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EDITORIAL

As mentioned in our controversial January podcast (no, I shan't get into the crunchy crisp debate here!), David Richardson (line producer extraordinaire) and I paid a visit to Tom Baker. We'd been chatting to Tom for some time about what he's going to come and do for Big Finish, but it was Tom who emailed and suggested we went and had lunch with him. I'm clarifying that, just in case you think we turned up on his doorstep uninvited! He even provided us with the correct space-time coordinates.

Now, naturally, you'd expect me to say we had a lovely time. It would be awful to write an editorial about how he had us driven off his land by wild, slaving dogs. And indeed, if that had actually happened, I would simply have not bothered to write an editorial about it!

But we really did have a lovely time. Tom was delightfully welcoming, extremely enthusiastic,

highly entertaining and I firmly believe that if we'd brought a microphone and a script with us, he'd have started recording plays for us there and then. He's really keen to get going on this – and so are we! So it is full steam ahead.

At this stage, one script has been finished and another is underway, with others in the process of being commissioned. There are all sorts of things to sort out and confirm, so we're not making any other casting or story announcements yet, or setting release dates. But you can be certain that the moment all the details have been hammered out and when recordings are underway, we will start revealing our plans.

I'm finding it all massively exciting, and I hope you all will too.

Nicholas Briggs

SNEAK PREVIEWS AND WHISPERS



Jago and Litefoot - Series Three

We're looking ahead to series three already, and some exciting developments in the lives of those infernal investigators. Those who have heard series two will already be aware that the ensemble cast has suddenly grown, and the writers for the upcoming new episodes have absolutely embraced all of the potential for new drama and comedy that this affords. That aside, it's business as usual as Jago and Litefoot investigate four new cases – some mysterious 'Wet Men' on the prowl in the streets of London; a young girl who has lost her mother; a young woman called Alice with a tragic past; and some strange artifacts that invade Litefoot's home...

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SHERI...

As the *Eighth Doctor Adventures* draw to a close, Sheridan Smith sits down with Paul Spragg to look back on four years of adventures

Hello Sheridan! We've finally prised you out of your booth.

That was my little home, wasn't it? I kept crawling out of my little shell, coming and having a bit of food and then back into me booth!

How's your day been?

It's been lovely. It's kind of sad and happy. It's really nice to be with everyone again and to see everyone because I just love this team, I love being here, but it's sad because I'm leaving. They said it's not forever and I might be able to come back, so who knows? But it's still a very sad day.

At the time of talking, people think you left in *Death in Blackpool*.

Of course, and people have been asking me, and I know that I've been coming back but I've had to say yes, it's a shame Lucie's gone, because I don't want to give the plot away and say, 'Ooh, actually I've recorded some more'. So I've been having to tell little white lies. I've just agreed, when they've said they're sad Lucie's gone. I say, 'Oh yeah, me too'. I haven't let on that there's a couple of extras.

If you want to come back, there's always the **Companion Chronicles...**

Really? Ah, great! That'd be exciting! I'd love that, that'd be great.



DONE?

It does mean you'd spend your whole day in a booth.

Kind of like I did today! Not everyone's here because they couldn't get us all on the same day; the last couple of years we've had to do that, we've had to have different people in on different days and one day I was just in recording all my stuff myself to nobody – well, Barney [Edwards] and Nick [Briggs] were reading in other people's parts, but the actual actors that were gonna play the parts did them on separate days, so it was very confusing. But it all makes sense when it comes out in the end.

When you hear it, it's seamless, which I think demonstrates just how lucky we are to have you.

I don't know about that! I think what a great team you've got and how easy you make it for me. It's nice that they accommodate me in that way. And of course I love it when we're all here together because that's just so exciting. I remember so many episodes on this I've met so many amazing people they get in. And it's so exciting! Sitting there thinking, 'Who's gonna be in this episode?' and seeing who walks through the door; you get Miriam Margolyes, Julia McKenzie, and all these amazing actresses and actors. I'm like 'Oh my God!' It's just been a real joy, this. I'm gonna miss it so much. But it's not the end, I hope. I've found it such fun to play Lucie because they write so brilliantly for her. She's just, like, a real tough cookie but [with] a heart of gold. She's just a feisty little Northerner and she adores the Doctor, although he gets on her nerves and she thinks he's a pompous stuck-up so-and-so now and again but I just think their relationship's grown and grown. I really genuinely am sad. Just doing some of the scenes then I've had tears streaming down

my face because you kind of get attached to it. And because of all the adventures they've been on, when I'm saying the lines now I think back to all those and it's really sad. So I turned into a big old girl in the booth a minute ago and started crying.

Wait until your last day!

Oh, don't. I'll be a mess. You won't be able to tell what I'm saying! You'll have to get someone else to say my lines, it'll be 'We can't understand what she's saying. We can't have this on radio'.

Are you jealous of Tamsin Drew (Niky Wardley) travelling with the Doctor?

