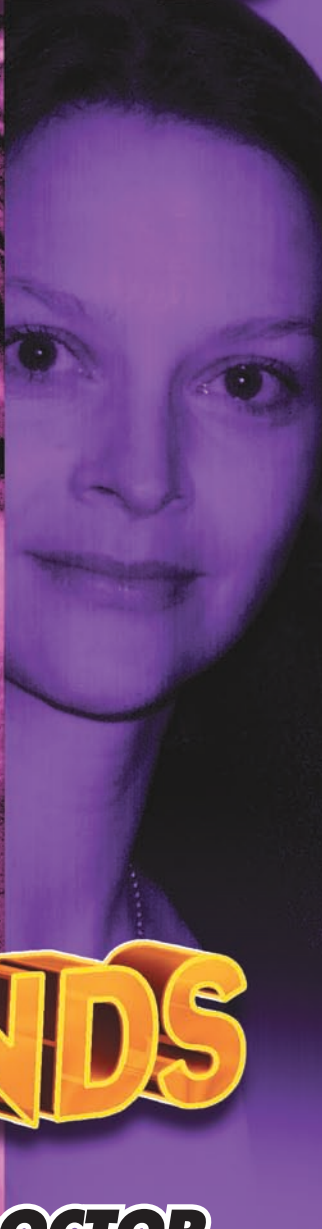


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ISSUE #5 **BIG**
JULY 2009 **FINISH**

VORTEX

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE



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EDITORIAL

Nick Briggs is having a baby right at this very minute. If that reason alone doesn't get him out of writing the *Vortex* editorial, I don't know what does. So it's me, David Richardson, filling in for one month only. It's eight am on a Saturday, and I'm bleary eyed after a few wonderful days in studio recording the January 2010 release of *Doctor Who*, which stars Sylvester McCoy. I'd love to go on about the story and the setting and the cast... but we'll reveal that soon. All I can say is that it was a very happy experience, and I got to cast and work with an actress I have admired for years. I love this job!

Anyway, here we are. In July. And it's out this month – the eagerly awaited *Company of Friends*, with Benny, Fitz, Izzy and Mary Shelley appearing on one CD. All four writers are interviewed in this issue but you can have your say on the *Vortex* letters page – drop us a line at Feedback@bigfinish.com.

This month also sees the return of *Dark Shadows*, with the latest audiobook *Echoes of Insanity*. There's been a gap between

releases - the last was a few months back – but the series is back with a vengeance, and there'll be another audiobook following very very soon. Plus producer Stuart Manning is locked away, honing four new scripts that will form the second season of full-cast stories. We don't have a release date yet sadly, but he assures us they will be into studio in America very soon and we'll make sure they are released just as soon as post-production has been completed.

Also out soon is the long-awaited *Bernice Summerfield: The Inside Story*, a massive 320-page book that explores the whole Benny phenomenon. With a raft of interviews and information about the 150 Benny stories told in different media, it's a treat for fans. We'll be taking the books to conventions during the Autumn, and Lisa Bowerman is coming along too to sign them. So hopefully see you at Regenerations in Swansea in September, where Lisa and I will be at the **Big Finish** table!

David Richardson – Producer

SNEAK PREVIEWS AND WHISPERS

Sherlock Holmes: The Last Act

The first of three confirmed, original *Sherlock Holmes* audio drama productions from Big Finish. It's an adaptation of the internationally acclaimed one-man stage play by David Stuart Davies (who is a renowned Holmes scholar and writer of several *Sherlock Holmes* novels) and stars Roger Llewellyn as Sherlock Holmes. Producer Nicholas Briggs takes up the story... 'Just by chance, I happened to see a performance of *The Last Act* a few months ago, not really knowing what to expect. I loved it. It's a fantastic play and Roger Llewellyn is superb in it. Somehow, he manages to bring to life a whole range of characters, including Holmes, naturally, along with Dr Watson, Moriarty, Inspector Lestrade and many, many more. I found it simply breathtaking! Only one thing distracted me from enjoying the play, and that was the growing feeling inside me that this would make a fantastic audio drama.' *The Last Act* will be followed, a month later, by the audio release of *Sherlock Holmes: The Death and Life* (David Stuart Davies's equally successful follow-up to *The Last Act*). Then, in January 2010, we'll be releasing the full-cast audio adaptation of the stage play *Holmes and the Ripper* by famous thriller writer Brian Clemens (yes, he of *The Avengers* fame!). Nick again... 'I was lucky enough to star in a production of this play last year at the Theatre Royal, Nottingham. Brian came along to see the play, and while having a drink with him and the cast afterwards, I mentioned the possibility of doing an audio adaptation. He agreed on the spot!' Nick's performance in the show garnered universally positive reviews, so it took just about half a second to persuade him to return to the role of Holmes for the audio adaptation. **SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE LAST ACT - AVAILABLE IN NOVEMBER**
SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE DEATH AND LIFE - AVAILABLE IN DECEMBER
HOLMES AND THE RIPPER - AVAILABLE IN JANUARY 2010

Doctor Who: The Lost Stories Paradise 5

Heading into studio just as this issue of *Vortex* is released, but not out until the start of 2010, PJ Hammond's *Lost Story* takes the Doctor and Peri to a luxury holiday resort where they are investigating the disappearance of an old friend. Hammond started work on the script in 1985, which was planned to be part of the *Trial of a Time Lord* season, but development was halted mid-way. Twenty-four years later Andy Lane has completed the story from the original scripts and notes, and Hammond is absolutely thrilled with the result. *P5* was originally scheduled to be seventh in the run, but we've moved it up to fifth place. "The *Macros*, by Ingrid Pitt and Tony Rudlin, was added at a relatively late stage," says producer David Richardson, "and it actually sits better towards the end of this 'season'. Plus, with *P5* now recording, it makes sense to get it out there as soon as possible!" **AVAILABLE IN JANUARY**



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THE PRISONER OF PELADON



Above: Nick Briggs, Nicola Bryant and David Troughton enjoy the sunlight before returning to the gloom of Peladon's citadel

Opposite page: Raxlyr loses his cool before King Peladon's stare. Nick Briggs and David Troughton fail to keep straight faces even at lunch



Companion Chronicles producer David Richardson recalls a day in the life of *The Prisoner of Peladon*

07:30 I'm walking to the station. The last time I did one of these articles, ice had disrupted my journey. Today is sunny sunny sunny. Everything feels good with the world.

10:00 The gang's all here. Nicola Bryant, the director. Mark Wright, the co-writer. David Troughton, who's playing King Peladon. And Nick Briggs, who's on his Ice Warrior duties today. We start the day by chatting about the script. Nicola reveals the level of detail of her research when she admits she has watched both of the TV *Peladon* stories, *The Seeds of Death* and listened to Jon Pertwee's audiobook reading of *The Curse of Peladon*. And she was in Big Finish's audioplay *The Bride of Peladon*. If she ever went on *Mastermind* with Peladon as a specialist subject, she'd win – no contest.

10:10 Into the sound booths, and we start on page one with the pre-titles sequence, and David's beautiful voice emerges from the speakers. It sounds fantastic. I sit in absolute admiration.

