

ISSUE 34 • DECEMBER 2011
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THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

THE FIVE COMPANIONS

**WILLIAM RUSSELL, PETER PURVES, JEAN MARSH
and ANNEKE WILLS interviewed!**



Writer MARC PLATT on Lost Story THE CHILDREN OF SETH

Producer MARK WRIGHT on GRACELESS II

RICHARD DINNICK on adapting THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES

BIG FINISH DAY 2

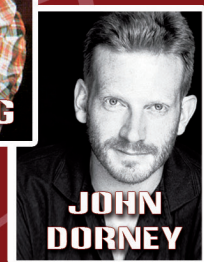
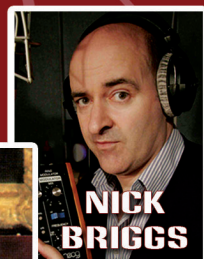
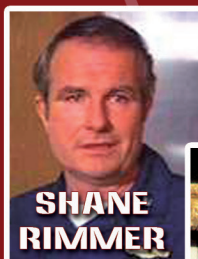
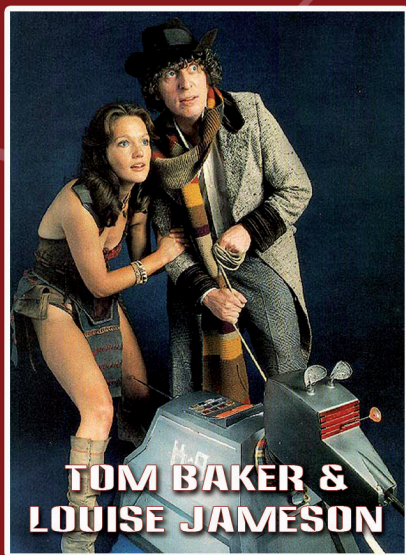
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Just wanted to remind you that Colin Baker returns next month in a great trilogy of adventures. It all starts with the long-awaited return of Davros to Big Finish, with Terry Molloy on deliciously evil form! Don't miss *The Curse of Davros*. And don't miss our new companion for the Sixth Doctor, Flip! She's great. Ah, the memories of a lovely week or so recording with Colin and Lisa (Greenwood – Flip) back in June. Those balmy days seem so long ago now that we're freezing almost to death in our cold, cold office. *Curse* is followed by a story which beautifully contrasts humour with terror. It's a satire on TV production, rather skilfully written by John Dorney. The story is *The Fourth Wall*... and there's plenty of peril waiting for Flip in it. Innit?

That's followed up by *Wirrn Isle*, a story set in a freezing future... which is reminding me of this office again! Naturally, it features the return of the Wirrn, but it's quite a unique story with a very distinctive style of storytelling. I'll say no more. Don't want to spoil it too much. But it's truly chilling, in both senses of the word.

And back to that other Baker chap: Tom. I think you might remember him. I've just been listening to the final mixes of *Destination: Nerva*, the first of our six story series of brand new Fourth Doctor adventures. Now, I know you'll think I'm a sappy old devil, but such is the beauty of the work our sound designer and composer Jamie Robertson has done on this story that the nostalgia of it all rather reduced me to tears. I know! It's just making me all emotional. Or maybe it's just the time of year...

Season's greetings to you all. And here's to some very exciting stuff coming up next year. Oh, and by the way, listen out for a special free download on New Year's Day!

Nick Briggs



Rising Big Finish star John Dorney delivers his first four-part main range story in the new year, a dark comic fantasy about the dangers of reality television... or at least, of television that becomes real. Young Flip (Lisa Greenwood) takes her first flight in the TARDIS as a fully-fledged companion and simply vanishes before the Doctor's eyes. And thus begins a bizarre and thrilling adventure in which you'll never quite know what to expect...

Colin Baker is on effervescent form, surrounded by a sterling cast that includes Julian Wadham (*Downton Abbey*), Yasmin Bannerman (*Doctor Who: The End of the World*), Martin Hutson (*Atonement*), Hywel Morgan (*Jago and Litefoot: Swan Song*) and Kim Wall (*Holy Flying Circus*).

Tune in to *The Fourth Wall* in February 2012. Things might never be the same again...

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IN THE BEGINNING

FOUR SIXTIES LEGENDS RECEIVE A GRILLING FROM PAUL SPRAGG AS THEY RETURN FOR THE CELEBRATORY EVENT WE COULD ONLY CALL **THE FIVE COMPANIONS**. FIRST UP **WILLIAM RUSSELL** AND **PETER PURVES**, AND THEN **JEAN MARSH** AND **ANNEKE WILLS**



It's very odd sitting down with the stars of early **Doctor Who** for an interview. Firstly, you could listen to their stories, reminiscences and combined wisdom for ever. Secondly, these were the people who helped shape **Doctor Who** in its formative years and it's hard not to be a little star-struck. Especially when you're sat with original star William Russell (an amazingly sprightly 87-year-old) and the actor who took over his action man role in the show, Peter Purves (72, and in equally fine fettle).

