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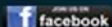
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SNEAK PREVIEWS AND WHISPERS

THE AVENGERS



The Avengers ran for six seasons and 160 episodes on TV, yet strangely very little is known about its beginnings... Of the twenty-six-episode first year, only two whole episodes and the first act of the opening story still exists. For too long, the origins of **The Avengers** have remained a secret...

Until now. Big Finish has a licence from StudioCanal to make faithful audio adaptations of surviving scripts, and in January 2014 Volume 1 of **The Avengers: The Lost Episodes** will introduce Julian Wadham as John Steed and Anthony Howell as Dr David Keel – two actors who fit the iconic roles perfectly.

That first volume includes the first three televised episodes – *Hot Snow*, *Brought to Book* and *Square Root of Evil* – plus a fourth yet to be announced, with guest stars including Colin Baker, Sophie Aldred, Blake Ritson, Adrian Lukis, Camilla Power and Alan Cox.

Bowler hats at the ready – it's an exciting new era for Big Finish!

EDITORIAL

Secrets are fun, aren't they? I don't mean hideous dark secrets that come out all the time in soap operas and ruin lives. I mean nice secrets. For instance, I know what's coming up in our main range of **Doctor Who** stories and the twists and turns in store. I know where producer David Richardson is taking our newly-announced **Survivors** series – and I know what terrible trials await Jago & Litefoot. But I can't tell you, and you know what? I don't think you'd thank me if I did.

There's so much joy about going into a story totally unprepared, which is why we try to let out teasing details about things without blowing all the many surprises along the way. I've recently been to the cinema to see **The World's End** and, while I really enjoyed the film, it was a shame that certain elements of it (and some of the best jokes) are given away in the trailer, which has been hard to avoid. I'm looking forward to seeing **Alan Partridge: Alpha Papa**. He's one of my favourite comic creations (as listeners to the podcast will know from my copious references to **The Day Today** on it), but I've seen the trailer. I really hope all the best bits aren't in that. But conversely, I've also seen master psychological illusionist Derren Brown's latest stage show this week and he asked the audience not to tell others what happens in it. I love that tacit agreement of an audience; it's what's kept **The Mousetrap** running in the West End for sixty years, and still people don't know whodunnit (I'm not telling).

It's a tricky balance to get right; you want to intrigue people, tempt them in, give them something to get excited about – but without giving it all away. And there's our Spoiler Quandary. It used to be the case that once something had been transmitted it was fair game to talk about but now, with staggered viewing and box sets, it's hard to know when something is 'safe' to discuss. I was a few weeks behind watching **Broadchurch**, and had to rattle through the last four episodes in a weekend before someone gave away who the killer was as it was mentioned *everywhere*.

How long do you wait when at any point, one of our releases could be someone's first audio? I don't know. But at certain points, as we continue a story arc, use a character again or create a striking cover image, we need to give things away. Apologies if sometimes that spoils the ending of another release. But always remember that as fun as secrets are, the journey to them is just as important. You may know the outcome, but do you know the why, how and when? Some of that may also surprise you...