10:25 Nick Briggs's first scene of the day, playing Raxlyr. He chats with Nicola about how he plans to pitch his three Ice Warrior characters. Nicola wonders if the Grand Marshall should hiss because, from watching *The Seeds of Death*, she realizes Ice Warriors don't do that in their own atmosphere. "I'm in the presence of greatness," quips David. We record alternate versions and make the decision in post-production (in the end hissy won out, because we felt it's an important motif). Nick's Ice Warriors are, of course, excellent – brought to life with the same rich quality that he imbues in Daleks and Cybermen.

10:50 King Peladon is reunited with the Third Doctor, and David sells a very poignant moment. He nails Jon Pertwee's voice, and it sends a tingle down the spine. When he's congratulated on it, David jokes, "It'll get worse!"

12:00 We're at the end of episode one already. There's a quick discussion about something that's not quite working in the climax, and Mark does a little on-the-spot script tweak that solves the problem. "Oh, do you see?" says Nick. "All they've done is added two letters!"

12:15 Riotous out-takes. David accidentally refers to *Alfa Centauri*. Magic.

13:00 Lunch. Also magic. Alex Mallinson, Big Finish art designer, photographer and part-time actor arrives to take some pictures. Look – they're on this spread! Aren't they lovely?

14:15 Nick has found a recorder in his booth. In between takes, musical mayhem ensues.

15:00 Pick-ups for the voice of Alpha Centauri. David has a very deep voice with a beautiful timbre, and it's not suited to the high screech as created by Ysanne Churchman on TV. So our engineer, Toby, adds a nifty little pitch-bend effect that creates the right tone. Nick watches the recording and remarks, "I love the way you're bobbing up and down as you do the voice of Alpha Centauri!"

16:00 The interview. David recalls the recording of *The Curse of Peladon* back in 1972. Nicola discusses what it's been like directing her first **Doctor Who** story. Nick has his recorder confiscated. It's a wrap – and the end of another happy day at Big Finish.



BENNY'S STORY LANCE PARKIN

You first wrote for the Eighth Doctor and Benny in the Virgin novel *The Dying Days*. What do you remember of that?

Specifically about Benny that she was, essentially, the protagonist of the book. Virgin wanted to demonstrate that Benny could sustain a range... well, she's still here. It's weird to think, isn't it, that Benny's been around as long now as **Doctor Who** had been when he met Adric. So *The Dying Days* was asked to do a lot of things, and one of them was to act as a stealth **Benny** book – it didn't have a **Doctor Who** logo on the cover. Both Benny and the Eighth Doctor have evolved since then, but they're also both such distinctive voices. Both of them are very easy to write for, and you should never underestimate how important that is in a running series.

What brief did Alan Barnes give you when he approached you for Benny's episode of *The Company of Friends*?

I was approached by Eddie Robson, Benny's showrunner, and the brief was just to have Benny and the Eighth Doctor. We quickly agreed it would be Benny as she is in the current audio series. BF didn't want to tie it in too closely because they didn't want **Benny** fans to feel obligated to buy it, which is a refreshing change in this age of over-professionalised marketing.

It's a small cast of characters – are there any benefits or challenges in writing that way? Without giving too much away, you explore a bit of TARDIS mythos in this story. Is that an aspect that fascinates you? The main challenge for this story was to try to say something interesting in 25 minutes, in a story

that has to reunite the Doctor and Benny and deal with all that. So the problem wasn't a lack of characters, it was to remember to tell a story. Eddie and I were both very keen that this was an adventure, not just two characters sitting around and reminiscing. I needed a story that was very simple to understand, with a clear threat to the Doctor. I also needed to have Benny and the Doctor together and free to be actively involved in the story – not just have them tied up together in a cell or something. So threatening the TARDIS was a way to square that circle.

How would you describe the appeal of **Benny**? Nowadays, a lot of it is down to Lisa Bowerman. I love writing for Lisa, because I don't have to second guess or pussyfoot around – she'll make the funny bits funnier, the angry bits angrier, and she brings such thought and nuance to the performance, really cares about it. Sometimes, in a script, you have to put things like '(SARCASTIC)' or '(GENTLY)' to cue the actor... you don't have to worry about that with Lisa, she'll get it. What I like about Benny is that there's actually a little cruel streak in there. She's not at all fluffy. I think Benny's a lot like Nancy Botwin in **Weeds**, who gets away with saying and doing a lot of things basically only because she's so sassy.

And how would you say she fits with the Eighth Doctor?

Well... there's the same problem that the Superman/Batman team-ups always have. Superman can do so much, you have to negotiate a space for Batman. They tend to make Superman a bit stupider and less driven when he's around Batman, and that only weakens the character. Benny, now, is a Doctor substitute to a large extent – she goes around being smart and sarcastic and fighting monsters. So there's a real danger meeting the actual Doctor that she either reverts to 'companion' or the Doctor gets dialled down a little so Benny can keep up. In the end, the difference is that Benny is practical: her job is literally to get her hands dirty in order to understand things. The Doctor is slightly more abstracted. They're both smart and funny, I try to write it so that Benny's jokes are slightly more insecure and sharp.



FITZ'S STORY STEPHEN COLE

You created Fitz for the BBC novels. What do you remember of that process?

It's all a bit murky, actually. With 22 novel slots to fill each year, when a bit of plot invention that would have a big impact on the Eighth Doctor range came along – such as allowing companion Sam to push off and age three years or introducing Fitz as a new regular – I thought it would be useful to be more personally involved, to ensure key points were implemented as I wanted.

So I planned to do a Barry Letts/Robert Sloman thing and co-write, with my Robert Sloman equivalent being old university mucker Mike Collier. But real life got in the way and I ended up writing Sam out in *Longest Day* alone in horribly compromised circumstances (my fault, not Mike's). Anyway, Mike and Rebecca Levene and I would often go out for dinner and I asked them for input into new companion Fitz. Rebecca had lots of great ideas – we were going to make him a mixed-race GI at one stage – but eventually he came to life as a well-meaning but quite superficial young man in the 1960s. I had thought that Mike and I could co-write his first story *The Taint* as I had

a very clear idea of what I wanted to do with him, but again life got in the way and I wrote that one by myself too.

How would you describe the character?

Fitz, clearly rather like myself, was a bit dodgy. I thought of him as Vila crossed with Adam Faith. He was sexist, cowardly, lazy but also good-natured and creative, musical and fond of hiding behind other characters. I know a lot of the writers identified with bits of him, and I suspect the readership of the books must have too, as he lasted a good long time.

Were there any challenges in translating him for audio?

Not really, it was just lovely to be back with him.



Fitz's Story doesn't feature Anji – was that a conscious decision?

I wasn't going to mention her at all, as it's Fitz's story and Anji is hopefully a strong enough character to warrant a tale of her own someday! Alan asked me where Anji was, and I didn't want to do a 'studying graphology' excuse so tried to use her absence, at least vocally, as a plot point.

It's quite a comedic story. Was it your choice to take that route?

It just turned out that way. Perhaps it's simply my pleasure to be writing for him on audio spilling out into the plot. Plus, I was on holiday in Majorca when I was asked to turn round a storyline in a week

or so, so had to go to internet cafes and send over story ideas... So perhaps the sunshine informed me! A lot of the joy of Fitz is that he's this light, unreformed character; authors have taken him to some dark places in the books, but as an introductory story on audio I just wanted to highlight his engaging and humorous aspects.