And such careers they've had too. William (real name Russell Enoch) played Ian Chesterton from

you meet up again you have an instant rapport. We may not see each other again for another five or six years, but it comes back each time. And I've never felt uncomfortable in the company of people I've worked with on this show when I meet them again."

"And of course it's always nice for an actor to be working!" adds William. "That makes you feel good to start with! So you're very well disposed to do all these."

"It's like no other job, I think, acting," believes Peter. "Because when you're working you're probably at your happiest. Always. You have really

"Two episodes. It's history is what we have, rather than actual work experience!" **Peter Purves**

day one of **Doctor Who**, did every action series going way back when, had a phenomenal stage career and played a memorable part in Rita's life in **Coronation Street** during the Nineties. Peter's portrayal of Steven Taylor is well-remembered by Whovians (and gave Steven Moffat the name of one of his **Coupling** characters) but countless youngsters grew up watching him present **Blue Peter** in what many consider its golden age, and later the legendary motorcycle obstacle course show **Kick Start**. And these are just tiny snapshots of two amazingly full lives. Today they're back playing their **Doctor Who** characters again. How has the reunion been?

"Always nice to meet the people you've worked with," says William. "We actually didn't work together very much, did we?" "Two episodes," nods Peter. "It's history is what we have, rather than actual work experience! Acting's a very strange industry, you know, because when you work with somebody, you share their life for the amount of time it takes to do it. In Russ and I's case, we worked two weeks together. That's all. We've met each other several times, but we worked together for two weeks. Now, in the past fifty years, that ain't very long. Yet you find when

happy moments in your life, but when you're working, for that to be the best thing you could be doing with your time is really a wonderful thing. Not many people can say that."

"No, they can't. Very true," agrees William.

Previously restricted to **Companion Chronicles**, the pair have finally got an opportunity to be in a full cast **Doctor Who** audio, alongside Peter Davison. "It's very intriguing; I'm interested," offers William. "I listen perhaps a little more acutely when it isn't Bill [Hartnell, the First Doctor]. So it is interesting to compare them. Because you compare them in your mind as you're doing it."

"But all the Doctors have offered something different," explains Peter. "When Patrick Troughton took over from Bill, there was an essence of Doctor trying to be somewhat similar. I know Patrick was different, but he looked a little similar; they weren't brave enough at that time to take a big leap and produce a Doctor who was twelve years old or something like that; what they did was produce someone who could have been a clone of Billy. Patrick did it very differently and they were very different types of actor."

"Then suddenly there was a bigger change when you got Jon Pertwee, who was offering something entirely different. Then you've got Tom Baker, who's a totally different Doctor, Peter Davison, who we've been working with on this today – and Peter was a very different Doctor – and Colin Baker. Great changes. They all offered something. And when you got Sylvester [McCoy], funnily enough, I always felt that Sylvester was the one who was nearest to Bill in



From left: Jean Marsh, Peter Purves, Sarah Sutton, Peter Davison and Anneke Wills

"Matt Smith, I think, could easily grow into being Bill Hartnell. And I find that absolutely fascinating."

Peter Purves

the way he performed, he was eccentric in the way that Bill was; a different eccentricity, but it had that same element about it. I was talking to someone the other day about Matt Smith, who is the current Doctor, who I think could easily grow into being Bill Hartnell. You can see in the way he plays it, there is this person who could have ended up being Bill Hartnell. And I find that absolutely fascinating."

How's it been working with Peter Davison on this story? "Oh, it's completely different! Absolutely! It's a totally different character he plays," explains William. "Totally different. And he doesn't fluff his lines, which is quite nice!" chuckles Peter. "It's a different kind of delivery, he was a very different Doctor. He

was four removed, so he couldn't be the same."

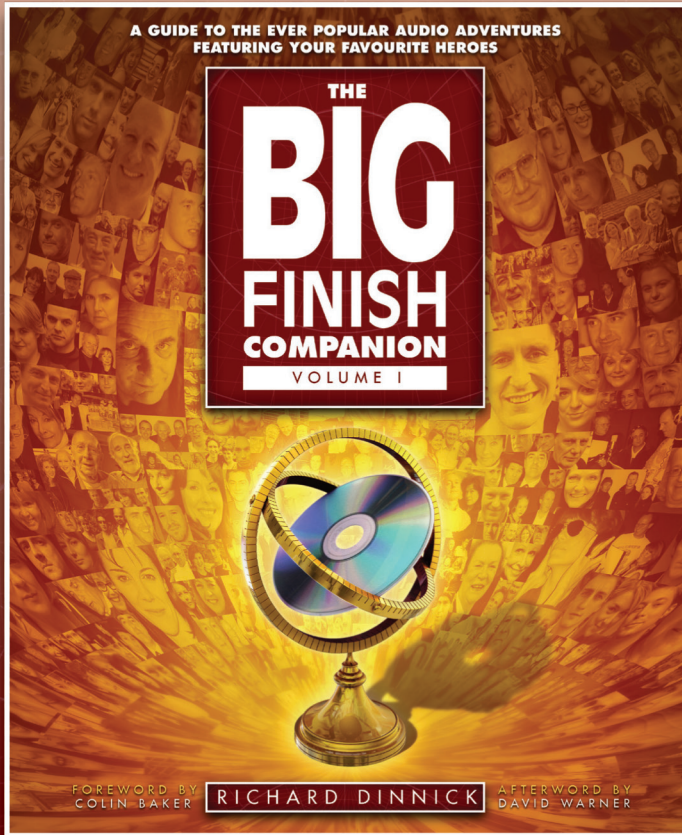
Is it quite easy to fall back into doing those time-worn companion lines, asking the Doctor what's going on? "We're actors," posits Peter. "We're playing a character that we know. I think the writing for most of these Big Finish things has been remarkable in the consistency that it's got of being the same character that you originally played. I think that's very clever."