I am, yeah. But luckily I love Niky and she's my really good friend, and it was so great today because she was in a booth while I was in a booth and we didn't even get to hug each other first. We did a couple of scenes and then ran out of our booths and hugged because I haven't seen her for a little while. But she's amazing and I love her, so I'd rather it be Niky than anyone else, because she's my friend and she's lovely and she'll look after Paul for me.

You've also worked with Paul on **Jonathan Creek**. Who was following who around?

I was chasing him! It was amazing because Alan Davies, who plays Jonathan Creek – I'm his sidekick on that – I always thought that mine and his relationship, and filming with him, I had so much fun and it was like I was coming to work with Paul. Me and Paul get on so brilliantly and I love coming to work and being his sidekick. So then to do an episode where both of them, who I'm sidekick to both, were in the same programme, it was so surreal but brilliant! I just loved having them both on set at the same time. It was just great

and I was really pleased – but he was the baddie! He turned out to be the baddie, so he wasn't Mr Nice Guy like our Doctor.

But he did take his shirt off.

He *did* take his shirt off! He looked amazing! I shouldn't say that...

He's very popular with some friends of mine.
I'm not surprised. He's very popular with me. [laughs] And I shall miss him. But I'll see him lots.

Is there a role for him in *Legally Blonde*?
I don't know if he'd be up for that! It's a chick flick. Not enough aliens.

Peter Davison's in it, you could just swap them over.

Aww, lovely Peter Davison. You know his daughter goes out with David Tennant, who's another Doctor, so there's links to lots of Doctors! It's brilliant! I must have always been destined to play a companion.

Did you watch the TV movie when you got this job? Were you a fan?

I was a **Doctor Who** fan, but you remember the original, and Verity Lambert, who produced it, I worked with before she passed away and she was a genius. We worked together on **Love Soup**; she's just amazing and at her funeral they played the **Doctor Who** theme while we were all there, and everybody was giggling. It was a nice affair, actually. But I was her biggest fan, so she used to tell me lots of stories right back at the very start, really early on. And surely everyone loves **Doctor Who**, don't they? I've not met anyone who doesn't. Whovians, or Whoies, which is it called?

I always liked Whoovers.

I like Whoovers! I'm stealing that. 'I'm a Whoover!' That sounds so wrong. Whovians? I did make a big faux pas though, when I got **Doctor Who**. When I went for the audition, I remember saying, 'Ooh, I'm gonna be the new **Doctor Who** companion on the radio for Big Finish Productions!'

and I did that with my hands [makes Vulcan salute]. That's **Star Trek**, isn't it! Completely wrong show! And then everyone laughed at me and said, 'You're an idiot! You don't even know what you're talking about!'. So I swotted up then on my **Doctor Who** and I'm thrilled to be a companion. I've got to go to all these conventions, that's what I wanna start. I've been to a couple and it's amazing how many people are there and people are dressed up as the Doctor and I found it fascinating. It's amazing, isn't it?

When I joined, Nick Briggs and everybody said, 'Now you're joining **Doctor Who**, be prepared. It's like a massive family. You'll get letters from all over the world now.' And I was like, 'Really?' and then all of a sudden I do, I get letters from all over the place. People who love all the CDs. And even at **Legally Blonde** I get so many people every day that have got all the CD covers of **Doctor Who** and are asking about Lucie; it's such an honour, I've loved every minute of it. I hope I get to do more. Maybe I can come back as a different companion with a slightly different voice.

How are you with accents?

I like accents. I can do posh. Or I could talk [changes voice] like that, come back as a little Londoner. [switches again] I could be a Scouser, couldn't I? Or Scottish. [switches again] Hello! What else? That's about it. [switches again] Somerset. Maybe she's from Somerset. [switches once more] American? I don't know, I'm out! Somehow I'll get back!

We've got you doing slightly different voices already this series.

It's fun doing all those different voices. That's the great thing about sci-fi; you can do whatever you want with the storyline. They must be so much fun to write. I wouldn't have a clue. When I read these scripts, I go, 'How have you come up with these ideas?' because it's amazing. I don't know how they do it. You must have a certain type of brain to write sci-fi. Which I don't have. I have a very slow brain. I can just about learn my lines and that's it.

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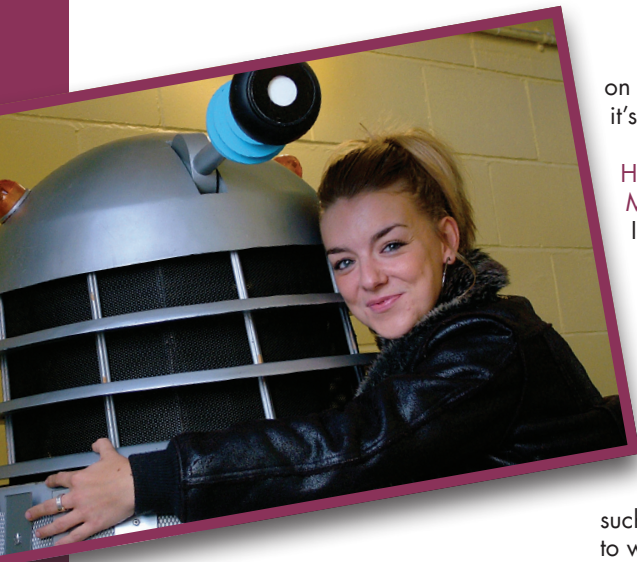
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BBC



I'm curious to see if anyone twigs that Lucianus in *The Book of Kells* is you. We're using a pseudonym. Really? Stop it! What is it?