How do you feel now the character has gained a new lease of life?

My tenure as **Doctor Who's** range editor was frantic and frustrating and exhausting. But I was pleased to have brought Fitz into the Doctor's world, and so I'm delighted the character now gets to star alongside the Eighth Doctor 'for real' 11 years on. I only hope I've done him justice.

THE COMPANY OF FRIENDS

The company of writers - Lance Parkin, Stephen Cole, Alan Barnes and Jonathan Morris - recall the development of the Eighth Doctor anthology **Doctor Who: The Company of Friends**



IZZY'S STORY ALAN BARNES

How did the idea of *The Company of Friends* come about?

The Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Doctors have all had a release made up of four 25-minute mini-adventures linked by a common theme – like *Forty Five*, or *100*. I just couldn't choose between Charley or Lucie as the companion, so I thought, 'Hang on – why don't we give him a different companion for each one?' It's not like the Eighth Doctor has had a shortage of companions over the years...

Was it difficult choosing which companions to include?

We gave some thought to using characters like Stacey and Ssard, from the *Radio Times* strip, but it had to be 'single' companions, really – it was a big enough ask to give one new character a fair shake in just 25 minutes' worth of drama. Also, bearing in mind the plays would have to assume no prior knowledge of these characters on the part of the listener, we didn't want companions who came with reams of complicated back-story attached. So we took a companion from each of the big Eighth Doctor canons: Bernice Summerfield, to follow on from the last of the *New Adventures*; Izzy from the *DWM* strip; for contrast, blokey Fitz from the BBC Eighth Doctor novels; and Mary Shelley, to represent to the audios. Way back in *Storm Warning*, I'd written in a reference to the Eighth Doctor's encounter with Mary Shelley, so finally we get to hear that adventure in full!

You created Izzy for *DWM*. What do you remember of that time?

Ah, the mid-1990s, when I was young and beautiful, and Things could Only Get Better. Izzy was very much of that moment – a Cool Britannia/geek chic sort of character, sunny and fun and so Out she's In. I struggled a bit to recapture her voice, but it all clicked back into place when I realised I'd have to write her as a period piece – a Britpop throwback, I guess!

It must have been interesting bringing her to life on audio.

To be honest, I ducked out of it initially – my natural instinct is never to go back, and I kind of wanted to do the Mary Shelley. I wanted Scott Gray to write the Izzy – Scott did such amazing things with her after I'd finished writing the strip, that I consider her as much

his creation as mine. But Scotty was too busy, and seeing as I was the only other person to have written the character, I was the only other choice! But I'm really glad I did it – Izzy's so funny and lively. Writing a character like that really brightens your day when you're a sour and miserable old Steptoe of a man...

How would you describe the story?

A sci-fi geek uncovers the dark underbelly of the British comics industry of the early 1980s... and lives to tell the tale! It's sort of an affectionate tribute to the comics I loved as a kid – you know, *2000 AD*, *Battle*, *Action*. But since I actually spent four years under Tharg the Mighty, as the editor of the *Judge Dredd Megazine*, I thought I could bring a little more than fannish nostalgia to the piece. More than that I'd best not say!

What did you think of the casting of Jemima Rooper?

She 'got' the character the second she spoke her first line, absolutely – walking the line between 'utterly adorable, give her a hug' and 'slightly irritating nerd' like she was born to play it!

Any thoughts on doing a *Company of Friends 2*?

Well, like I say, my natural instinct is never to go back, so left to my own devices, I'd have to say 'probably not'. I don't think we'd gain anything by going on to 'collect the set' of Eighth Doctor companions, as it were – we shouldn't be commissioning plays just to plug perceived gaps in the canon, we should always be looking for new things to do. But never say never – after all, it's not necessarily my call!



MARY'S STORY JONATHAN MORRIS

All of the companions in *The Company of Friends* are from books or comics. Except Mary Shelley. What's the story behind this?

The Alan Barnes masterplan. Ever since *Storm Warning* he's been dropping hints in his Eighth Doctor stories that the Doctor may have had a past encounter with Mary Shelley. Nothing explicit, just the odd cryptic clue here or there. It was Alan's idea to finally tell the story of this encounter, but as he was already busy with Izzy (!), he passed the brief over to me: Mary Shelley, the Villa Diodati, and Frankenstein.

How did you go about researching for your script?

I re-read *Frankenstein* in one of those editions where half the book is the story and the other half is telling you about the life of the author and the circumstances under which it was written. I read *The Vampyre*, the relevant sections of Polidori's diary and Byron and Shelley's greatest hits. What struck me about *Frankenstein* was how different it is from the films, which, it has to be said, do a much better job with the plot.

Is it quite daunting writing characters who actually existed as people?

I wouldn't say daunting. You have texts you can draw on, diaries, letters and so on... but it's important to try to make the characters feel like real, contemporary people. So while they might have nineteenth century dialogue, I based the characters on people I knew at university; in particular, those trust-funded English literature students who would talk demonstratively in pubs and try to be terribly bohemian all the time.

Listening to *Mary's Story*, it seems as though you were having a ball writing this script. Is that the case?

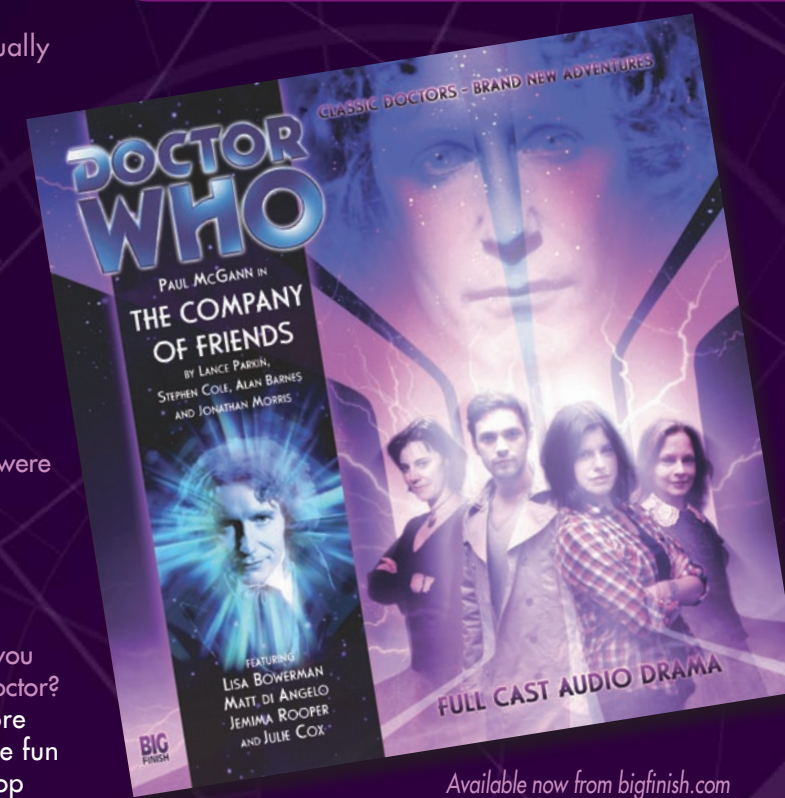
I'm glad it gives that impression. I enjoyed the gothic melodrama and all the grisliness – and introducing a new companion, of course...

