobs.

They are highly skilled in their fields and they've brought a new sense of purpose to their team. Frankly, there's not a day that goes by when I don't thank my lucky stars that they took those jobs. Alison and Adam, you have transformed Big Finish's customer relations and mail order service. You've given us all pride in BF's image again.

And if I may make a personal observation, this is all part of my ongoing mission to make sure the right jobs are being done by the right people. That's how anything works properly. Of course it's essential to have the right levels of investment and planning, but it all comes down to people and jobs and how happy they are in their work and how suited they are to the work. Which is why, as time passes, and contrary to my expectations over three years ago, I enjoy my role at Big Finish more and more. I love it because of the team: because we have a brilliant line producer who not only organizes everything beautifully, but has such great creative insight. We have a producers' assistant who not only assists to perfection, but anticipates and creates at every turn. And I could go on praising every part of BF (the energetic genius of Alex Mallinson, the tireless attention to detail from Frances Welsh) but you're probably bored now and, to be honest, I'm actually indulging in the most self-congratulatory show of slapping myself on the back. Yes... MYSELF! Because I wanted all these people to work for Big Finish: all the sound designers, the composers, the artists, the actors. I either decided we needed them, or someone who I trust implicitly decided. So all I want to do really is thank the whole BF team for making me feel so proud.

Nicholas Briggs

## SNEAK PREVIEWS AND WHISPERS



### Companion Chronicles: *Tales from the Vault*

So what do you do when you have the chance to work with two actors who have played **Doctor Who** companions, but don't actually have the rights to their characters? With Daphne Ashbrook and Yee Jee Tso in the UK in November 2010, it seemed crazy to miss the opportunity to record with them – so we invented two new characters for them, Ruth Matheson and Charlie Sato. They are two specialist UNIT personnel whose job is to look after The Vault – a massive repository of stuff left over from alien invasions.

Joining the biggest cast ever assembled for a single **Companion Chronicle** are Peter Purves as Steven, Wendy Padbury as Zoe, Katy Manning as Jo and Mary Tamm as Romana. The script is by Jonathan Morris and is – according to producer David Richardson – “simply unique and brilliant”. *Out July 2011*

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# HARPO SPEAKS

So what's an average day like in the Big Finish studio? One of the universe's hardest-working producers, David Richardson, presents his diary from the recording of one day during the production of the next *Fifth Doctor* trilogy...

0530

Bluuurgh. Wake up. Feed the cats (we have three). Get straight onto the computer and do emails. Big Finish is a machine that never sleeps. The email traffic is huge and constant – so anything between 20-50 emails can arrive overnight, because our writers and editors are night owls. And they have been beavering away while I've been having my kip.

0730

Get the train from Bromley. I've recently bought an iPad and it's become indispensable for this job. It means I can always have my scripts with me – so while I'm commuting to the studio I can also be reading the scripts for **Jago & Litefoot** series four. Other people in the carriage probably wonder why I'm chortling to myself, but Jago has just been very funny.

0915

Arrive at the studio. Engineer Toby has been here since 7am, as he gets in early to make the lunches (of which you've no doubt heard a lot). Director Ken Bentley also gets in early, because there would be nothing worse than the train breaking down and the cast sitting around waiting for the director. Today I grab Ken for 10 minutes to record his interview bits for the CD extras of yesterday's story.

1000

By now, the cast is in. I always make sure that everyone is offered a tea or coffee the moment they step through the door – it's important, I feel, to welcome actors, make them feel at home, then let them settle in for the day and have fun. Today it's a huge team because this set of stories has four regulars – it's Peter Davison, Mark Strickson, Janet Fielding and Sarah Sutton.

Mark, bless him, has flown in from New Zealand to do this. It's taken loads of planning and prep, and Ken has the most intricate schedule we've ever worked with. It's a six day recording, and we have Mark for four days (he has to fly back to NZ at the weekend), Peter for four days (he has four jobs this week – this, a West End musical, and two TV shows!), and Janet and Sarah for all six. Fear not – the Doctor and Turlough are in the stories just as much as ever, but Ken is a little bit greyer.

1015

We start recording. I must say, the moment Peter, Mark, Janet and Sarah get into the sound booths it just sounds so... special. So authentic. That brilliant TARDIS team comes back to life, and suddenly it's worth all the extra planning and head-scratching. They're just so funny off-mic as well, firing off sparkling repartee and wicked jokes. And Janet calls me Harpo, constantly. I can be in another room and hear this voice yell 'Haaaaarpoooooo!' The one time she called me David left me feeling deeply troubled.

1100

We're well underway now. Ken has a very relaxed, assured approach to directing. Nothing phases him. He creates a fun atmosphere and it brings the best out in people. I tend to sit in the control room,



Clockwise from top left are: Lizzie Roper, Lucy Adams, Mark Strickson, Stephen Cole, Ken Bentley, John Banks, Michael Maloney, David Richardson, Sarah Sutton and Janet Fielding

working on my laptop while keeping one ear on the different takes we're doing. We may be recording, but that Big Finish machine is still churning onwards – so I'm setting up a lot of recordings for January. We'll be doing the subscriber 2012 special (yes, 2012), **Jago & Litefoot** series four, **Lost Stories** series three... and all this has to be cast, contracted, scripts sent out... Thank heavens that Paul Spragg is back in the office, able to action the paperwork as soon as we're in 'go' mode.