Ash Hidminster.

Stop it! That's genius! You lot are amazing! I'm going to steal that as my alter ego. Ash Hidminster. You know like Beyoncé has Sasha Fierce? I'm gonna be Ash Hidminster.

You mentioned conventions. Do you have any time to do them?

Not at the minute, no! I don't actually. But then, that's because I'm a workaholic and I'm a nutcase. I'm doing **Legally Blonde** at the minute and then filming some stuff over Christmas. But I would love to, yeah. They're only for a couple of days and a weekend, so maybe I'll be able to fit them in. I know I sound crazy busy, I know it's a bit insane really; I should learn to say no to things really, shouldn't I? But my philosophy is you've got to take it all while it's there because you never know how long it'll last. I'm very lucky to be doing what I love, so I just wanna try and fit it all in. And I especially love this job. This is my favourite. It's just so nice to come in and have fun, and you don't have to learn your lines, you can look like however you want – roll out of bed, turn up. It's like a little family here, everyone loves each other, everyone gets

on and we all run on the spot from Daleks; it's brilliant!

How have you found working with Paul McGann these four years?

I love him. I'm actually in love with him. [laughs] He would go, 'What are you saying, you silly girl?' No, he's just brilliant. I've just grown so close to him and even from when we first started he really took me under his wing and looked after me. And he's just done everything, he's my hero. I was the biggest **Withnail & I** fan, and I just think he's such a class actor and

such a nice man as well, he's just great to work with. But also, you know, he has come and supported me in the shows over the years. Like **Little Shop of Horrors** he came and he watched, and he watched **Legally Blonde** and he came to see me in the play at the Bush Theatre that I did. He's so supportive and lovely and just a great man, and I've loved every minute of working with him and I'll miss him. But we will see each other again outside of work, so that's good.

So: 60 episodes of Lucie Miller.

It's not 60. Is it really? [*It's not quite; it's actually 51 – I added up wrong – Paul*] Stop it. Are you serious???

You're one of the longest serving companions in **Doctor Who** history.

Am I? Yay! Oh, that makes me so happy! And it doesn't feel like I've done that many because it's just flown by. Oh, I don't wanna leave! No! Another 60 please! I could come back on the computer screen or something, as a screensaver. We have to come up with a plan. Nick Briggs, we are gonna bring back Lucie Miller whether you like it or not!

How about a spin-off series?

Yay! Yeah, and then the Doctor can be my sidekick. How about that?

The Eighth Doctor Adventures - Lucie Miller is out now and *To The Death* will be released in March

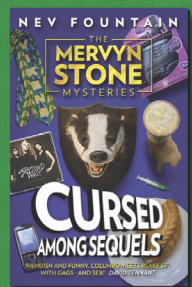
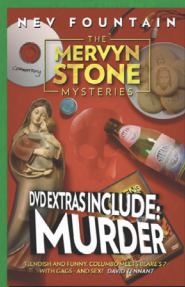
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After Eight

The creative team behind *The Eighth Doctor Adventures*, Nicholas Briggs, Barnaby Edwards and Alan Barnes, look back on an impressive four series of stories

What's been your role in *The Eighth Doctor Adventures*?

Nick Briggs: Jason spoke to me about the possibility of doing new Eighth Doctor adventures that Radio 7 would be interested in purchasing for broadcast before I became executive producer. I was extremely excited by the prospect. Gary Russell, then the Big Finish producer, before the exec role was created, wasn't really interested in doing it. However, he did set up a lot of the first season. He got Alan to think up a new companion – Lucie – and, with Alan, recommended a bunch of writers who he felt would be good and, very importantly, deliver quickly. So when I came on board as producer of this range, the writers were already at work on the stories they'd pitched and had accepted by Alan. From then on, my involvement has been as writer, director, producer and executive producer, bringing together a great team. The core of the team was Alan Barnes and Barnaby Edwards. And as we moved from series to series, we would plan ahead and allocate stories and writers together in big, rather exciting meetings, with all three of us tapping away on keyboards and scribbling notes. Along with Barney and Jason, I was involved in the casting of Sheridan Smith as



Lucie Miller... it was a unanimous decision. No contest. We saw some great actresses, and one or two of them would have made very respectable second choices if Sheridan hadn't accepted.

Barnaby Edwards: It's developed over time. My job titles have included actor, director, associate producer, photographer, writer, casting director and line producer. I also make the tea occasionally.

Alan Barnes: Commissioning, script-editing... and don't tell anyone, but I may have done the odd bit of rewriting as well...

What do you feel was your biggest contribution to the series?