This is just the start of Mary's story. Does it leave you eager to show more of her adventures with the Doctor? It would be lovely if people wanted to hear more stories with her, but perversely it might be more fun to keep her as an unknown quantity, just to drop

hints occasionally. It's always good, I think, to be left wanting more, to feel that you haven't quite been given the whole story.

Any final thoughts?

At last the moment we've all been waiting for: the Byronic Doctor meets Lord Byron. You can't afford to miss it!



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UPCOMING RELEASES

JULY

- Doctor Who – The Company of Friends (1.23, Eighth Doctor/Benny/Fitz/Izzy/Mary Shelley)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – The Scapegoat (3.5)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Drowned World (4.1, Sara Kingdom)
- Bernice Summerfield – Absence (10.2)
- Stargate SG-1 – Pathogen (2.3)
- Highlander – Kurgan Rising (1.4)
- Dark Shadows - Echoes of Insanity (1.8)

SEPTEMBER

- Doctor Who – Paper Cuts (1.25, Sixth Doctor/Charley)
- Doctor Who – Blue Forgotten Planet (1.26, Sixth Doctor/Charley)
- Big Finish Magazine 14 (Doctor Who subscribers only)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – The Eight Truths (3.7)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Prisoner of Peladon (4.3, King Peladon)
- Bernice Summerfield – Secret Origins (10.4)
- Stargate SG-1 – Lines of Communication (2.5)

NOVEMBER

- Doctor Who – The Eternal Summer (1.28, Fifth Doctor/Nyssa in Stockbridge)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – The Nightmare Fair (1.1)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – Ringpullworld (4.5, Turlough)
- Cyberman 2 (Box set)
- Judge Dredd: The Crime Chronicles – Blood Will Tell (1.2)
- Sherlock Holmes: The Last Act

JANUARY

- Doctor Who – TBA (1.30)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Leviathan (1.3)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (4.6, TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (4.7, First Doctor)
- Judge Dredd: The Crime Chronicles – Double Zero (1.4)

MARCH

- Doctor Who – TBA (1.32)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Paradise 5 (1.5)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (4.9, Third Doctor)

AUGUST

- Doctor Who – Patient Zero (1.24, Sixth Doctor/Charley)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – The Cannibals (3.6)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Glorious Revolution (4.2, Jamie)
- Bernice Summerfield – Venus Mantrap (10.3)
- Bernice Summerfield – The Inside Story (Book)
- Stargate Atlantis – The Kindness of Strangers (2.4)
- Dark Shadows – Curse of the Pharaoh (1.9)

OCTOBER

- Doctor Who – The Castle of Fear (1.27, Fifth Doctor/Nyssa in Stockbridge)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – Worldwide Web (3.8)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Pyralis Effect (4.4, Romana II)
- Stargate Atlantis – Meltdown (2.6)
- Judge Dredd: The Crime Chronicles – Stranger Than Truth (1.1)

DECEMBER

- Doctor Who – Village of the Damned (1.29, Fifth Doctor/Nyssa in Stockbridge)
- Doctor Who – An Earthly Child (Subscribers to main range only, Eighth Doctor and Susan)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – Death in Blackpool (Christmas Special)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Mission to Magnus (1.2)
- Iris Wildthyme – The Claws of Santa (Christmas Special)
- Judge Dredd: The Crime Chronicles – The Devil's Playground (1.3)
- Sherlock Holmes – The Death and Life
- Bernice Summerfield – Secret Histories (Book)

FEBRUARY

- Doctor Who – TBA (1.31)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – The Hollows of Time (1.4)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (4.8, Second Doctor)

APRIL

- Doctor Who – TBA (1.33)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Point of Entry (1.6)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (4.10, Fourth Doctor)

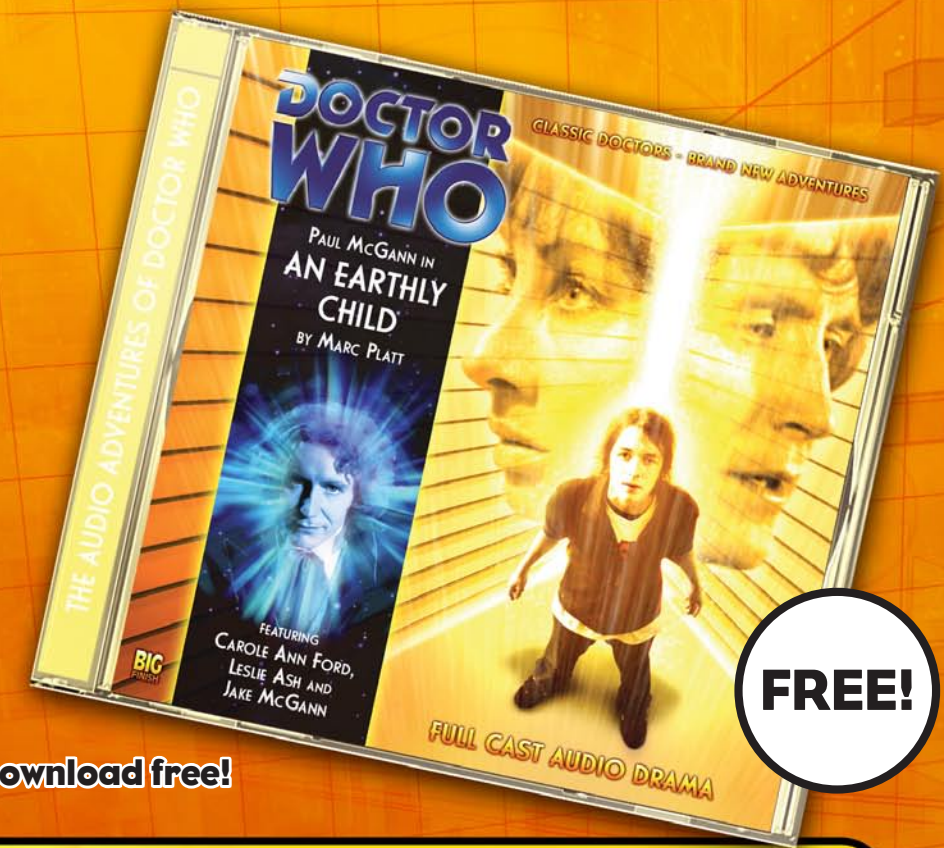
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**BIG
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FAIRS FAYRE



Photo © Matt Jones

The multi-talented Nigel Fairs has worked for Big Finish as producer, writer, director, actor, sound designer and musician. **Vortex** asks him about his latest projects – including post-production on this month's **Dark Shadows** release: *Echoes of Insanity*.

What does the sound design job on **Dark Shadows** specifically involve?
I receive the dialogue recordings from the States and edit them. The dialogue edit is rather a long-winded business on the Big Finish 'talking books' format, as it involves fiddly things like separating out the reported dialogue from the narration ("he said" and so on) and giving it a different ambience. This kind of separation usually only happens in 'run of the mill' audio drama if one of the voices is a monster! It was an option not to do this but I think that in the long run it's worth the extra effort as the final product sounds more layered and interesting.