1300

Lunch. Toby has made a massive curry today – so many choices and pickles and things. Again, it just adds to the sense of enjoyment and occasion. No one ever goes home from a Big Finish day saying they haven't had fun.

1400

I do the photography, even though Janet says that Harpo is the world's worst photographer. She's joking. I think. Then it's back to the booths. Now everyone is getting into the swing of things, I'm keeping an eye on the schedule to check the actors' breaks. If they have 10 minutes off, then I drag them into the little side room for an interview

for the CD extras. And it's cold in there – freezing, in fact. We sit in thermal coats, sipping hot tea, while our teeth chatter.

1500

Oooh! Just the kind of email I like to get. I've been chasing a really brilliant actress for one of our **Lost Stories**. It's a really exciting script and a pivotal role. And this performer has said yes. I tell Ken, who does a little dance and texts his girlfriend. This person is a legend.

1700

It's all gone well, and we finish the day with wildtracks. Mark joins in, and does some brilliant monster sounds. Then Ken leads a merry band to the pub, and I set off on the long journey home.

1900

Home at last. And an hour's catch-up with work and emails before making dinner.

2030

Time at least for one hour's telly. Heading toward the end of **Upstairs, Downstairs**.

2200

Bed time! I set the alarm for 0530...



Back playing Evelyn Smythe alongside the Sixth Doctor this month, Maggie Stables chats to Paul Spragg about her much-requested return

# EVELYN ALL

**Hello Maggie. Good to have you back after so long.**

Oh, that's very nice of you to say that.

**How's your return been so far?**

Great fun! I always enjoy myself so much. You get a great bunch of actors and director/producers and the lovely sound engineer, Toby. It's like coming home. It's really, really lovely.

**How long since you were last here alongside Colin Baker?**

Since I did one with Colin it must be well over a year. I've done one with Sylvester [McCoy], meanwhile, and I've done a **Companion Chronicle** since then, but with Colin it's been quite a while.

**Has he changed?**

No, bless him. He doesn't change at all!

**You mentioned *A Death in the Family* with Sylvester...**

It was nice to work with Sylvester again. I hadn't worked with him for a long time, 10 years it must have been. But of course we'd seen each other at conventions and things, so I got a great welcome when I turned up; Sylvester said, 'Hello darling! How are you?' which is always nice.

**After that you were in for *Companion Chronicle A Town Called Fortune*.**

That was great fun. I hadn't realised exactly how they were going to do the **Companion Chronicle** but I enjoyed it very much. And because it's set in the Wild West, as you know, I said to the director [Lisa Bowerman], 'I don't know what my American accent's like' and she said, 'Well, you don't have to worry about that because it isn't actually you, it's Evelyn's American accent so it didn't really matter too much'. But it was a good story and I enjoyed it. And I was with a very nice, very good actor, Richard Cordery, and after we'd done it, I think two or three weeks later I

went to the theatre in the West End and there he was in **Enron**, playing a big part!

**Do you prefer making full cast dramas or two-handers like the *Companion Chronicle*?**

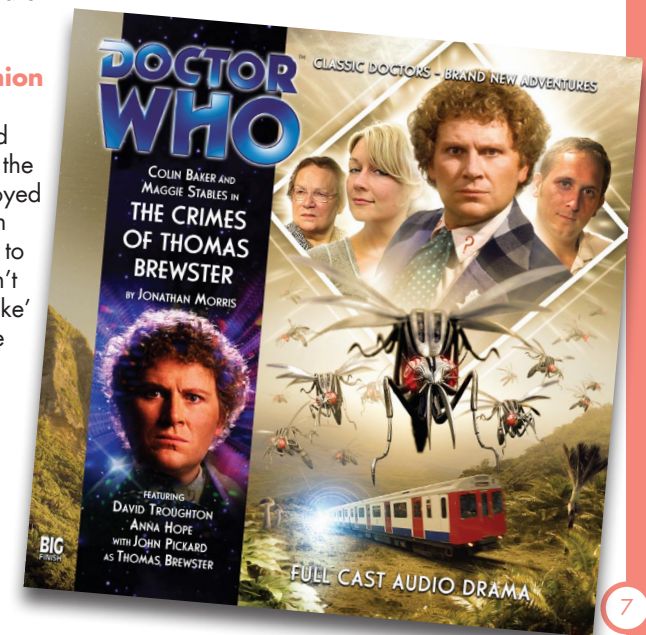
I think I prefer full cast drama really, because it's more fun. You bounce off one another, you know? And of course it's always fun when you're not actually recording and people are telling stories and you're having a good laugh. It's more jolly. People have always got wonderful stories about work they've done or work that they didn't get and people they've known years ago.

**This series of stories features Thomas Brewster (John Pickard) as a companion. What do you make of him?**

That's quite an interesting one, isn't it? Because I sort of approve of him, as Evelyn. I want to give him another chance. The Doctor's a bit wary; he's tougher on him than I am. But to work with of course, [John's] absolutely fine. Lovely.