Does it make a difference that the pair are playing older versions of their characters this time? "I don't think so. It's a totally different thing," says William. "All these things are what happens to you as an actor; you're cast in different roles all the time, and if you're lucky you keep going and you keep varying things all the time."

"I couldn't play Steven Taylor energetically in the flesh now," explains Peter, "but I don't think my voice has changed much; it's pretty much the same voice I've always used. Your voice does change, it deepens a bit. And as you get very much older, it probably gets a bit shakier as well. I don't think mine's done that yet. It probably will. But at the moment I still feel I'm delivering things like the Steven of forty years ago. Or trying to, anyway. I'm not trying to be any different; I'm just trying to be me. Me as an actor trying to deliver these lines, trying to give them feeling, trying to give them import. I think probably my accent has changed slightly because at that time I was still of the old school of actors that didn't have an accent. And now I've let my own natural accent come through a little bit more; it naturally sits there with a slightly Northern edge to it, but that's all. So apart from that I don't think it's changed at all. It's the same character really."

Plus, of course, there are other companions in this story for Ian and Steven to interact with. "The enjoyment of it all is actually meeting them in the flesh and talking to them out of the booths," smiles Peter, "because once we're doing the parts, we're doing the parts. But there is more of a rapport between me and Jean than there is between me

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and Anneke because I never worked with [Anneke]. A lot longer than I worked with Russ, I worked with Jean for twelve episodes. And three months is a nice tranche of time. And we instantly have got back into the mode of working that we always had, which is very, very nice."

"It's always something of a celebration when you're seeing old friends or people you've worked with," admits William. "Or didn't work with! It's very nice to meet them."

The **Doctor Who** family has always been a very welcoming one. "You know everyone who's been in it," nods Peter. "I've had more pleasure from working on these things than I have from anything in my acting life; it's been great fun. It doesn't take a lot of time; you've got a script, you have a read-through, then you do it. But it's great fun. It's proper acting, it's the real thing. I like doing radio plays; they're lovely. It's a nice medium to work in and as you get older, you are limited in what you can do physically, so it's nice to be able to do this, to act with our voices."

As we head towards the fiftieth anniversary of everyone's favourite sci-fi show, do either of the men feel like elder statesmen of **Doctor Who**? "It never occurred to me!" smiles William. "I don't feel like an elder statesmen!"

"I feel much more like an elder statesman of something like **Blue Peter** than I do **Doctor Who**," considers Peter. "I was in that for so long; that was a ten-year stint, this was a one-year stint. The show was old when I joined it. Russ and the rest of the team had done eighty episodes when I joined. The first episode I did was episode seventy-seven or something of the series. They'd done a huge amount of work. Two years work and then I joined it and did a year, but it was still the formative years of

the show because it went on for another twenty-three years before it came off.

"It's a staggeringly successful show. It's a flagship show of the BBC now, and it never was. It was a hate show for a lot of people. A lot of people within the BBC didn't want the show to go on – as you know, it's been well documented. But it survived and it developed. But there's still only one Doctor for me, and that's Bill. How could there ever not be? He created the character. He was it. And that's the Doctor. Whenever anyone says **Doctor Who**, I don't think of anybody else; my first thought is always



The cast and crew of *The Five Companions*

"I feel much more like an elder statesman of Blue Peter than I do Doctor Who." Peter Purves

of Bill." "I'm locked to Bill Hartnell," William agrees, "because he was the character and I find it slightly difficult to adjust to all the new characters. I have a sort of fixed loyalty to Bill. He was the one."

With William and Peter recalled to the booths, it's time for a word with their fellow Sixties veterans, Jean Marsh and Anneke Wills. And because they're in a chatty mood, there's not a lot for their interviewer to do. Jean's in sparkling form, a 77-year-old with a vast array of credits to her name on TV, in film and on the stage,

and currently experiencing a resurgence thanks to her starring role as Rose in the revival of **Upstairs Downstairs**. She's also got a long history with **Doctor Who**, having appeared in *The Crusade* before returning as ill-fated companion Sara Kingdom, and then in the show's final Sylvester McCoy season as Morgaine in *Battlefield*. Anneke Wills looks about half of her 70 years and is equally delightful – fun, giggly and thrilled to be back for another audio adventure. She retired from acting

a nice, sweet script, and funny and touching. Just reading it, I learnt about everybody's character; I love Polly!"