NB: Well, I have final creative responsibility for it all. And we sort of saw this as our flagship series as it had a new style and was going to be on the radio. So I think my greatest contribution was as the team leader, working with great people for whom I had bags of respect. I flatter myself that the respect was mutual, as we all worked very well together. I'm proud of unleashing the formidable casting talents of Barnaby Edwards, who got us splendid casts and taught us that anything was possible. I'm so proud we cast Sheridan. She's amazing! A great talent and such a lovely person to work with. I'm proud of the way Alan Barnes and I forged a way of working together against all expectations – ours and Gary Russell's! Alan and I are very different, and it turns out that our different abilities and approaches complement each other. And Alan learnt very quickly that if he let me have my own way on a few key elements, then I'd end up saying yes to almost everything he suggested. I think he's just such a narrative powerhouse. He is like a heat-seeking missile for plot and character solutions. But I can't really work out what my biggest single contribution was. I had a hand in all of it, throughout.

BE: I suppose the most noticeable contribution I've made has been in my capacity as casting director. Each year I've tried to push the envelope a little further to get the very best ensemble casts possible. It's sometimes a very frustrating process, but the rewards are considerable. I mean, it's not every day you find yourself directing Bernard Cribbins, Una Stubbs, Clare Buckfield and Stephen Gately in the same scene.

AB: I'm going to have to say Lucie, whose biography I wrote up one dismal January afternoon in the BF office. At the time I was a bit reluctant to push the character forward, simply because I thought it was inevitable, knowing Russell T's work, that Rose's replacement in the TV series would turn out to be a Manc lass! But she needed

to be the antithesis to Charley, someone to prick the Doctor's tendency to pomposity. And then Sheridan came along, and took the character to a level I don't think any of us anticipated.

How do you think the range has changed and developed over the last four years?

NB: I think we've just learnt how to do it better every year. We found a new way of telling stories, and most of the writers really got it. It kept opening up so many possibilities and meant we could develop continuity strands within the range. I think it's become more assured and confident.

BE: I suppose the biggest change was between series one and series two, when we realized how Sheridan was going to play Lucie. Her dazzling performance drove us to write tougher, quirkier, funnier and more emotional stories for her and the Doctor. Without Sheridan, there would never have been stories like *Orbis* or *Death in Blackpool*. Much of the feel of series two, three and four is down to Sheridan.

AB: We allowed it to evolve fairly organically, I think. I was really keen for the series to carve out its own niche and its own feel, independent of the main range. So I seized on Auntie Pat when Paul Magrs brought her to the table, for example. Then Straxus, Karen... what happened after *Morbius*... Although we went into every season with a reasonably clear through-line in place, we resisted the temptation to plan too far ahead – we developed each series as if it were the last. I think that gave each of the four series its own distinct personality.

What are you most proud of, and what would you rather not have done, in retrospect?

NB: As I say, I'm most proud of establishing the team of Alan, Barney and me. I'm so proud of the actors we've had and the great scripts. But, if I'm really self-indulgent, I'm really proud of how I've ended it. I've worked so hard on the finale, *Lucie Miller* and *To the Death*. I wanted to take risks and be ruthless, and I want to thank Alan for

encouraging me and helping me every step of the way. I'm pretty proud of *Sisters of the Flame* and *Vengeance of Morbius* too! I can't think of anything we regret doing in terms of story, content or casting. Well, not anything fit for publication anyway. I suppose I regret doing the weekly downloads for the third series, because the whole website infrastructure turned out not to be strong enough to support it, so the big story every weekend we released a new download was 'BF's site has bust again'. I found that really crushing and upsetting. It's one of my biggest regrets full stop. It's made me very nervous of doing anything like that again.

BE: I'm most proud of the fact that we managed to maintain an exceptionally high standard of writing, directing, acting and post-production over all four years. Indeed, for my money, each year was an improvement on the previous one. As to what I'd rather not have done, I think it would have to be making Ian McNeice walk a quarter of a mile in order to photograph him against an 'interesting' background. He's never let me forget it.

AB: In both cases, for personal reasons, *Death in Blackpool*. Most proud because I really stretched my writing – it wasn't my usual sort of thing at all, and I think I did a blummen' good job on it! But... in our haste to get going on it, I neglected to let Paul Magrs know what we were doing with the Auntie Pat arc, and I'm not surprised he was a bit taken aback when he eventually found out. Sorry Paul. Not my finest hour.

How vital is the Doctor/Lucie relationship, and has it been as good as you hoped it would be?

NB: Totally vital, and it's even better than we'd hoped for. I don't think we could ever have anticipated the fantastic performance that Sheridan has given. And her performance has inspired us to write more for her character, and develop her and her relationship with the Doctor. And that in turn has sparked Paul's performance. They are just so good together.

BE: I think it's fair to say that it's been better

than any of us could have imagined in our wildest dreams. From Paul and Sheridan's very first scene, it was clear that this was the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

AB: I think there's a tendency for **Doctor Who** fans to see each companion in isolation and judge them independently of the various Doctors. But it's the chemistry between them that matters – that's when something special happens, something catches fire. In that sense, I don't think it's too much of a stretch to compare them to the Fourth Doctor and Sarah, say, or the Second and Jamie. Early on, I got a real thrill out of their dialogue at the top of *Horror of Glam Rock* – particularly Lucie's line about a 'tranny pile-up on the M62'. That was the moment I thought, 'This is really going to work...'