**Without giving too much away, what was your favourite Evelyn moment?**

I like the spacewalking bit. That was great fun!



### Is there still room for Evelyn to develop?

Oh yes. I think that she can be developed even further. We've only ever seen a really nice side of Evelyn. I think she is a nice person, but there could be occasions, I suppose, when she might not be quite so nice. That's a possibility, isn't it? I think there are lots of things she could do. She's a versatile, intelligent woman, so I think she can go anywhere the scriptwriters want her to.

### You've been with Big Finish from the beginning.

I did my first recording in 1999, but not as Evelyn. I played an alien in *The Sirens of Time*. Evelyn was invented for *The Marian Conspiracy*. There's been a great variety in the places we've been and the people we've met and the adventures we've had, but basically the relationship between the Doctor and Evelyn hasn't changed; it's still very much as we forged it in *The Marian*

*Conspiracy* because that was where we sort of worked round each other and discovered what the other one was like. That's where the relationship was forged and I think it's stayed like that.

### There are often requests from the fans for more of Evelyn.

That's very nice! Thank you to all the fans!

### And you've done many conventions now.

I've done quite a few, yes. They're always great fun, of course, the conventions. I'm not sure I would now be so keen to do conventions that are a long way away. If it's in London it's on your doorstep. These ones in the States, they're great fun when you get there but flying these days is not as enjoyable as it used to be. I don't mean the actual being on the plane; it's all the security and all the fuss you have to go through before you get on the plane, you have to be there hours before and all that...



Clockwise from top left are: Peter Forbes, Bernard Holley, Andrée Bernard, Chook Sibtain, John Pickard, Colin Baker and Maggie Stables



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So, are you happy to keep on adventuring around the universe?  
Oh, absolutely! Plenty of adventures with Colin, that sounds really good!

What about with one of the other Doctors? Maybe Peter Davison or Paul McGann...  
I hadn't thought about it, but that would be enjoyable, yes! I do love working with Colin because we get on personally so well, and I think on recordings it comes over just as it comes over on the stage; if you're working in a stage play and the company all get on well together, it comes over the footlights and the audience enjoys that.

It doubtless helps that Colin's said you're the kind of companion he wishes he could have had alongside him in the series.

They were all youngsters in those days! I think it makes sense because Colin's a very thoughtful and rather intellectual Doctor and it makes sense if he's got a fairly intelligent companion; Evelyn's a professor of history so she's clearly no slouch and somebody who, in a way, can talk to him on his own terms.

What's it like to be flying the flag for the older generation of companions?  
Oh, I'm delighted to be! Delighted!

**Doctor Who** - The Crimes of Thomas Brewster is out this month. The Feast of Axos follows in February and Industrial Evolution completes the trilogy in March



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# JUSTIN TIME

Has there been anything you've had to veto due to it being out of character or out of era?  
Oh, loads of stuff. 'Veto' is a bit harsh – we reserve that

Justin Richards reveals how to successfully merge script editing and writing, and make **Jago & Litefoot** 'utterly brilliant'

Hi Justin. This month sees the release of the second series of **Jago & Litefoot**, and for the second time you have a story in the box set. How did you get involved in it?

For series one, producer David Richardson asked me if I'd be willing and able to write an episode. David and I have been friends for longer than either of us cares to remember, and he's been trying to persuade me to write for the Big Finish **Companion Chronicles** for years. I've never really had the time, but when he mentioned a Jago & Litefoot series I just had to make time. They're such interesting characters, and Andy Lane's *The Mahogany Murderers* was a terrific story, so how could I resist? Also, the Victorian era fascinates me. I've written several novels set in the 1880s – **The Death Collector**, **The Parliament of Blood** and **The Chamber of Shadows** – so it's an era I know quite well. Having already done the research, as it were, was a big help.

Having persuaded me to write for the series, David then asked if I'd like to be script editor. I've script edited several Big Finish productions and used to be quite involved with the proposal and synopsis stage of development for BBC Licensing a while back so David knew I had some relevant experience and expertise in the audio medium as well as having done a lot of editing for print publishing. Luckily it all fitted into a relatively quiet time in my schedule.

Then, having done it all once, I guess David and everyone else at Big Finish was

pleased with how series one worked out so they asked me to do it again. One of the criteria – one of the main criteria, actually – that I have for agreeing to do any work is that it must be fun. It has to be something that I'm going to enjoy doing. I had such fun writing for series one and working with the other writers that agreeing to do series two and rearranging other work to fit in with it was an easy decision.

**What is the role of the script editor?**

I think it probably varies according to the series, and depending on the working relationship between the producer and the script editor. On **Jago & Litefoot**, basically David Richardson as producer is the boss – he's in charge of everything from the scripts to the direction and sound design and marketing. I'm responsible, quite simply, for the scripts. So I work with David to map out an overall shape to the series – the ongoing story elements, how the characters will develop, what sort of locations will make for interesting soundscapes and so on.