Then I add in the spot effects (coffin doors opening, necks snapping, etc!) and the background ambience, which usually takes about a week, and finally compose the music, which usually takes a fortnight. As in **The Tomorrow People** (and to a lesser extent in **Sapphire and Steel**) I am building up a collection of 'character themes', which I can draw on as the characters reappear in each other's stories.

Where have you been creating and sourcing your effects from?
In my office and occasionally in my kitchen! Celery makes a splendid broken bone noise and my neighbours are often bemused to hear me howling at the moon during the afternoons!

Your first **Dark Shadows** project was last year. I understand the whole franchise was quite new to you. What did you think of it?
To be honest, I still haven't seen an original episode, but I'm enjoying the CDs very much. They're extremely atmospheric, well-written scripts and beautifully read. I think I was lucky with *The Skin Walkers* (my first one) as it was very **Interview with the Vampire**, quite gothic; just my cup of tea!

What have been the specific challenges of *Echoes of Insanity*?
Echoes of Insanity is a curious beast. It's rather like *The Wicked and the Dead* in that there's a surreal quality to some of the exchanges, calling for some pretty bizarre ambiances and music. But there are some lovely flashback sequences which I've gone to town on – the scenes in Jamaica and Tokyo are my favourites.

The music has been a particular challenge. The producer, Stuart, sends me some 'sample tracks' for inspiration as to the tone of the incidentals for each release, which is very useful indeed. Unfortunately I misinterpreted one of these and produced an 'angry Angelique' theme that he didn't like at all! I'd spent a whole day composing it and was so pleased with it that I bunged it in several times... then I had to remove it and spent another day composing an alternative, which is hopefully better! Nothing is ever wasted, though. Something similar happened on *The Wicked and the Dead* and that particular musical sequence ended up appearing briefly on the **Jamie Companion Chronicle** I edited earlier this year!

Do you enjoy the fact that **Dark Shadows** shares some of the mystery and surreal qualities of **Sapphire and Steel**?
Definitely, yes.

It's well over a year since you finished working on **Sapphire and Steel** – what do you miss most about that project?
Without a shadow of a doubt, it's working with David [Warner] and Susie [Harker]. I really miss them very much, as I also miss my **Tomorrow People** family. I've been involved in almost every part of the production process at Big Finish on various projects, and the one I enjoy most is the studio day. Working with creative people face to face, eating lunch with them, being inspired by them. Everything else is really a rather lonely occupation.

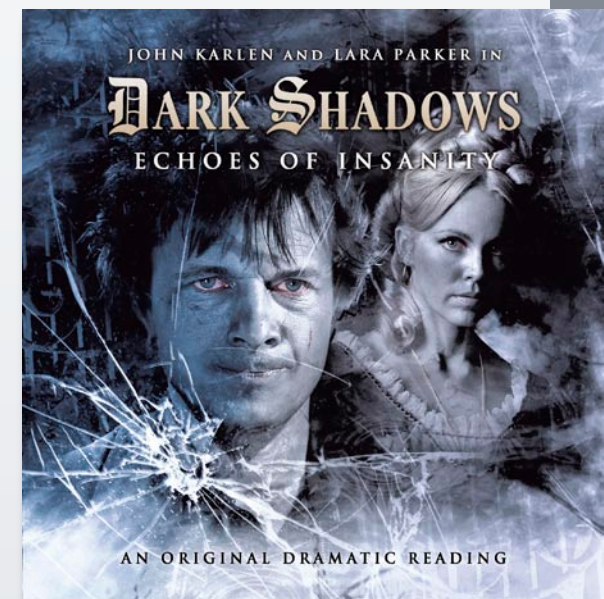
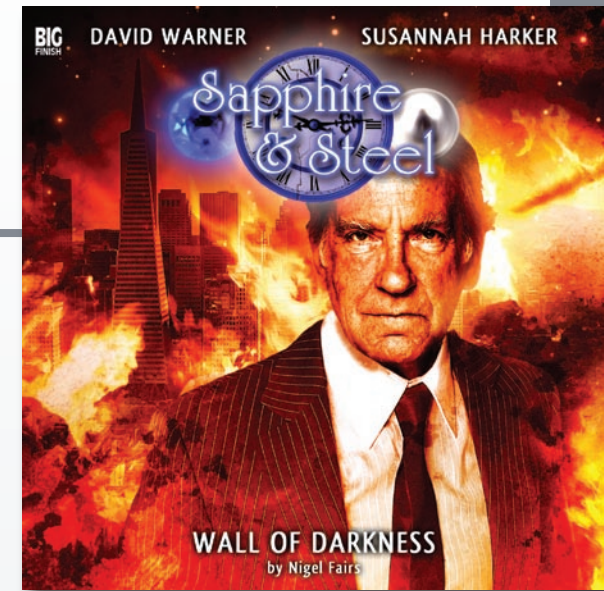
Which **Sapphire and Steel** stories are you most proud of?
Daisy Chain, because it really took the audio series in a new and refreshing direction and also played a small role in setting Joe Lidster on his amazing career. *Cruel Immortality* because of the quality of cast and Alistair Lock's superb production values. *Mystery of the Missing Hour* because it makes me laugh and episode four is chilling. *Wall of Darkness* because I think it was my best script for the series. And it had Louise Jameson in it!

You're also doing the sound design and music on **Doctor Who: The Lost Stories** – *The Hollows of Time*. Have you had fun recreating the 1980s?
I think it's a chillingly accurate recreation of everything Eighties. And I have enjoyed creating the 'Gravis moo'.

You've written two **Companion Chronicles** for Leela. What was that experience like?
Working with and for Louise Jameson is always a joy and I'll always be grateful for Big Finish for introducing me to her. The first time I saw her work was on **Doctor Who** so it's been lovely to try to recreate the 'Hinchcliffe' Leela, though it's her theatre work that I've found most inspiring over the years. She's a consummately professional actress with a fantastic eye for detail. I was lucky enough to devise and direct the first production of her Drama College in Tunbridge Wells and this summer I'm achieving another lifetime ambition by acting on stage with her in a Shakespeare anthology. So yes, thank you BF!

And can we expect a third Leela story?
Yes, I'm writing it at the moment. I asked [Louise] if there was anything she wanted Leela to do and she answered immediately, 'Make her...' and that's where I'll stop. I don't want to spoil things. But if you listen to it and don't like it, it's Lou's fault, not mine!

Echoes of Insanity is out this month.



Joining Nigel are David Warner and Susannah Harker as elemental investigators **Sapphire & Steel**

NOT WAVING...

Author Simon Guerrier takes us through the process of writing this month's new *Companion Chronicle* featuring 1965 TARDIS crew member Sara Kingdom.



28 November 2008

Two weeks to the day after *Home Truths* is released, producer David Richardson emails me. 'Okay Guerrier... what's your availability for writing like? I want another Sara Kingdom *Companion Chronicle* out of you. Jean Marsh has already agreed to do it. I'm after outer space sci-fi this time – Sara Kingdom in action mode, wielding her rifle. What d'ya reckon?'