What would you say to encourage people who've never tried the Eighth Doctor Adventures to give them a go?

NB: It's great stuff. It's got the energy of the new TV series, but it's still got its feet firmly rooted in classic **Doctor Who**. It has got its fair share of humour, but it's darker and scarier than any other kind of **Doctor Who** available. And Lucie Miller is very possibly the best **Doctor Who** companion there's ever been.

BE: This is the show Paul McGann should have had if that movie had taken off. It's fast, fun and fabulous – you've got a treat in store!

AB: They're the most consistent, and consistently exciting, sequence of stories I think we've ever done.

Which particular story best encapsulates The Eighth Doctor Adventures, and why?

NB: For goodness' sake, how am I supposed to work that out? They're all so different. I don't do that 'favourites' thing... but I will say that I love the energy Eddie Robson brought to the earlier stories. I think he did such a great job with *Human Resources*, the Cyberman one with huge, walking office blocks. His scripts kind of



Above - Nick Briggs, Sheridan Smith and Barnaby Edwards
Bottom right - Alan Barnes

said, 'Yeah, we can do **Doctor Who** like *this!*' He opened our minds, I think. And I really love his story *Grand Theft Cosmos*. Such a brilliant caper, filled with brilliant comic timing and loads of action. Then there's Alan's most audacious, depressing Christmas special ever, *Death in Blackpool*. Beautifully dark. I love Barney's historical detail too. I could go on forever, and then I'd end up just listing every story. And naturally, I worked hard to make my scripts encapsulate everything I thought worked about the series. *Wirrn Dawn*, for example, is a very stark, simple story, giving the Doctor and Lucie a lot of time just to show us who they are and how they function as people. You might think it's just about big insects, but oh no!

BE: I don't think you'll find a single story to encapsulate

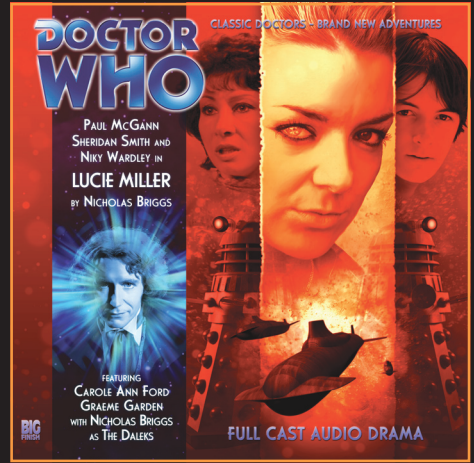


the **EDAs** – which is rather the point. It's the versatility of style and setting which really marks out these stories as something special.

AB: You want me to pick just one?!? If I was going to recommend one to someone who'd not heard any... maybe *Grand Theft Cosmos*, for its sheer vivacity.

What impact have the **Eighth Doctor Adventures** had on the Eighth Doctor himself? Will this be reflected in future main range releases?

NB: It certainly reinvigorated Paul's performance. He'd got to a point when he felt he was ready to give up. We told him about the Radio 7 series and he basically agreed to do that as his final thing for Big Finish. But afterwards, he said, 'We must do more!' He's completely back on board now and always looking to the future with us. And that enthusiasm he has will give his main range stories the right energy. But we'll always be developing new stuff with the Eighth Doctor. Even though we know that in the **Doctor Who** universe he changes into Chris Eccleston one day, it still



feels like we have a bit of a blank canvas with him, which makes certain the future can only be exciting.

BE: You'll just have to wait and see.

AB: I think it'd be a betrayal not to follow up on *To the Death* at some point. As you'll know when you've heard it...!

The Eighth Doctor Adventures - *Lucie Miller* is out now and *To The Death* will be released in March



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BBC

What a Carole on!

Back alongside Paul McGann once more, Carole Ann Ford tells Paul Spragg what it's like playing Susan 48 years on

How's it been being reunited with Paul McGann for the first time since *An Earthly Child*?

Very nice! Great! Paul's a great guy; the thing is, I don't get to see him much today because we don't do very much together in it, so most of today has gone without actually seeing him too much.

You've also been working with his son Jake, who plays Susan's son Alex. He's a lovely guy. Very sweet. Obviously a chip off the old block!

How has being a mother affected Susan? I think she has a bit more gravitas. She's probably a bit more emotional too, because this is what happens when you have kids. You get more emotional about them and everything else, I think. It must be very emotional for her, for him not to have met his great-grandfather up to now. At least she's got someone to share things with to a

certain extent, and being as Earth doesn't like alien people it's probably very difficult for her to share things with anybody else.

Are you surprised to have become part of the more contemporary **Doctor Who**? I don't really think about it too much, I just love doing things for Big Finish! It's just another thing for Big Finish.

Is the right answer.

[laughs] It couldn't be a nicer working environment. It's just so relaxing, it's brilliant! The trouble is, on a hot day like this it might be a little too relaxing. We're all feeling a bit sleepy, I think!