**Which came first? The script editing or the writing?**

It's an iterative process – the editing starts before we have scripts and ends after they're finished. We decide which writers from those we'd love to work with are best suited to the stories we want to tell. I provide a brief that includes all the ongoing elements and anything that has to happen to contribute to the series' overall story, and maybe some ideas for the individual story within the episode. Some writers find that useful and develop my ideas and improve them, others abandon them and

do something very different and very much better!

Then, when the scripts come in, I go through each one – as does David – and make comments and suggestions. Those might be to do with tweaking dialogue so it's more in character, or restructuring a story so it is more dramatic, or maybe pointing out an anachronism, or when it isn't clear to the listener exactly what's going on... Sometimes I end up writing small sections that have to tie in with another script or develop a character in a particular way. So, for example, I wrote the closing scene of the last episode of series two, as it had to finish the series in a very particular way.

**How tricky is it to find the voices of Jago & Litefoot?**

It gets easier with practice! Actually, it can be quite hard, but it's easy to tell when you've got it wrong. All the writers have said that the characters are so well defined in *The Talons of Weng-Chiang* that you can just *tell* when they aren't behaving or speaking as they should – as they actually would.

**What methods do you use to set you in the right Victorian frame of mind?**

As I said before, it's a place I'm sort of used to, so that isn't as hard as it used to be for me. But suitably Victorian music is a help. Recently I've found it helpful to play the soundtrack from the Guy Ritchie **Sherlock Holmes** movie while writing or planning **Jago & Litefoot**. And obviously I dress up in a big cloak and deerstalker and smoke a pipe while writing. Well, actually, that's not true. Not the pipe, anyway.

for things that transgress BBC guidelines. But there are lots of anachronisms that we have to put right in the early stages of scripting. I had someone singing *Roll Out The Barrel* in one of my scripts, for example – which is actually from the 1920s. But it's easy to get caught out and I'm sure there will be things we've missed despite our diligence. It's mid-December now, and I've recently been to a Christingle Service. Now, you'd think Christingles are an old tradition, and you'd be right as they first had them in Germany in the 1700s. But Christingles weren't actually introduced to Britain until 1968.

One anachronism we won't put right is Jago's alliterative showmanship. That's all from the TV show **The Good Old Days**, where Leonard Sachs invented all that patter and banter with the audience and the clever introductions. Actually, in Victorian Music Halls and theatre shows the acts were usually introduced just by changing a board at the side of the stage. Except at the Palace Theatre, where Henry Gordon Jago's unique style set a precedent that Leonard Sachs picked up on when he set-up The Players Theatre Club – the template for **The Good Old Days** – with Peter Ridgeway in 1937. That's our story, anyway.

**How do you feel about helping finally give Jago & Litefoot a life away from the Doctor?** Actually, while a lot of what they do in *Talons* is inspired by the Doctor and the adventure he's got them caught up in, Jago and Litefoot both spend a lot of time investigating and getting stuck in without the Doctor. Of course, we don't have the Doctor in **Jago & Litefoot**, but I think his influence is still felt – he's an inspiration to them.

What adventures can we expect from Jago & Litefoot in series two?

It's tempting to say 'more of the same' but that doesn't do it justice. We've built on the success of series one and taken it a step further. The stories are bigger and bolder, and in a way more personal.

There's an emotional depth to the characters that we can draw on now we've established them properly with the first series – not just Jago and Litefoot, but Sergeant Quick and Ellie too.

Aside from your story, which is your favourite so far? That's a tricky question. I could be tactful and just dodge it, but to be honest they're all favourites for one reason or another. It also gets hard to separate them in

my mind as I work on the whole series as a complete story – I can think of some terrific dialogue that I wish I'd written, but I can't necessarily recall which script it's actually in. And in some cases, maybe I *did* write it! Each and every story has several stand-out scenes. It isn't just that it wouldn't be fair to single out any episode for particular praise, I really do think they're all utterly brilliant. So there.

Were you surprised the first series was such a big success? Is there a desire to top each successive series?

I wasn't at all surprised that it was a critical success and hugely popular. It's really gratifying to see that translate into sales and downloads – which is what we need, to be honest, to justify doing more. And it's great that we *are* doing more. It's testament to the original characters as devised and written by the incomparable Robert Holmes, and to the perfect casting by David Maloney, and the acting talents of Chris Benjamin and



Trevor Baxter – all of which have stood the greatest test of all: time. The challenge for us writers – and for David and myself and Lisa [Bowerman, director] – is to use what we've been blessed with to the greatest effect, and to keep doing that.

What are Trevor and Chris like in studio?

Professional, talented, generous to the material we give them and appreciative of it. They're great fun to work with, and each of them has so much experience and knowledge that it's a bit like attending a cross between an acting masterclass and an after-dinner speech.

You've been closely associated with **Doctor Who** for a long while now, especially considering your

role in the BBC books range. What's your favourite medium to work in? I don't really distinguish, actually. It's all story-telling, whether it's prose fiction or an audio script, or even a **Monster Files** mini-movie for the BBC **Doctor Who** website or linking material for the **Sarah Jane Adventures** website. There's a different way of approaching each, different techniques and strengths that you get to know from experience. But even in what others consider a single medium, the way I approach a short story is different from how I work on a novel, which is different again from working on a novel series like **The School of Night**. The trick is just to tell the best possible story in the best possible way, whatever the medium. With **Jago & Litefoot** I think we're doing that!