I'm too busy larking about at a *Doctor Who* convention in Chicago to answer. So David rings me to check I've got his message. I scribble some ideas in my notebook on the plane back to London.

3 December

I send David my ideas. There are five possible framing sequences (in which an older, somehow-not-dead Sara Kingdom tells a story from her time with the Doctor), and four stories she could tell. David wants framing sequence one, the direct sequel to *Home Truths* in which

another inquisitor comes to the house in Ely. 'In fact, let's bring back Niall [McGregor] as Robert...'

He's less sure about the story ideas. 'How about one set in London in the 1960s, an *Avengers* pastiche. Sara K as Mrs Peel! Sorry, I'm changing the brief as I go. But I rather like that now I've thought of it!'

I respond with a daft *Avengers* idea I've had for ages. David doesn't like it. Instead he wants my first idea, a base-under-siege story set in a mine in outer space, with jelly-like aliens that would be all wet-sounding. 'But I really want Sara in action mode. Think Ripley, Sarah Connor.'

4 December

I send David my first outline, called *Mined Out*. 'It's an action story, but I'd like to make it more like *Apollo 13* than *Aliens*, with Sara having to use her brains as well as her gun. I'm really thinking of the TV address recorded by Richard Nixon but never broadcast had something gone wrong with Apollo 11, and Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed on the moon safely but got stuck there. That eerie sense of clever people struggling against the brutal, unyielding mechanics.'

David likes this but makes a few comments – 'No mention of jelly monsters please' – and confirms that Niall McGregor will be back as Robert.

We discuss details over the next few days. David wants me to up Robert's role in the story and to make the Doctor more integral. He also asks why the TARDIS can't translate the not-jelly monsters' speech.

11 December

I send David a rough outline for the story, incorporating our discussions. He's worried about a reference to a plague killing Robert's people. 'Let's avoid dying children. Always dodgy ground for *Doctor Who*.' I suggest the sickness makes people sleep – for ever, like in a fairy tale.

The same day I send a fuller synopsis, now called *The Drowned World* after a novel by the great JG Ballard. David points out it's also the name of Madonna's 2001 tour.

17 December

Script editor Jacqueline Rayner likes my proposal, so it's sent to the BBC for approval. The team in Cardiff approves it the same day. David issues my contract with a deadline of 4 February.

31 January

My Facebook update: 'Simon Guerrier worries he's gone more creepy than action-adventure. But otherwise he is happy.'

1 February

I send David the first draft. 'As before, I've called her "Sarah" in the dialogue 'cos that's how it's pronounced.' The next day – working from home because of the snow – David lets me know he's read and liked the script, but feels the Doctor still isn't involved enough, especially in the resolution.

3 February

I send back a revised version before heading off to California. "'Miner role', I explain, 'is intended as a cameo by that famous actor, er, me.' 'Are you in Equity?' asks David.

15 February

Jac Rayner makes helpful comments. My opening scene – explaining the events of and since *Home Truths* – needs to be clearer and my tenses are sometimes muddled. David also still worries about the Doctor's role. I'm at the GallifreyOne convention in Los Angeles at the time, checking my email before the closing ceremonies. 'This seems fine,' I say. 'I'll get on it once I'm back in London.' 'No,' commands David. 'I want you to do the rewrite WHILE YOU ARE ON STAGE.'

23 February

I send a third version to David, who still wants the Doctor brought more to the fore in part two. I send a revised version to him the same day – he's happy, and sends it for approval to Jac.

6 March

The new issue of *Doctor Who Magazine* announces *The Drowned World*. By neat coincidence there's also a feature by Andrew Pixley on Terry Nation's never-made spin-off Dalek television series. It would have starred Sara Kingdom, perhaps played by Jean Marsh.

7 March

I help out on the Big Finish stall at the Timequest convention in Barking. Two of my customers are Amy Hutchinson and Tracie Cowell. We've not met before but they said such nice things online about my *Key 2 Time* plays I've made them characters in *The Drowned World*. Jason and David ask them to rate my writing... on a scale from 'Not that good' to 'Atrocious'.

Then, bizarrely, my friend John Keefe rings from America just to say hello. He also has his name in the script.

14 March

Jac Rayner has a brilliant idea for improving the end of part one. I provide a new version the next day. 'I've also gone through the whole thing again, and made a couple of tweaks – mostly to the stage directions – to keep the word count down.' But Jean Marsh has already been issued with her script, so I undo the tweaks to her dialogue. That's it, though: the script is finished.

16 March

David confirms the recording for 26 March, and wants me for 09.45.

26 March

My Facebook update: 'Had to die twice on *The Drowned World*. Bar me, it went magnificently.' Jean Marsh applauds my 'Miner role', but they all shake their heads in despair at my geekiness when I explain the stage direction 'All "Blue Veils and Golden Sands"'.
I interview cast and director for the CD extras. And forget to ask Niall McGregor and Lisa Bowerman about working with Matt Smith. Sorry. But that's it – all done. David won't be drawn on whether there'll be a Sara 3 Kingdom. But he's got an idea for what I might write next...



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...BUT DROWNING

Another helping of your letters is plated up and thrust before Executive Producer Nick Briggs for him to digest and... actually, perhaps that metaphor had best be left unfinished.

Dear Big Finish,

I recently purchased the download version of the **Companion Chronicle** *Home Truths*, which, incidentally, I enjoyed very much. I've recently decided, though, that I simply cannot do without the actual shiny CD, so have subscribed to the next season of the **Chronicles** on CD.

My question is whether there is any discount on purchasing the CD version if one has already bought the download? Is there an 'Upgrade to CD' option available?

Also, on an entirely unrelated note, I'd like to ask if there is any chance of hearing more from the excellent and talented Oliver Mellor. I think he'd make a fantastic new companion for the Sixth Doctor, as and when Charley Pollard bows out. There's not been any opportunity to investigate the dynamic of a Sixth Doctor/male companion before. The Sixth Doc always seems either avuncular or old-married-couple with his companions. It would be lovely to hear him and a friend just having a laugh around the universe. Hex works well with the Seventh Doctor, but he's a little overshadowed by the strong rapport between Sylvester and Sophie.

Very best wishes,
Jon Way

That's an interesting point about 'upgrade to CD', Jon. That option is not available, nor is it commonly available from other suppliers. And no one else has asked for this. People generally buy a CD first then want access to a download, which is why we offer a free download with every CD bought via our website. I suppose there comes a point when you have to judge what you think is fair, and that's always tricky. I mean, you could say what you're asking for is like someone buying a paperback book, then expecting money off when they decide they want to buy the hardback! Thanks for the Oliver Mellor reminder. He is a fine actor, and we really must employ him again. I met him while working on the TV series, when he was playing one of Freema's office mates! Yes, must get him back... not sure what role, though... Hmm...

I just wanted to express my appreciation for *The Mahogany Murderers*. It is a thoroughly entertaining play and Andy Lane has

beautifully captured the characters. I heartily agree that Jago and Litefoot should be given their own spin-off series. (I always thought The Doctor and Leela should have stayed on in that locale for a whole series.) Please pass my regards on to Andy Lane. I loved his **New Adventures** books too.