"Aww! Thank you! She likes to be loved!"

Did they know much about each other's eras of **Doctor Who**? "Nothing," replies Anneke. "I was aware; we'd seen little photos and things. But not really, no. More about the new **Doctor Who** since Sylv left than the old ones, for me. And now it's like homework! I can't miss it because people will

"I have to say, of the new [Doctor Who] I don't understand what's going on! I wonder if anybody else does?" Anneke Wills

fairly young in order to bring up her family, but she made a big splash in a short time in a variety of productions including **The Railway Children**, **The Avengers** and **Strange Report**, her first acting job coming when she was a mere thirteen years old. She's known to **Who** fans, of course, as swinging Sixties sidekick Polly Wright from Patrick Troughton's tenure on the show. But have the pair ever acted together before?

"No, never!" both reply in unison.

"This has all come as a wonderful surprise!" continues Jean. "It's the first time I've *really* met you. It's a pleasure."

"Is it?" asks a surprised Anneke.

"Yes, it's a pleasure to meet you!"

"The thing is, I feel like I know you because of Rose, you see."

"We've had a lovely morning, haven't we?"

"Gabbing away."

"And it's such

ask me questions, so I have to watch it. Although I have to say, of the new lot I don't understand what's going on! I wonder if anybody else does?" Anneke's informed that it's not just her being puzzled at the latest complex series of Matt Smith adventures. "I'm very glad I'm not alone."

"I'm not a sci-fi fan so I don't watch it," admits Jean. "There's so much on that you can't watch everything, so I decide to almost watch nothing. I just occasionally pick up on something. It's usually because a chum has said. I

watch that series **Spiral** because it's French. I'm always learning French. I speak French but very badly. I speak it with a good accent but no grammar or anything. And English I'm afraid, as well...

"I couldn't even remember who the Doctor Whos were that I'd worked with! William Hartnell and Sylvester McCoy," she confirms.

"Oh, did you do a



Sylvester story?" asks Anneke. "Were you the same character?" "No," smiles Jean. "I played Morgan Le Fay for four episodes in his last set. That was terrific fun. It just makes it more fun coming here, doesn't it? Because you're learning things!"

It's a shame that neither actress is able to go back and remind themselves of their time on the show, what with so many of the episodes wiped and apparently lost for good. "There is my very first episode, I think," ponders Jean, "which was playing the Princess of France, Joanna."

"How interesting you were playing a princess of France!" adds Anneke.

"I always wanted to be French," Jean explains. "When people say to me, 'What would you like to be if you weren't an actress?' I say 'French'. But a lot of Sara Kingdom's were wiped. But all of the last four are still there, of *Battlefield*. What's really nice, though, is when you meet **Doctor Who** fans, everybody likes to be the world's foremost authority and so you say, 'I don't know, you tell me!' They love it!"

What's been the pair's experience of working with Peter Davison? "I must tell you," says Anneke, "it's been really lovely to work with him this morning. There's a kind of energy. To be doing my scenes with Peter, when I read them I thought, 'Oh, this is very honouring for my little Polly character' because she got largely kind of trashed and forgotten about. I've enjoyed it tremendously."

While Jean and Anneke haven't worked together before, they have encountered some of their colleagues in and around conventions. "I've met up with Peter and we've swapped autobiographies," reveals Jean, "and William Russell, I've shared a taxi a couple of times with him and he's just heavenly, because he's got all these wonderful theatrical stories. He told me about Richard Burton and Alec Guinness and all these wonderful people."

"Yes, it's a juicy old taxi ride!" agrees Anneke. "I've only done two conventions, I think," continues Jean. "Again, I'm not the world's foremost authority. I think I over-commit myself. I don't mean generally in my life; unless it's work, I'm very careful

about saying I'll do something, so I'm probably the most ignorant **Doctor Who** survivor!"

And if anyone in **Doctor Who** is a survivor, it's Sara Kingdom. "I think she's been deaded a few times!" giggles Jean. "I died from a poisoned dart or something and it made me age very quickly, so they aged me with make-up, make-up, make-up and then lastly it was just a very old woman, made up to look older,

and then I just crumbled into a puff of powder."

"Into dust?" asks Anneke, rather sadly.

"Into dust," confirms Jean. "On Kembel."

"Was Kembel a planet?"

"Yes."

"How did she come back then?"