**The School of Night: Demon Storm** by Justin Richards and published by Faber & Faber is available now. **The School of Night: Creeping Terror** will be published in April.

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# READY, EDDIE, GO!

**Eddie Robson talks about writing Eighth Doctor Adventures and trying to out-joke Jonathan Morris**

Hello there Eddie. You're the writer of this month's Eighth Doctor adventure, *Prisoner of the Sun*. This being the final story before the grand finale of the Eighth Doctor adventures, what was your brief?

Actually, for the first time in a while this was a McGann story with no brief. It was originally an idea I'd pitched as a solo Doctor four-parter. Alan and Nick hadn't had a chance to consider where it might go in the schedule yet, and then when they were planning the next McGann season they saw a gap for it. It ended up being crunched down to a two-parter, which makes it much pacier and more exciting and was generally a good idea. To make up for taking two episodes off that, they gave me *Situation Vacant* to write at the same time and they were total opposites – with *Situation* the brief was very specific, *Prisoner* was an idea I had out of the blue.

**How did you deal with writing for Lucie Miller without it actually being Lucie Miller?**

Very easily, because it wasn't originally going to be Lucie, it was just going to be an android with a generic voice. The idea that Sheridan could play the part came later – it made sense; the Doctor's been alone for a long time here and so he programs his android assistant with the voice of a friend. It was a case of changing a handful of lines. I'm really

looking forward to hearing how Sheridan's approached it – she's always great as Lucie and I'm keen to hear how she tackles a Lucie/Not-Lucie figure as she does here.

**You originally came to the attention of Big Finish through *Short Trips*. Can you explain how that happened?**

Back when I was at university, I pitched a novel to BBC Books. They didn't pick it up, but Jac Rayner said she'd keep me in mind for the next *Short Trips* the BBC did. I wrote a story and then the BBC decided not to do any more *Short Trips*. However, Jac was kind enough to remember me and, when BF took over *Short Trips*, it did get used. I was on BF's radar, and from there I convinced Gary Russell to let me pitch for the **Who** audios. That was *Memory Lane*.

**You've been very involved in the Eighth Doctor Adventures over**

**the years. How has your approach changed, and what keeps drawing you back to Paul McGann's portrayal?**

I enjoy his casualness, making it up as he goes along – I always remember that the first wave of novelists writing for the Eighth Doctor went for that approach, to contrast with the meticulous control-freakery of the Seventh Doctor, and I think it suits Paul's performance very well. Lucie has brought out a boyish nerdiness in him too – his enthusiasm for trains in *Grand Theft Cosmos* and satellites in *The Eight Truths*. In *Prisoner* we see chinks in his confidence – he's less bullish than his immediate predecessors.

**How much do you feel you've shaped Lucie's character?**

She was originally going to be a hairdresser, but after *Human Resources* became such a key story for her, her back-story was reworked and she became a temp. I also thought of her surname! But in terms of her character, it was pretty well laid out in the original character document. All the first season writers discussed her, and then when Sheridan was cast the character came together. It seems amazing now that when we wrote those episodes we didn't know who'd play her. I originally wrote her as Liz White, but was told to think more abrasive.

I got to do a good storyline with Lucie in *The Eight Truths*, where she starts questioning what she does with the Doctor. I think that brought out how Lucie isn't the type to over-think things, she just goes for it. We know something's wrong with her because she stops trusting her gut.

**Which aspects are you most proud of from the Eighth Doctor Adventures?**

I think the Doctor/Lucie relationship has been really successful and many people have responded to it. With those characters I think it's developed into a very accessible series, a good entry point for new BF listeners.

**You've also been involved in *The Crimes of Thomas Brewster* and *Industrial Evolution*; how did you and Jonathan Morris decide to work together on these, and what can listeners expect?**

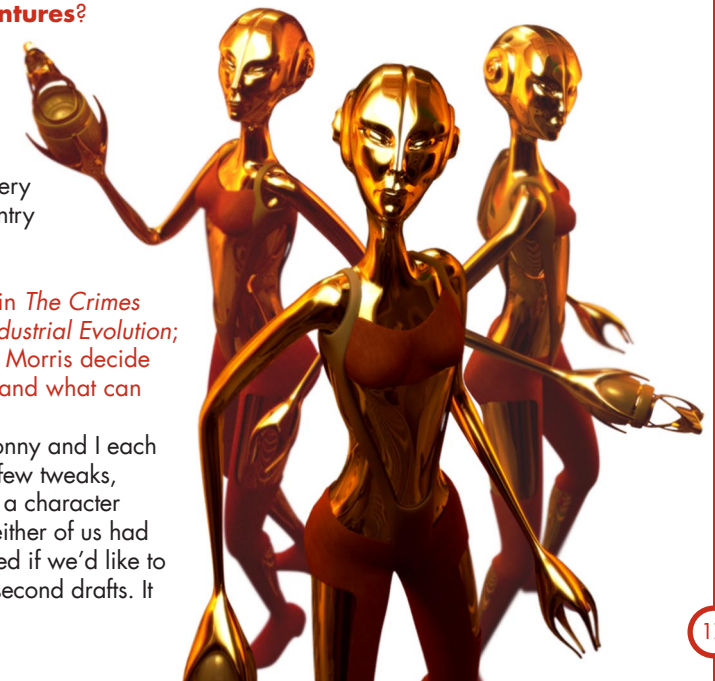
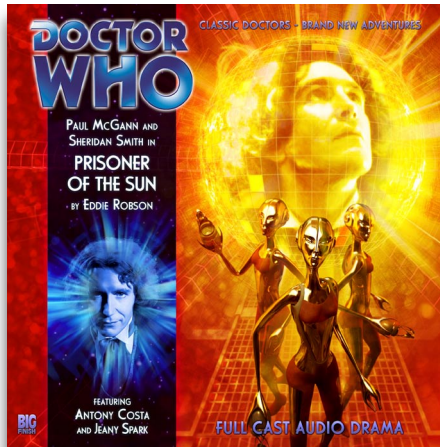
It was Alan Barnes' idea. Jonny and I each had a script that needed a few tweaks, plus each of us was writing a character created by the other and neither of us had quite nailed it. So Alan asked if we'd like to swap and do each other's second drafts. It