Henrik Hansen

Thanks, Henrik. Consider your regards passed on. We loved this adventure. There are no firm plans for a series featuring Jago and Litefoot as yet.

I bought season two of **The Eighth Doctor Adventures** at the Army of Ghosts convention last Sunday. I've just finished *Grand Theft Cosmos*. Just a quick email to say I'm absolutely delighted with the season so far. Sheridan Smith rocks. I know this is a bit cheeky but is there any chance of a signed photo of Sheridan?

Thank you.

David Campbell

We think Sheridan Rocks too, David. I'm afraid we can't open the floodgates to sending out signed photos of any of our companions or guest stars. That's a whole other business! Sorry to disappoint, but I'm glad you're enjoying her performance. She is a remarkable actress and incredibly rewarding to work with. And she loves playing Lucie! She jokes that she'd still like to be playing her when she's old enough to need a zimmer frame.

Hi, I've really enjoyed the **Sapphire & Steel** CDs, I've got all the seasons. Are there any plans to do any more?

Thanks,
Steve

Sorry to say that there are currently no plans for new **Sapphire and Steel** adventures. The sales had fallen quite considerably and we are currently concentrating on new projects such as **Stargate** and **Highlander**.

I really enjoyed *Phantom of the Opera*. Are you planning any more, as there is only so much **Doctor Who** I can listen to. Original productions of Edgar Allan Poe, Rider Haggard, Sax Rohmer, etc may be a possibility.

Best wishes
Adam Fronteras

Glad you like *Phantom*. Our productions rely entirely on sales to fund them, and although

we all acknowledged that it was a great piece of work by Barnaby Edwards, it just didn't sell enough to warrant doing more full-cast classic adaptations. We are constantly reviewing our position on this, though, because we would dearly love to do more. In the meantime, you may enjoy the **Sherlock Holmes** audios we'll be releasing from November this year.

Really enjoying the new Eighth Doctor season, downloading and getting the CDs, and was just wondering when *Death in Blackpool* will be available for pre-ordering and also to ask will there be a fourth season?

Thanks for all the hours of enjoyable listening.
David Goodram

Death in Blackpool will be available as the first release of the fourth season of new **Eighth Doctor adventures**. That season should be available for pre-order before the end of the year.

Hope you are all well at Big Finish Towers and can take two minutes to answer this quick, but convoluted, question. My **Doctor Who** 12-CD subscription is due to be renewed around November/December. Now, as this is a busy time of the year credit card wise, if I renewed my subscription early (eg in August/September) to begin with the November or December release, when would I be billed?

On a personal note can I say that all your current **Doctor Who** and related ranges are amongst the best BF have ever produced, keep up the good work.

Thanks and regards,
Andy Wellock
PS: Love the Podcasts & Voorrteeeexx.

As far as I'm aware, you will be billed immediately you made the order, and your subscription would be extended accordingly. Thanks for your praise of the **Doctor Who** ranges. Big Finish has a great team of people who work extremely hard on every release. From script, to studio, to post-production, music, mastering and the CD booklet, each release represents a long, meticulous process of making sure we keep the quality as high as possible. My job is to oversee all this, but I'd particularly like to praise our directors, Ken Bentley and Barnaby Edwards, our script editor, Alan Barnes, all our cover and sound designers, Paul Spragg for his endless labours on booklet layout and David Richardson for his tireless work in making sure everything gets done. I thangyew!

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BARNABY EDWARDS

Big Finish polymath Barnaby Edwards chats to *Vortex* about adapting and directing *The Phantom of the Opera*.

Why did you pick *Phantom of the Opera* to kick off the Big Finish Classics range?

Because I wanted to start the series off with a bang. Gaston Leroux published *Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* exactly 100 years ago and not a single adaptation during the intervening century has come close to doing justice to his tale of mystery, madness, music and murder. Vast swathes of plot are skipped over, characters omitted and motivations altered – to say nothing of the complete elimination of Gaston Leroux's meticulous musical quotations.

The remit of *Big Finish Classics* is to produce full-cast audios of classic novels which have never been properly adapted before. You couldn't hope for a better first title than *The Phantom of the Opera*: everyone thinks they know it, but no one really does. And it's hard to think of a story more perfectly suited to the audio medium: disembodied voices, operatic arias, ghostly violins. It was the perfect story to launch with.

What makes this *Phantom* different to all the other interpretations?

Plenty. I believe there are over fifty elements in this adaptation that have never – and I mean never – been faithfully rendered in any other version of the story. To list but a few: the iron torture chamber, the Indian lasso, the rat attack, the siren of the lake, the story of the sultan's wife, the mysterious Persian, the bronze scorpion and grasshopper, the wine barrels, the underground flood gates, the death bed confession, the golden ring.

And then there's the music. No one has ever gone to the trouble of using the specific arias and musical quotations mentioned in the original novel – until now. Leroux didn't put them in by accident: he chose his pieces very specifically because he wanted his readers to summon up a mental soundtrack in their heads as they read his story. It's only when you hear the exact phrase of Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* – which the Phantom sings to woo Christine – that you can truly understand how bewitching and irresistible his seduction technique is! This is the first – and only – adaptation to use the musical quotations mentioned in the original text.

How important was the music to the production?

Of paramount importance. But don't think this is a musical: it isn't. Forget Andrew Lloyd Webber. This is a drama which just happens to involve some music. The story is, after all, set in an opera house and concerns a composer wooing an opera singer. It would be weird if it didn't involve music. There are perhaps ten extracts from various operas – all freshly recorded for this production by Tim Sutton and two talented singers from the English National Opera and Opera Diva – plus the novel's famous *Death of Lazarus* violin theme, performed by the wonderful Ruth Rogers. These are integrated into the action, just as they are in the novel. For those of a nervous disposition, let me assure you that you will not be hearing any of the actors bursting into song. The actors act; the singers sing.

On top of this, Tim Sutton composed the most sumptuous incidental music for the story. It is impossible to underplay Tim's contribution to *The Phantom of the Opera*.

What challenges did you encounter that you haven't making *Doctor Who*?

I would say recording the operatic arias, but since that was largely left to Tim Sutton and Toby Hrycek-Robinson at the Moat studios, it would be presumptive of me to claim it as 'my' challenge. In terms of the writing, the biggest challenge was how to turn what is largely an epistolary novel – made up of letters, newspaper articles, diary entries and so on – into a drama with dialogue and action. Leroux has the story narrated by someone with access to all the correct documents, but he doesn't name the narrator. I chose to make my narrator the one character in the story who might legitimately have access to all that information: Madame Giry. She's worked as concierge at the Opera House longer than anyone else, knows the performers, the backstage crew and the managers. She also, critically, is the only character who is befriended by the Phantom. And once I knew I had Anna Massey on board – she signed up before I'd even put pen to paper – everything else fell into place.

Who surprised you with their performance?

The new boy, James D'Arcy. I knew and admired him from his impressive film and television credits – hence my reason for casting him – but I think I was unprepared for quite how dazzlingly good an actor he is. Raoul is a terribly difficult role to pull off, especially since I had written the part to be as true to Leroux's original as possible: a hero who is by turns arrogant, charming, impulsive, loyal, violent, manipulative, brave and stupid. James nailed every single nuance with pinpoint accuracy.