How are the booths today?

Not too bad. The whole atmosphere is a bit airless, isn't it, a bit sort of claustrophobic, I suppose. But it's okay!

Do you prefer the relative calm of doing a **Companion Chronicle**?

Oh no, no, no! I'd much rather have other people about me. The pressure of doing a Companion Chronicle is something which is... it's wonderful to do, it's fascinating, but when I did, in particular, *Here There Be Monsters*,



Carole Ann Ford with Jake McGann, who plays Susan's son, Alex

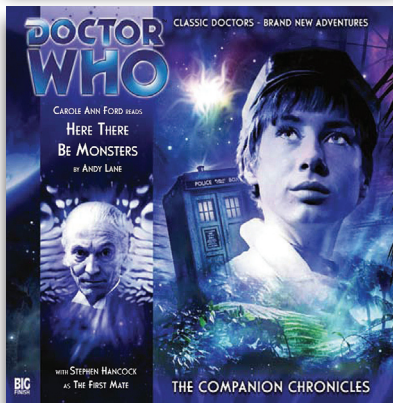
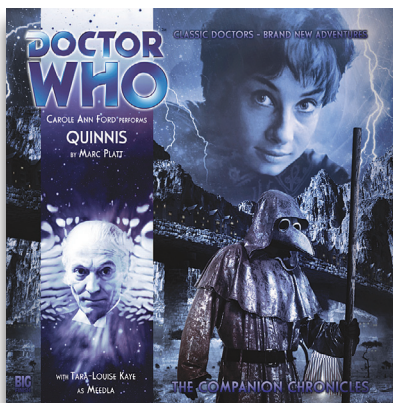
it was a hell of a strain. A hell of a strain! But I'm very much looking forward to the next one [Quinnis]. I've only yet seen an outline of it, but it looks absolutely fascinating. Especially as I'm going to be doing it with my daughter!

You've also been doing some work on AudioGo's range of adaptations, including *Marco Polo*.

I did fill-in narration with that, and it's just terribly, terribly sad that it's been lost, because the beauty of that one was just unbelievable; the few photos that are around do show it a bit, but it was just so special. Such a pity. And I went to a convention in Wales a couple of months back, which was a reunion of people from that, so Derren Nesbitt was there, Mark Eden was there, Zienia Merton, and William Russell and myself were there, and Waris Hussein, who directed it. It was just so great, it was so nice meeting everybody again, having a chat about it all.

The booth is calling! Thanks for chatting, Carole!

Quinnis and Lucie Miller are available now and To The Death will be released in March



It's Showtime!

Producer David Richardson recalls the journey of bringing the **Drama Showcase** series to our ears

It all began, although I couldn't have known it at the time, at a **Doctor Who** convention in Birmingham. There I was, running the Big Finish stall, selling a few CDs and enjoying chatting to people, when Caroline John pops over. She's holding a brown package, which she slips secretly under my arm. "My husband Geoffrey has written an audio play," she whispers. "Could I ask a huge favour? Would you mind reading it?"

Carrie is a singularly lovely person, and if she'd asked me to skydive into a war zone to deliver the mystery envelope to a faction of oppressed rebels, I would have probably done it. Unfortunately, she was asking me to read a script, and I have many, many scripts to read. A huge pile. And, to my shame, this one – *Unintelligent Design* – got added to the pile. And sat there waiting.

Stage two occurred when we were recording Louise Jameson's contribution to our **Short Trips** range. We were sitting chatting in the green room, and Louise mentioned she had been directing a stage play called



Nigel Fairs, writer and star of *In Conversation with an Acid Bath Murderer*

In Conversation With An Acid Bath Murderer. Written by our own Nigel Fairs (**The Tomorrow People, Sapphire and Steel**) it also starred him in the lead role. It'd be great for audio, Louise suggested, and when she got home she emailed me the script. Unfortunately, I have a huge pile of scripts to read... and so you know the rest.

Then, one day in September 2010, a message pinged on my mobile from Katy Manning. 'Darling!' it said (everything Katy says seems to have an exclamation mark). 'Can you and Nick come to lunch! There's something I'd like to talk to you about!'

Never ones to turn down a free lunch, Nick Briggs and I trundled round to Katy's house in South London, wading through the huge tomato plants outside the front door. There was tea. There was cheese and crackers and tomatoes (from outside the front door). But, most importantly, there was a play. Because Katy sat herself on the sofa, pulled out a huge pile of A4 pages and prepared to launch into a one-woman show. She précised it with a warning: 'Darlings,



*The cast of In Conversation with an Acid Bath Murderer:
Left to right - Louise Jameson, Nigel Fairs, Richard Franklin and Suzanne Procter*

if you don't like this, we will never speak of it again! But this is something I wrote some time ago when I was staying with Liza Minnelli. I performed it at one of her parties to all sorts of people from Hollywood, and Blake Edwards – who was there – showed interest in making it into a film. Sadly it never happened. See what you think.'

By the end of page one, Nick turned to me and nodded. I smiled back. *Not a Well Woman* features a whole array of characters all performed by Katy. It's about a woman who is partially sighted, who sees the world a little differently, and it is tinged with dark humour and tragedy. It's also very adult in tone – not one for under 18s, we suspect!