worked really well, as we both had minor plot problems where we couldn't see the wood for the trees and we fixed each other's fairly easily. In particular Jonny managed to simplify a pointlessly convoluted bit in mine. Of course, I also put some jokes in his which I'm hoping listeners will say are the best ones, because that will hopefully annoy him.

**What's next for you, from Big Finish and outside the worlds of Doctor Who?**

I've been working on an original novel called *Silent Dust*, which is finally complete – I literally broke off from preparing to send it out to agents to do this interview – so fingers crossed for that. And if you are Russian then you can read my stories and comic strips about the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles in the show's official Russian magazine (don't ask).

**Doctor Who - The Eighth Doctor Adventures: Prisoner of the Sun is out this month**





Nicola Bryant talks to Paul Spragg about life beyond the TARDIS in audio adventures and much, much more...

# AUDIO EXPERIMENT

Hello Nicola! This month finds you at the centre of your first **Companion Chronicle**, *Peri and the Piscon Paradox*. How did it compare to doing a full cast drama?

It's quieter! When it's really only you in the studio, there's less witty repartee and lunch is much quicker, though the helpings of puddings are larger. But seriously, Spragglet – I may call you Spragglet...?

Oh, go on then.

It was a pretty intense process. Exhausting but exhilarating. It was also very hard to complete one of the scenes with Colin [Baker, back as the Sixth Doctor] as both his lines and his performance were so funny.

Tell us a little about the plot.

Sorry Paul, I really don't want to say anything about the plot. It's essential that you listen to it from beginning to end, and not cheat yourself of the journey.

Fair enough. Writer Nev Fountain says you were instrumental in driving events in the story. What elements were your suggestions, and were there any Nev politely declined to use?

I had always imagined that if Peri had gone back to Earth and had remembered all that had happened to her, she might very well use that knowledge to become like Dana Scully, investigating paranormal or alien activity, and Nev did *partly* use this suggestion... But I can't say any more because, as I said earlier, I don't want to give the plot away.

I'm not sure I drove the actual story. I think it would be more accurate to say that Nev has good instincts, and wrote the kind of drama he thought I would love, and he did. I don't recall making any suggestion that he turned down, but perhaps the rejection was just too traumatic and I've blanked it from my mind...



Nicola with Piscon writer Nev Fountain at the Moot studio

You play two different Peris in this story. How did you set about finding voices for each of them? Is the original Peri easy to slip back into still?

I've been lucky enough to play Peri for over half my life, so I didn't find it difficult to create an older and a younger voice for her. The truth is, the older Peri's voice evolved from the story – I read the script and it was seeing who Peri had become and what she'd been through that led me to find her timbre.

What were your favourite voices to do? The Fifth Doctor? Sadly you never get to play the Sixth Doctor as Colin did his own voice...

I didn't really think of it as 'doing voices' – it sounds a bit tricky, like it's all about doing an impression, and I don't believe Peri should be any better at 'doing voices' than your average American college student. It wasn't something she demonstrated a skill for in the TV series – so what I did was try to remain authentic to Peri telling her story rather than an actor doing impressions. And knowing I felt like this, Nev put something very simple into my dialogue to address this point.

How do you feel about your exit from the show on *The Trial of a Time Lord* now, and does *Piscon Paradox* go some way to addressing it?

I was very happy with my original exit – that is to say, I loved the shaved head, the mind transplant and Yrcanos blowing my body to smithereens. It was dramatic, poignant and shocking. So of course I hated it when they reconnected (I'm told this is the word!) my exit. I simply adore how *Piscon Paradox* explains the truth of Peri's situation. Because once again it is dramatic, poignant and shocking...

You've had a busy time with Big Finish lately thanks to the **Lost Stories**; which were your favourites to do, and will you be back for more?

I've simply loved doing the **Lost Stories** on so many levels, so you won't be able to stop me doing any more! And yes, there are others in the pipeline...