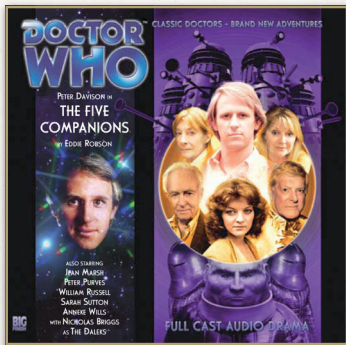
There's an intervention at this point because the story of Sara's **Companion Chronicles** revival is rather complicated to go into, but suffice to say Sara is back in the land of the living. "So that's why [Steven] says, 'But you're alive!'" realises Anneke.

"And that's why I say that cryptic thing: 'Ah, but I'm not the woman I used to be. But in a way I suppose I am again.'"

Jean is reminded that en route to revival, she also spent a bit of time as a house. "Oh yes, I'd forgotten that I was a house!" she grins. "You were a house???" says Anneke incredulously. "Now I have to go back and see what I can find of her as a house..." **VORTEX**

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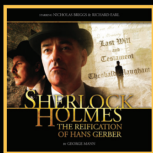


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THE JOY OF SETH

Writer **MARC PLATT** uncovers the history of new
Lost Story **THE CHILDREN OF SETH**

Hello Marc. Where did you first encounter *The Children of Seth*?

■ I first read the script about twenty years ago when [Script editor] Andrew Cartmel was clearing his office at the BBC. The production of the classic series of **Doctor Who** had just folded, and Andrew asked me if I wanted anything as a souvenir. Amongst the stacks of papers was Christopher Bailey's unfinished first draft for *Seth*. I knew immediately that was what I wanted. *Seth* is a Byzantine (in more ways than one) space operatic epic; a sort of **I, Claudius** with Imperial cities in space, androids and definitely no Mara. It was originally conceived as a Fifth Doctor story, but then Peter Davison left and Chris was left writing

for an uncertain Doctor and companion. The whole story, which is as complex and richly drawn as you'd expect from the author of *Kinda* and *Snakedance*, got mired down. There was precious little help coming from the production office either, so eventually Chris was forced to abandon the story altogether.

What state was the script in before you started work on it?

■ There was a detailed storyline and a first draft TV script, divided into two forty-five minute episodes. The second episode was left unfinished. Some scenes had several versions and the luxury of copious hand-written notes and corrections by

Chris Bailey all over the pages. The script was written for the Sixth Doctor and Peri, but their characters are generic rather than defined. Both actors were yet to be cast, leaving Chris with little idea how to pitch their characters. It's very clear that the huge cast of colourful guest characters (there were twenty-six speaking parts alone) took over the story, leaving the Doctor and Peri sidelined. We decided to go back to the original idea of a Fifth Doctor story with Tegan and Nyssa as companions. The many short TV scenes needed to be reworked into a more serviceable audio format, and the number of characters cut down without losing the epic sweep of the story.

How much input did Christopher Bailey have into the process? Was there a point at which he hoped to finish it himself?

■ From the start, Chris gave us carte blanche to rework the story, which was an incredibly generous thing to do. He also gave us several ideas that were not yet in the script which we were able to incorporate – notably a sequence where the Doctor loses his sight, which I used as a metaphor for a dangerous assault on the Doctor by the space city's controlling computer. He has to go into dark places to find the truth and set the world to rights again. And the unseeing dark is a great image for an audio play.

I think Chris was genuinely surprised by our interest in a story that he had left unfinished nearly thirty years ago. I suspect it was so far behind him now that he was happy to let other people take over the reins.

What are the positives and negatives of completing someone else's script?

■ That depends on the material, but in the case of *Seth*, it was an absolute treat. The difficult thing is

trying to catch the style of such a terrific writer as Chris Bailey and to be faithful to his original ideas. That always has to be a first port of call. Fortunately, Chris's characters are so strong that they almost

dictate where they would like to go. There were some major rewrites, but I hope it emerges in line with what Chris had in mind and catches the wicked sense of humour too. There are certainly times when I'm writing my own stuff that I wish I had Chris on tap and ready to consult.

Which of your own elements are you most pleased to have come up with?

■ Filling out the very sketchy

portrayal of Peri into parts for both Tegan and Nyssa, and rounding out the character of the ministerial aide Albis in many, many ways. I also realised that there was no meeting early on between the Doctor and the main villain, Byzan. So I set up a rather theatrical confrontation between them that hopefully emphasises Byzan's flamboyant and scheming nature.

Are there other **Lost Stories** out there that you'd like to be involved in realising?

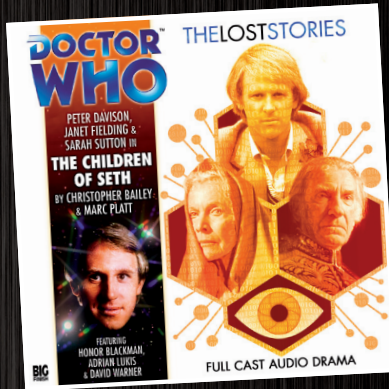
■ I'm really happy to take whatever [Producer] David Richardson wants to throw at me – as long as it's not darts or the furniture.

What's next on the Platt agenda?