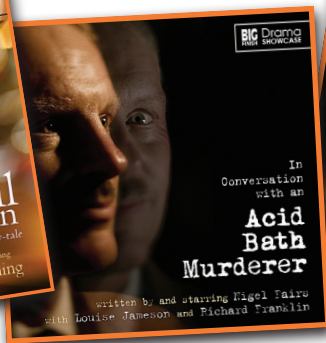
Katy's reading was brilliant and, of course, a bit scatty. 'Oooh, I've lost a page!' she'd say every so often, and then consult the rewrites that were on post-it pads throughout. But by page 20 we'd heard enough to know that this was something special. 'We'll make it,' said Nick. 'You like it?' asked Katy, somewhat surprised. 'It's fantastic,' I assured her.

And there we had it. A brand new original drama for Big Finish Productions. A

play that wasn't science fiction or fantasy; a departure for us, but given the success of Rob Shearman's **Love Songs for the Shy and Cynical**, perhaps one that fitted nicely. Nick asked me who should direct it, as he didn't have time. I told him to make time, and he did.

When I got home, I remembered the package that Caroline had given me. Actually, that's to say I remembered the package but I'd forgotten where I'd put it. After much scrabbling through scripts, I found it and settled down to read *Unintelligent Design*. And – to my immense delight – I loved that too. It's the very clever and gloriously witty story of a university professor and his student, whose thesis is up for a major award. I could tell you more, but it would actually undermine the delightful surprises in a tale that is tinged with sci-fi elements.

Could we, I wondered, have a new series on our hands? The answer came the following week when I was working with Louise Jameson again. She'd been on tour with **Pulling Faces**, a searing monologue about one woman's resistance



to plastic surgery, which was written by Helen Goldwyn, an actress who has been with Big Finish from the beginning (and played a lead role in our **The Tomorrow People**). Lou handed me a DVD, which contained a video recording of one of the shows. I took it home and watched it and I laughed and cried. And the next day I called Jason and explained the situation. **Drama Showcase** was born.

The four plays were recorded during the autumn of 2010, between September and December (Katy's was recorded first, just a couple of weeks after our lunch). There were some minor changes along the way. *Pulling Faces*, though performed only by Louise on stage, was adapted for a more expansive audio format where the different characters would be played by other actors. So we've got David Warwick, Nigel Fairs, Helen Goldwyn and even Colin Baker (who is superb as a plastic surgeon) as guest stars. Similarly, *Acid Bath Murderer* was performed by two people on stage, but Nigel preferred an ensemble cast, bringing in Louise, Richard Franklin, Suzanne Procter and David Warwick (again) for the various roles. At first I wasn't convinced and tried to persuade Lou that I thought it was a shame to lose the monologue version, but she was right.

At the time of writing, *Not a Well Woman* and *Acid Bath Murderer* are both finished, the final post-production touches having been made. *Pulling Faces* and *Unintelligent Design* are expected soon. I'm so very proud of these plays; they have a quality and freshness that brings them alive. And, because they were made in a spirit of love for the product,



Tea break at the recording of Unintelligent Design

everyone has gone that extra mile. Toby Hrycek-Robinson's sound design and music for *Not a Well Woman* are just breathtaking.

So here we are, one month before the release of the first CD, and fingers are crossed that these will be a success. I truly hope they are – with the talent involved, they certainly deserve to be.

*The **Drama Showcase** season is available for pre-order. All pre-ordered CDs will be signed by the relevant star of the play. Please note the plays contain adult content and are not suitable for younger listeners.*

Thanks for extending the December sale. It meant that I had two bites of the cherry. As a consequence I have discovered **Iris Wildthyme**: absolutely brilliant, haven't laughed so much in ages. Just what's needed at the moment. I think you said there are more on the way; I really hope so.

Thanks again

Steve Moore

Nick: That is indeed our plan, Steve.

I just wondered if there were any plans to write an audio featuring Peri and the Daleks? Many thanks.

Mark Wiles

Nick: No plans on the table at the moment, but I'm pretty sure it will happen one day.

Just listened to the **Lost Story The Daleks: The Destroyers** which I enjoyed, and wondered if there are any plans to make this a full series or to continue it in some way. Keep up the great work.

David Goodram

Nick: No plans, but I must admit that it's something that had occurred to me. Have you heard our **Dalek Empire** series?

This is less an enquiry and more a hearty thanks. I've just come to the end of my first twelve-month subscription to your main **Doctor Who** range – I've bought plenty of other plays, piecemeal, over the years, but this was the first time I committed to a year's worth of **Who** in one go. And I absolutely loved it. I can't thank you all enough, from the writers, actors and directors, through the producers, sound designers and other people whose jobs I don't even know the name of. I've also treated myself to the two series of **Jago & Litefoot** as well, and they were equally excellent.

I think it's easy for people to take your hard work for granted, so I wanted to make a point of thanking all of you at Big Finish for giving me an adventure every four weeks, which is really all I can ask for from life. And as soon as someone in London deigns to give me a

job, I'll subscribe for another twelve months straight away.