From Peri's perspective, I enjoy it when she's got something exciting to do, like going undercover in *Paradise 5* or dressing up as Queen Elizabeth in *Point of Entry* and becoming delirious in *The Song of Megaptera*. But on top of those three I personally enjoyed listening to *Leviathan* and *The Nightmare Fair*. Sorry, I just couldn't name one favourite!

You've also been one of the faces of the **Mervyn Stone Mysteries** and have been doing readings from the books. What's it been like breathing life into a whole new world of characters? It's always exciting to be involved in the birth of a new ensemble of characters. I've done a lot of new plays in my life, and it's a process I particularly enjoy. Vanity is such a dream part, as she is one of those larger than life characters that one can come across in this business, and I had plenty of people to draw on for inspiration! No names, unless it's your round...

Plus on TV we've seen you as a very close friend of Keith Barron in **My Family**, which you'd been in once before; how were Keith and Robert Lindsay to work with?

It was a great privilege to be asked back to **My Family**, and both Keith Barron and Robert Lindsay were a joy to work with. We had so much fun rehearsing and recording on set, and of course, it was wonderful to be back working with director Ed Bye who cast me in **The 10 Percenters** many, many years ago.

If you put the **My Family** role alongside your appearance in **Doctors** this year, you could say that you seem to be getting a reputation for playing women of a certain type... Let's say no more than that, shall we Spraggers?

Where can fans see you and/or hear you next?

I have just been seen on an episode of the children's comedy **Scoop** this week; funnily enough it was all about time travel! At the moment I'm looking forward to doing more Big Finish, and for a change I won't be doing just Peri. I'll also be in the guise of a variety of interesting characters. Next week I'll be working on an excellent episode of **Dark Shadows**, written by Jonathan Morris, and in the new year I hope to reprise the role of Vanity Mycroft on CD. That's all I can say for now!

Peri and the *Piscon Paradox* is out this month



Just thought I'd take a few minutes out of a cloudy Sunday afternoon to write you a quick note.

I've never heard an audio play of any kind before, except maybe bits and pieces of *The Archers* as I'm doing my daily work going from customer to customer. So imagine my surprise at how fantastic I found *Cobwebs*, *The Whispering Forest* and *The Cradle of the Snake* to be.

I'm also writing to thank you for a very prompt and friendly service. I ordered the above titles at about 3.30 Thursday afternoon, and they were on my doorstep the following day.

I fully intend to order more stories, hopefully all of them, and also become a subscriber.

Thank you all again.

Edward Bennett

PS: *The Fifth Doctor* is my period of **Doctor Who**, and these new stories take me back to 1983. How fantastic is that!!

PPS: Do you sell signed copies of audio plays?

Nick: Dear Edward, thanks so much for writing. I'm really thrilled to hear that you enjoyed your first audio play! And so glad to hear that your customer service experience was good. That's something we've really improved recently, so I'll pass on your thanks to the two new people running the team at our warehouse, Alison and Adam.

I'm afraid we don't sell signed copies of the plays, although we do offer them at conventions if we sponsor a guest and they sit at our table. Also, we have a number of signed scripts that subscribers can win. If you're a subscriber, you're in with a chance of winning.

Why do you have a registration system? I'm computer savvy enough to be very careful and organised with the websites I sign up with, and I don't like giving out my email address willy-nilly. I have never

encountered a website that required me to sign up and sign in before being allowed to buy what I want. (eBay probably does but there's a social aspect to that which plain old buying-from-an-online-store does not need.)

Worse, you're dropping obstacles in my way. I was happy enough to key in some credit card details – that's expected – but you're asking me to jump through more hoops than necessary. User interface design wisdom states that every choice you give a user is another opportunity for them to choose to give up.

For the record, I gave up. Sorry. If you feel you need my email address for no visible good reason then I automatically tend towards thinking there's a bad reason instead.

I'm still curious as to why you think you need such a system, though.

Joel Fagin

Nick: Hi Joel, this kind of system is standard to all online retailers as far as I'm aware. I do sympathize, though. I get put off when people ask for my email address. I automatically think that it's going to be used to bombard me with spam. But in our case, it's there so that we can keep you informed if there are any matters or problems arising from your order. This kind of registration process is a way of keeping all your details safe from prying eyes and is completely secure.

Just a quick question: I loved the *Sea Devils* in Benny audio *The Poison Seas* and would like to know is there any chance of possibly seeing them appear in the future? Or maybe an audio featuring both Silurians and *Sea Devils*?

Keep up the good work.

Callum

Nick: No plans at the moment. We were thinking about a Silurian story in 2009, but the BBC asked us not to do it because of their then-upcoming battle between Matt Smith's Doctor and the Silurians.

Just read and loved *A Death in the Family*, well done all. It's been a brilliant BF year with the Klein, Land of Fiction and Tegan-Nyssa-Turlough trilogies, but my pleasure has been tainted by seeing that 2011 will kick off with the return of Thomas bl\*\*dy Brewster! Please make this his last outing and spare us hearing any more of this infuriating, cod-cockernee character PLEASE!!!!