■ There's another Fifth Doctor story on the stocks. This time with an old Holmesian villain, but in a younger, less gangrenous state. After that... well, I do know, but I'm not allowed to say yet. It is something I've both longed for and dreaded for years. **VORTEX**

Doctor Who: *The Children of Seth* is out this month.

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GOING TO THE DOGS



RICHARD DINNICK describes the tricky process of adapting one of literature's best-known tales: **THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES**

Hello Richard. How daunting was it to adapt something as legendary as *The Hound of the Baskervilles*?

■ Hello! I was both thrilled and nervous when Nick asked me to adapt *Hound* because it is not only a Sherlock Holmes story, it is *the* Sherlock Holmes story. I know that Sherlockians can be as scrutinising and discerning as any other fandom when it comes to their canon. As such, I knew I had to be at my very best. Fortunately, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle crafted a true masterpiece with *Hound* and therefore I knew that if I stuck to his plan I couldn't go too far wrong!

What do's and don'ts were you given for adapting the book?

■ Way back at the end of last year when Nick and I had a meeting about it, I was very happy to hear him

say that he wanted all our plays this season to be as close to the source material as possible. When you've got such an excellent story and wonderfully evocative prose coupled with Nick's and Richard Earl's truly bravura performances [as Holmes and Watson] – as well as those of the other cast members – there is no need to go off piste! Add nothing and take as little away as possible was the bottom line.

Did you have to make cuts, and was there anything you were sad to lose?

■ Given the time constraints of a two-CD play, I had to make cuts here and there, but I would like to think that this was surgery of which Watson would be proud rather than ham-fisted butchery! There was one aspect I wish we could have kept

in. Near the beginning there is a cabbie who drives the villain away in London. In the book, Holmes tracks down the cabbie and discovers that the man who hired him gave his name as 'Sherlock Holmes!' Such a wonderful touch by Conan Doyle; it really showed the impudence and ego of the villain he is up against. I can't think of any scenes that had to go due to pacing or their not working on audio. Indeed, given Watson's narration being such a characteristic of the **Sherlock Holmes** experience, I would go as far as to say that I believe they work as well on audio as they do in their original written format.

*What's different about this **Baskervilles** from those which have gone before?*

■ The key thing with the Big Finish adaptations is just how true to the originals they are. Over the years there have been so many versions of *Hound* on stage, screen and audio. Almost all of them have added elements in. The Basil Rathbone film very famously included a séance scene which just doesn't happen! This was even included in the recent Tiger Aspect TV film. There's really no need for it – or anything else! The atmosphere is already so well drawn and will have anyone on edge already!

There's one tiny addition that we have made to one of Watson's letters to Holmes, and those who listen to *The Tangled Skein* will see why. It's a negligible addition but something that's there as a nod to the next story. I was very pleased to be able to suggest this and Nick okayed it. So in it went!

You were also assisting on the production; what was it like in studio?

■ It is an absolute privilege to sit with Nick, Ken [Bentley, director] and Toby [Hrycek-Robinson, engineer] in the studio as the recording took place, acting as a kind of stage manager calling the actors in for their scenes, and then being another pair of ears attuned to the script and alert for changes. I loved every minute of it – and then there are the lunches! Since then, Nick and David [Richardson]

have been kind enough to ask me to do a bit of similar work on the Fourth Doctor audios.

*What have you learned over the course of your **Sherlock Holmes** experience?*

■ Loads! Ever since I started working with Big Finish I wanted to become more involved in the production side of things and this was a magnificent opportunity to learn, very kindly offered by Nick. He's nice that way. I had been in studio before as a writer, but this time I felt I had a far more 'legitimate' reason for being there and Nick briefed me on what he expected of me and what my duties would be.

Working alongside him and Ken I think I have picked up a great deal by just watching such consummate professionals in action – osmosis if you will! I hope that this apprenticeship will serve both me and Big Finish well in the future! **VORTEX**

Sherlock Holmes: The Hound of the Baskervilles is out this month.

[CLICK HERE FOR DETAILS](#)



I just wanted to start out saying how much I am enjoying **Sherlock Holmes** season two so far. I cannot wait for the rest of the stories, but I shall try to possess myself in patience. I was wondering about the change from mp3s to mp4 or the ACC files. I like it very much to be able to stop and not have to fast forward or rewind to get to my spot. Are mp3s available? I'm just wondering. Thanks again for a spectacular season of Holmes & Watson!

John Roach

Nick: I think you've accidentally ticked the audiobook option, which gives you an mp4. But mp3s are certainly available to you.



Little baby Charley.

Our daughter was born on October 13th and we called her Charley. Not specifically named after Ms Pollard, but certainly inspired by her. Congratulations on our part also to Alan, Gary or whoever it was that came up with the full name: it rolls so well off the tongue that we decided to give her all of it: Charlotte Elizabeth. There's a picture of her attached. Christopher Wake

Nick: That warms the cockles of my heart. We love Charley. She will return in her own series one day. I promise.