Alex Watts

PS: Get Stephen Hall back before he gets too rich and important for us!

Nick: I think Stephen Hall was too rich and important for us in the first place. We were very lucky to get him. We will certainly try to get him to come and play again as soon as we can. Thanks so much for writing and giving us all a boost with your lovely comments. I've just caught up with **Jago & Litefoot** myself and have really loved it.

I must say that *Litefoot and Saunders* was tremendous fun. I'm doing my best to take series two slowly rather than wolfing them down, so to speak.

And I thoroughly enjoyed *The Four Doctors*. I'm especially happy when I'm talking about it to friends because when they ask which Doctors are in it, I respond (using my best Bob Fosse/**Chicago**/*All That Jazz* voice) "A Five, Six, Seven, Eight!"

Henrik Hansen

Nick: Thank you, Henrik. Glad you liked our subscriber special. We always work to make them as special as possible.

A quick question from *The War Games*, which I viewed recently. In episode nine the War Chief is executed. Why didn't he regenerate? Always wondered that.

Michael Pollard

Nick: Time Lords can be killed, you know. They are not indestructible. Regeneration is not something that happens automatically. The Doctor is always in peril, he's not just thinking, 'Yeah, bring it on, I can regenerate if you shoot me'.

Hello all at Big Finish! Now, as a huge fan of your audios and a subscriber for the first time (to two ranges of **Doctor Who**), I would love to see the Eighties Cybermen make a return; the *Attack of the Cybermen* and *Silver Nemesis* ones, as I feel they were sidelined to the *Invasion*-style ones. The stories that have had the Eighties style haven't really done them justice,

and maybe as in *Doomsday* on the new TV series, the Daleks and Cybermen could match off as they seem to know each other. Keep up the excellent work and look forward to hearing the Fifth Doctor versus the Sontarans soon.

Patrick Lockyear

Nick: Personally, I'm not fond of the Eighties-style Cybermen. Far too emotional. Always clenching fists and saying, 'Excellent'. Not the sort of thing you'd expect from a creature with all its emotions removed, is it? But I know it's all down to personal taste and when we got into the series. And it's important we reflect as many views of the series as possible, so maybe we should consider doing some Eighties-style Cyber stories... Hmm... Thanks for becoming a subscriber!

I have followed you since the beginning of your adventures and I must say that the stories are getting stronger and stronger each time I listen to them. There are so many series to choose from now and I am happy because I never know what I am going to purchase next. I recently listened to **Jago & Litefoot** series one and thought that was fantastic. The last McCoy season was amazing and I cannot wait for the Lost Season 27.

I also enjoyed Peri and the Sixth Doctor together for lost seasons and just got the first box set of the William Hartnell era. I cannot wait to get to grips with them. Will there be any more new companions joining the Doctors? I know there is Raine for the Seventh Doctor and Thomas Brewster once again for the Sixth.

Thank you so much for making these adventures. They are really great and I cannot wait to renew my twelve-month subscription. I am hoping for more Evelyn Smythe. I am also missing Charley Pollard as well.

Marios Assos

Nick: There is a plan for a new companion. More on that in the coming months. And, as you know, Evelyn is currently in the Sixth Doctor stories. As for Charley... well, I'm still planning that Charley series!

FORTHCOMING RELEASES

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)

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** *Kiss of Death* (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 *Feril'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)
Dark Shadows 15 - *The Blind Painter* (Roger Davis, Nicola Bryant)
Dark Shadows 16 - *The Death Mask* (Jerry Lacy, Lara Parker)

JUNE 2011

- Doctor Who** *Rat Trap* (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)
Jago and Litefoot *Series 3 Box Set* (Four full cast adventures)
Drama Showcase 4 *Unintelligent Design* (Geoffrey Beevers)
Dark Shadows 17 - *The Creeping Fog* (TBA)
Dark Shadows 18 - *The Lost Girl* (TBA)

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)
Dark Shadows 19 - *The Poisoned Soul* (Nancy Barrett)
Dark Shadows 20 - *The Carrion Queen* (TBA)

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)
Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles *The Specials Box Set* (*The Three Companions, The Mists of Time, Freakshow*)
Dark Shadows 21 - *The Crimson Pearl* (Actor TBA)

SEPTEMBER 2011

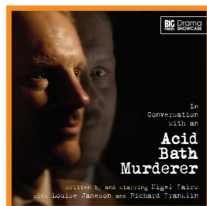
- Doctor Who** *TBA* (151, Doctor TBA)
Doctor Who *TBA* (152, Doctor TBA)
Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles *The Memory Cheats* (6.03, Second Doctor)

OCTOBER 2011

- Doctor Who** *TBA* (153, Doctor TBA)
Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles *The Many Deaths of Jo Grant* (6.04, Third Doctor)

NOVEMBER 2011

- Doctor Who** *TBA* (154, Doctor TBA)
Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles *The Child* (6.05, Fourth Doctor)
The Big Finish Companion *Volume 1* by Richard Dinnick (hardback)



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