But all the cast were on top form: Anna Massey's witty Madame Giry, Peter Guinness's seductive Phantom, Helen Goldwyn's pristine Christine, Alexander Siddig's mysterious Persian, Tony Millan's bumptious Moncharmin, Richard Earl's dry Monsieur Richard, Nick Wilton's bumbling Detective Mifroid, Geraldine Newman's querulous Madame Valérius, Nick Brimble's noble Philippe de Chagny, Samantha Hughes's monstrous La Carlotta and Nicola Weeks's excitable Meg Giry.

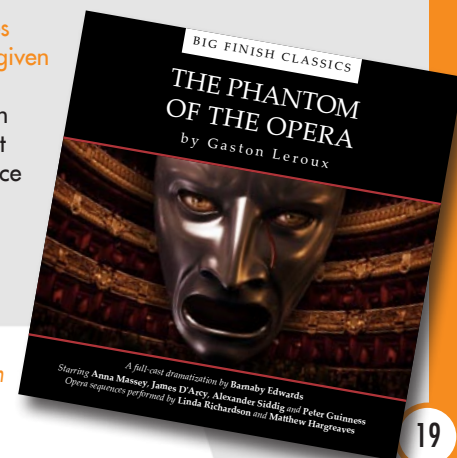
How would you pitch the play to our *Doctor Who* fan listeners? What's in it for them?

What's NOT in it for them?! *Phantom* has it all: adventure, romance, excitement, horror, music, comedy, murder. If you're the sort of fan who likes their *Doctor Who* dark, rich and gothic, then you'll love *The Phantom of the Opera*. Also, if you enjoy Big Finish *Doctor Who*, then you'll appreciate the familiar cast, sound designer, composer, writer and director.

Which other classic stories would you like to adapt, given the chance?

Jules Verne, Arthur Conan Doyle, HG Wells... the list is endless. In every instance I'd like to go back to the original novel and bring it to life faithfully and excitingly for a new generation of listeners.

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David Richardson on...
Being Human

I missed Toby Whithouse's monster flatshare drama on its original airing, but recently caught up on glorious Blu-ray – and it looks magnificent in HD. Funny and scary, sad and uplifting, it shares themes with *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in that it makes the impossible believable, which shining a mirror up to us humdrum humans. And Jason Watkins – our White Guardian from the *Key 2 Time* stories – makes a fabulous villain.

Nick Briggs on...
The Beiderbecke Affair (ITV 1985)

The first of three great series starring James Bolam and Barbara Flynn up to some quirky, seemingly pointless antics regarding a school, a man called Big Al (whose office is an allotment shed), an obsessive graduate police detective and a load of Bix Beiderbecke LP records. There is, of course, more to it than meets the eye, but this slice of deceptively gentle comedy drama with a biting satirical undercurrent is a pure delight for me. The pace is beautifully sedate and the script is one of many examples of pitch-perfect work by Alan Plater. One of the particular joys of this series is that it contains, sadly, one of the last television performances by the truly great Colin Blakely, who, as the constantly exasperated police superintendent, delivers lines like, 'Sling your hook, but I may want to shout at you again later' to perfection. I will shortly be moving on to *The Beiderbecke Tapes* and *The Beiderbecke Connection*.

Alan Barnes on...
Strike

I'm sorry, I can't supply my Team Twitter entry this month. No work in Wimbledon fortnight! Some might say that I'm on a hiding to nothing attempting to persuade *Doctor Who* fans of the joys of watching what is, fundamentally, sport – but hey: Whoies and tennis fans alike can't wait to get out of the brilliant sunshine, go home, pull the curtains and boggle blearily at the telly for hour after hour, can they? At the time of writing there's another

13 full days to go, by the end of which I'm going to be bleached white, like a vampire, unable to speak in sentences that don't include phrases like 'backhand down the line' and 'forehand cross-court volley'. Now – if you'll excuse me – there's doubtless a galumphing British trier about to break down against a sleek Hungarian robot. Oh, I say!

Jason Haigh-Ellery on...
Slings and Arrows (Three Seasons) (2003-5)

All the fun of the stage is here in the best thing to come out of Canada since maple syrup... Having turned mad and run away in the middle of a performance of *Hamlet*, renowned actor Geoffrey Tennant returns to the New Burbage Theatre Festival, where he had his greatest triumph and most humiliating failure, to assume the artistic directorship after the sudden death of his mentor, Oliver Welles. However, he didn't expect Oliver to still be there as a ghost that only he can see. With Oliver's help Geoffrey attempts to reconcile with his past while wrestling the festival back from the brink of failure. With a bitter leading lady, a clueless leading man and a scheming general manager, he chooses to return to the play that caused the damage in the first place – and stage a new version of *Hamlet*. Wonderful!

Barnaby Edwards on...
The Pianist

Wladyslaw Szpilman's memoirs of life in the Warsaw ghetto during the Second World War make for grim reading, and yet there is something curiously uplifting about this tale of survival against all the odds. Many people will be familiar with the story from Roman Polanski's Oscar-winning film, but the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester has just staged a breathtaking adaptation featuring a piano, a chair and two performers: musician Mikhail Rudy and actor Peter Guinness, familiar to thousands of Big Finish listeners from his performances in *The Holy Terror*, *The Beast of Orlok* and *The Phantom of the Opera*. It was simple, moving and utterly riveting. Now, how do we get the audio rights...?

Toby Hrycek-Robinson on
Derek Bailey and the Story of Free Improvisation by Ben Watson

After the wailing at being left without TV, phone and internet for 10 days (and counting) subsided, in joyous tranquility I read a hugely enjoyable biography of my dear and departed friend Derek Bailey. Am I irrevocably Luddite to wish the infernal internal alarm clock insisting I check my email every two or three hours to go to indefinite snooze? Reading, listening, eating, breathing – all seem better without the constant presence of modern communication. And after a short bike ride, even junk mail seems agreeable with a mug of tea among the bizarre inhabitants of my local internet café. I must change ISP more often!

Paul Spragg on...
Psychoville

I had the good fortune to see the first two episodes of the new comedy series from *The League of Gentlemen's* Reece Shearsmith and Steve Pemberton at the BFI recently, and now it's arrived on TV. Incredibly blackly comic (Shearsmith didn't want anyone to describe it as 'dark') but tightly plotted in a way the *League* never really was, it's both disturbing and hilarious, often at the same time. Sinister characters such as Pemberton's Lomax, Shearsmith's Mr Jelly and Dawn French's Joy are amongst the many highlights, and there's even a beautifully crafted online mystery to be solved if you pay close attention to on-screen clues. Like nothing else on TV, and all the better for it. And look out for episode four's *Rope* pastiche, featuring only two characters.

Alex Mallinson on...
Transformers 2

I've finally managed to divest myself of the need to watch a film with a coherent plot, compelling characters and palpable emotion and replaced it with the desire only to see massive robots punch each other while huge explosions go off. There's a guilty joy in seeing millions of dollars spent on what is basically Toymageddon so that my inner child can chortle in savage glee.

Team Twitter

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