I'm just wondering if you would consider doing a **Robin of Sherwood** audio at some point in the future?

Karon Hollis

Nick: We've already done **Robin Hood** CDs based on the BBC series, but, to be blunt, they weren't very popular and didn't sell particularly well. I know **Robin of Sherwood** was extremely popular, but it seems odd to have to negotiate the rights to release Robin Hood stories based on a particular interpretation, when Robin Hood, the legend, is, of course, not a copyright idea. It's a legend in the public domain. I'm not convinced that there are enough followers of the great **Sherwood** series around who would buy an audio series.

Now that you've brought in the character of Mary Shelley I would like to hear you guys do something with Fitz and the Eighth Doctor sometime. Fitz is definitely my favourite companion from the Eighth Doctor books and I loved him in the audio from *The Company of Friends*. Any plans for doing more with Fitz and Eight?

Cathy Segee

Nick: No plans to do any of the other companions from *The Company of Friends*.

Two suggestions for audiobook series. You may use these suggestions freely.

1. Oral history of the English people's experiences during WWII. Literally, the oral history of those who were alive in the UK during WWII.

2. Audiobooks continuing **Foyle's War**. I love **Foyle's War**. Michael Kitchen is absolutely outstanding as Foyle. Honeysuckle Weeks is awesome as Sam.

Terry L Ridder

Nick: These are great ideas. But they'd be difficult markets to tap into, I feel. It's all about knowing who we can sell to. I'm certainly very keen on doing historical, documentary stuff and have been looking into this for some time.

First I would like to say that your audio shows are great! Wonderful to hear the

old Doctors again and I really like the ones you have put on Radio 4 Extra. A few months ago there was a programme with someone (I am sorry, I can't remember who) talking about BF doing some of the lost adventures which were written but not used in the show, which is a great idea. I was wondering if you have ever thought about doing *The Dark Dimension*? This was a story that was supposed to be made in Sylvester's era but due to problems was replaced by *Dimensions in Time*, which I guess became the last 'old show' story.

I was able to get a script for *Dark Dimension* and, having read it, I think it is a very good story and I really wish they had done it. Who knows, it may have saved the show. The big problems would be getting everyone on board and we have had a couple of losses, namely Jon Pertwee and Nick Courtney. (Nick had a big part in the story.) I would be tempted if I was doing it to make the Third Doctor the first; away from the script I know, but it would make more sense to the story, I think.

Sorry for going on a bit, but it's something I feel very strongly about. I have tried to do it on computer animation but I don't think I am ever going to be good enough at it to pull it off. Please, please say you will think about it, it would be great to hear it done some day.

Thank you for your time and for reading this. Have a great day all.

Steven McPhail Roehead

Nick: You may have heard us talk about this in the podcast. I think you put your finger right on the problem. There are too many characters integral to the plot who are played by actors who are sadly no longer with us. I think it makes the project impractical. Also, on a personal note, although I think it's a fun story, it doesn't really feel like authentic **Doctor Who** to me. But that's just my opinion. Maybe I should read it again!

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GRACE

UNDER PRESSURE

PRODUCER MARK WRIGHT BRINGS US UP TO SPEED ON THE ADVENTURES OF ABBY AND ZARA IN PREPARATION FOR THE RELEASE OF GRACELESS II

Now, first things first: you're in no way connected to Mark Wright from **The Only Way is Essex**, right?

■ I've actually been leading a triple life as a Big Finish writer, reality TV 'star' and a former Liverpool and England international football player for the last few years, so it's pretty exhausting. Actually, I think I should do a swap with the bloke from **TOWIE**, and he can come and write my next **Companion Chronicle**.

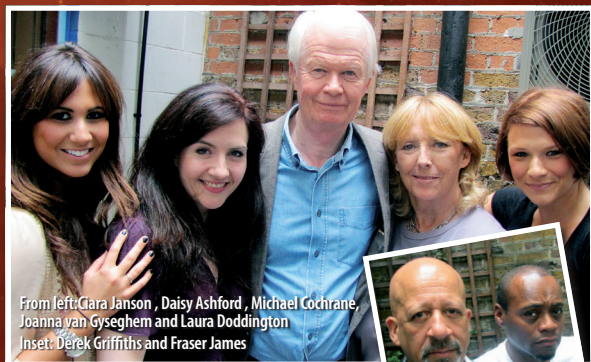
Graceless has gone down very well with the fans; to what do you attribute its success?

■ I think it's because we took people by surprise with it. When the series was first announced,

there was quite a negative reaction on some of the message boards. Why on earth were we doing it, why wasn't it a DI Menzies or Charley spin-off, this is one spin-off too far, how dare they! But when the series came out, it was so tonally different to anything else Big Finish was doing, the audience responded well. **Graceless** can be quite brutal and honest in places, and Simon Guerrier has done a terrific job in writing scripts that let you know that this really isn't **Doctor Who**. There's a scene in the first part of series one that is quite shocking (it has violent robots and lots of shouting), and that's where Simon set his stall out.