Gary W

Nick: Well, Gary, I guess everyone's entitled to their opinions. But I have to tell you that there's nothing cod about the way John Pickard speaks. That's just his accent. But I expect you're a genuine cockney yourself, so I won't question your expertise. We loved Thomas Brewster and were anxious to see him return to the series. But I can't honestly see any reason why his returning in some stories next year would spoil your enjoyment of stories this year...

Please pass the word on to the rest of the people involved. Here is a major thank you for offering the releases in iTunes Audiobook format. That is just what I wanted. Now the stories go from my account right to my phone and I'm listening to them as soon as possible.

You guys are great.

Steve Holyer

Nick: This is something that our hard-working webmaster Paul Wilson was keen to do. He spends a lot of his time reading all your posts, so gets a very good feel for what people would prefer. Thanks to Paul and very glad we've delivered what you want on this point.

I know in the past you have run short story competitions – have you any plans to repeat the idea?

Nick Boardman

Nick: No firm plans, but it is something we would like to do in the future. It all depends on whether the new **Short Trips** audios are a commercial success.

## FORTHCOMING RELEASES

### JANUARY 2011

**Doctor Who** – *The Crimes of Thomas Brewster* (143, Sixth Doctor & Evelyn)

**Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures** – *Prisoner of the Sun* (4.08, Eighth Doctor & Tamsin)

**Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles** – *Pert and the Piscin Paradox* (5.07, Fifth Doctor, 2 discs)

**Jago and Litefoot** – *Series 2 Box Set* (Four full cast adventures)

### FEBRUARY 2011

**Doctor Who** – *The Feast of Axos* (144, Sixth Doctor & Evelyn)

**Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures** – *Lucie Miller* (4.09, Eighth Doctor, Lucie & Tamsin)

**Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles** – *The Perpetual Bond* (5.08, First Doctor)

**Doctor Who: Short Trips** – *Volume 2* (2 CDs, various readers)

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

### MARCH 2011

**Doctor Who** – *Industrial Evolution* (145, Sixth Doctor & Evelyn)

**Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures** – *To the Death* (4.10, Eighth Doctor, Lucie & Tamsin)

**Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles** – *The Forbidden Time* (5.08, Second Doctor)

**Gallifrey** – *Season 4* (Box Set)

**Love Songs for the Shy and Cynical** – Audiobook (read by India Fisher, Toby Hadoke and Jane Goddard)

**Drama Showcase 1** – *Not a Well Woman* (Katy Manning)

**Highlander** – *Series 2 Box Set* (Four enhanced readings)

### APRIL 2011

**Doctor Who** – *Heroes of Sontar* (146, Fifth Doctor/Tegan/Turlough/Nyssa)

**Doctor Who: The Lost Stories** – *Thin Ice* (2.3, Seventh Doctor & Ace)

**Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles** – *The Sentinels of the New Dawn* (5.10, Third Doctor)

**Drama Showcase 2** – *Pulling Faces* (Louise Jameson)

**Mervyn Stone 1: Geek Tragedy** by Nev Fountain (Paperback)

**Mervyn Stone 2: DVD Extras Include: Murder** by Nev Fountain (Paperback)

**Mervyn Stone 3: Cursed Among Sequels** by Nev Fountain (Paperback)

**Caustic Comedies** – *The Stageplays* by Robert Shearman (Paperback)

### MAY 2011

**Doctor Who** – *TBA* (147, Fifth Doctor/Tegan/Turlough/Nyssa)

**Doctor Who: The Lost Stories** – *Crime of the Century* (2.4, Seventh Doctor & Raine)

**Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles** – *Ferri's Folly* (5.11, Fourth Doctor)

**Doctor Who: Short Trips** – *Volume 3* (2 CDs, various readers)

**Drama Showcase 3** – *In Conversation with an Acid Bath Murderer* (Nigel Fairs)

### JUNE 2011

**Doctor Who** – *TBA* (148, Fifth Doctor/Tegan/Turlough/Nyssa)

**Doctor Who: The Lost Stories** – *Animal* (2.5, Seventh Doctor & Raine)

**Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles** – *The Cold Equations* (5.12, First Doctor)

**Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles** – *The Specials Box Set* (*The Three Companions, The Mists of Time, Freakshow*)

**Drama Showcase 4** – *Unintelligent Design* (Geoffrey Beevers)

### JULY 2011

**Doctor Who** – *TBA* (149, Seventh Doctor)

**Doctor Who: The Lost Stories** – *Earth Aid* (2.6, Seventh Doctor & Raine)

**Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles** – *Tales from the Vault* (6.01, First, Second, Third and Fourth Doctors)

### AUGUST 2011

**Doctor Who** – *TBA* (150, Doctor TBA)

**Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles** – *The Rocket Men* (6.02, TBA)

**Doctor Who: Short Trips** – *Volume 4* (2 CDs, various readers)

**Jago and Litefoot** – *Series 3 Box Set* (Four full cast adventures)

### SEPTEMBER 2011

**Doctor Who** – *TBA* (151, Doctor TBA)

**Doctor Who** – *TBA* (152, Doctor TBA)

**Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles** – *The Memory Cheats* (6.03, Second Doctor)

### OCTOBER 2011

**Doctor Who** – *TBA* (153, Doctor TBA)

**Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles** – *The Many Deaths of Jo Grant* (6.04, Third Doctor)

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