How did Abby and Zara need to change after the *Key 2 Time* trilogy so they could lead a whole series?

■ They needed to grow up. You couldn't have had a series based around two naive characters constantly asking questions about the nature of being human and living in this universe. They also needed to be made equals. In *Key 2 Time*, Zara was always ahead in a way, as she'd seen more, she'd killed a lot of people and was quite ruthless, whereas Abby was essentially there to be nice and help the Doctor. By giving Zara the pregnancy storyline, and having Abby destroy the Sphere in series one, it brings them closer together in their experiences. They each have an appreciation of what it's like to be the other, and that really set the momentum up that we're still running with in series two.



From left: Ciara Janson, Daisy Ashford, Michael Cochrane, Joanna van Gysegem and Laura Doddington
Inset: Derek Griffiths and Fraser James

Where do we find Abby and Zara at the start of **Graceless II**?

■ They're bombing around time and space in this unconventional family unit, as they have baby Joy with them now, and Joy's dad, Marek, is also along for the ride. They're helping people, trying to make amends for the wrongs they've both done. But they've made enemies along the way, enemies who will be looking for them throughout time, waiting for them to make a mistake.

What's in store for the girls as the series progresses?

■ In the first story, *The Line*, they arrive on an industrial planet which has a deep connection to Marek's past. Simon wanted to do a story that

focused on Marek, as we love working with Fraser James and we didn't really find out much about him in series one. This sets up themes of family and a desire to be rooted somewhere that runs through series two. In *The Flood*, the twins help out in a small coastal town that's being battered by rain and storms. The floodwaters are rising, but that isn't the only danger. There's something out in the ocean, and it wants something. I don't really want to say anything about *The Dark*, apart from the fact it's a terrific four-hander that ends up in a

very surprising place by the end.

How have Ciara and Laura approached the roles as the series has gone on?

■ It's been great to see how close as friends Ciara and Laura have become since they started playing these roles, and that's something that

they use in studio to give

their relationship as Abby and Zara a real lift. I honestly don't think it would work as well with two actresses who hadn't formed that bond away from the studio and the series. That totally informs the approach they take to playing the parts, and that filters down through the whole process, to Simon's scriptwriting and how Lisa is able to approach directing them.

You've got a fine array of guest stars this series; what were they like?

■ Just fantastic. It's one of the delights of working for Big Finish, getting the opportunity to work with these brilliant actors who I've admired for years. Even before Simon had written the first

words of *The Line*, he said he wanted Derek Griffiths for Golding, and thanks to Derek being a family friend of Ciara's, we got him. The man is a legend, and a brilliant actor – and very charming. For me, getting Michael Cochrane was a box ticked. I'm such a fan of **The Archers**, and am now starting a mission to work with as many cast members of the series as I can. But Michael was such a lovely presence in studio, bringing all that experience and warmth. We also had Joanna Van Gyseghem from **Duty Free** making her Big Finish debut, and Susan Brown returning. Both class acts who brought a great presence to the studio. And it's also not only about the well-known guest stars – we have brilliant people across the board, with the likes of John Banks, Daisy Ashford and Joseph Kloska bringing their experience to the series. I love working with Lisa Bowerman as a director, as the casting process for **Graceless** is always a treat. Lisa has a pretty big rolodex of actors, so that process of throwing names around of who we might like to get is always great fun. I've always had a good memory for actors, and so our conversations about casting become this brilliant game of names and faces – one actor mentioned will inevitably lead to another and another, and then the casting builds up from there. I'd known Lisa for years, but **Graceless** was the first time we ever worked together.

What's the best thing about producing **Graceless**?

■ Working with a brilliant bunch of people who are more than just colleagues. The **Graceless** family is actually quite closely knit. I met Ciara and

Laura at the Gallifrey convention a couple of years back when Simon and I were on this sort of American road trip (it's much less glamorous than it sounds), and we all bonded there, so it was great when **Graceless** came along and it seemed quite a natural fit for us all to work together, with Lisa coming on board as director to complete the team.

What other projects are you working on at the moment? Are you up for a third series of **Graceless**?

■ There are a few things keeping me busy at the moment, chief amongst them being the first of the new **Blake's 7** novels from Big Finish, with Cav Scott, which is such a brilliant thing to be asked to do. We also have new episodes of **Iris Wildthyme** going into studio at the end of the year and the beginning of next. I can't wait to be working with Katy Manning and David Benson again. Like **Graceless**, it's just too much fun to really consider it as work. Elsewhere, I've been helping out down at the *Doctor Who Magazine* offices pretty regularly, and I had my first stage play performed back in October (which coincidentally starred Braxiatel actor Miles Richardson's mother – there's always a connection somewhere along the way!). The plan is to write a new play next year, along with the usual rounds of pitching and magazine work that keeps me off the streets.

As for **Graceless III**, if the audience wants it, we'll do it. There is a story to be

resolved following the end of series two, so it would be rude not to... **VORTEX**

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