PAUL SPRAGG

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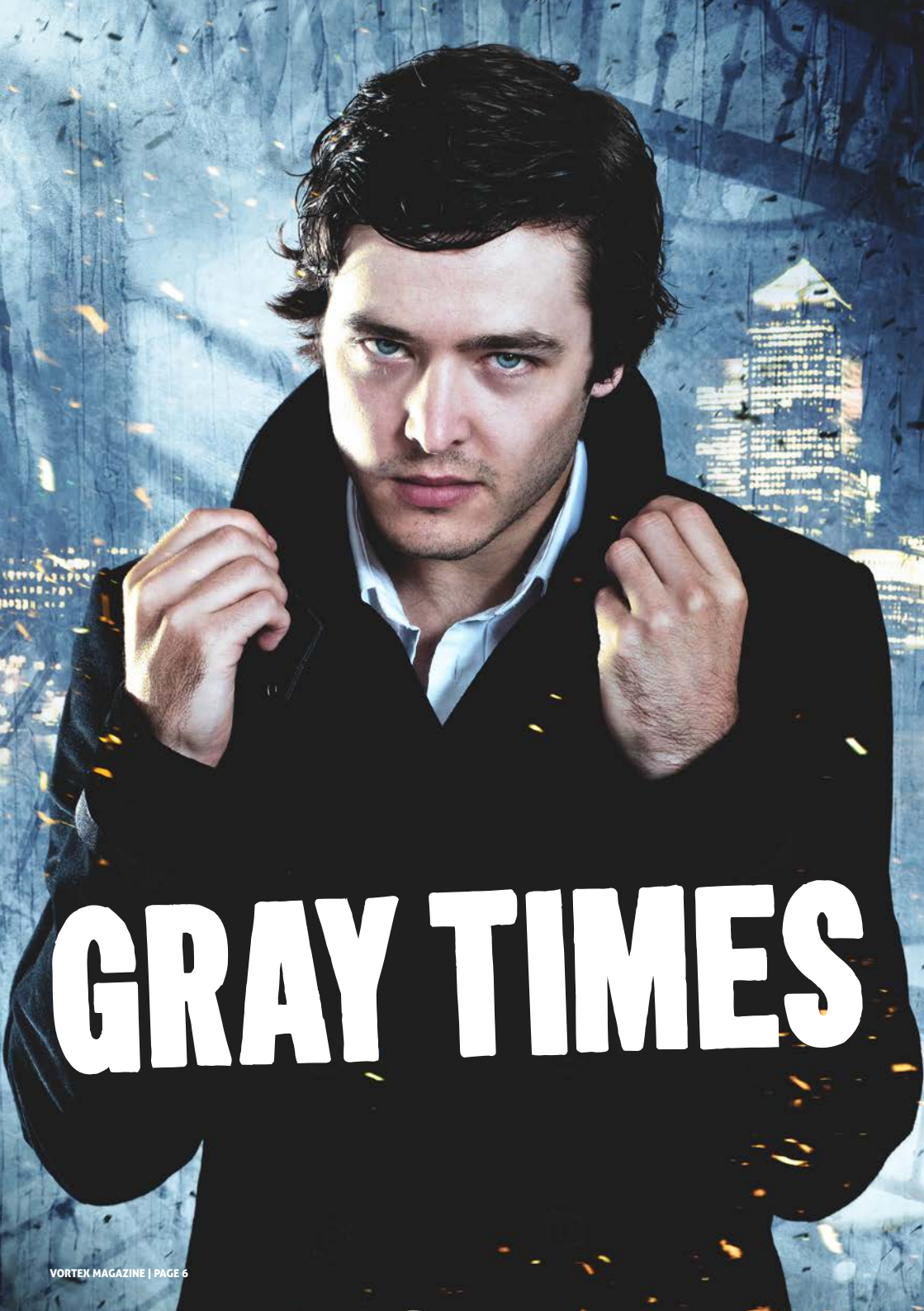
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GRAY TIMES

WE TAKE A LOOK AT THE WORLD THROUGH THE EYES OF DORIAN GRAY – AND THE PEOPLE WRITING HIS NEW SERIES OF **CONFESSIONS**

A Postcard from Dorian (as sent to Alexander Vlahos)

Dear *Vortex* Magazine,

I've arrived safe and sound – there was a bit of hassle getting the Portrait through security, but nothing I couldn't handle. What can I say about this place that hasn't already been said? It's beautiful, the weather is astonishingly bleak. Right up my street.

How are you? I hope you're taking care of everything and not getting too stressed. Remember your medication.

At the time of writing this, we should be a couple of episodes into the second series of **The Confessions of Dorian Gray**. Which means you'll have travelled to the Florida swamplands and Brighton Pier – and there's still much more to come, you lucky, lucky things! An hour-long Halloween special set in the cobbled hills of Edinburgh which will guarantee to frighten the living daylights out of you. It did me, and I lived through it!

I've been so fortunate to have had such fantastic adventures in my eternal life – and grateful that Scott Handcock (the idea man) and the guys over at Big Finish (lovely chaps) decided to assemble a team of majestic penmen to write them out in little half-hour chunks! I want to take this opportunity to celebrate Gary Russell, Simon Barnard, David Llewellyn, Nev Fountain and Roy Gill for making me come across less narcissistic and arrogant than I really am. Your cheques are in the post. And to the wonderfully talented luvvies that came in on their weekend off (that's dedication) and who didn't take too much artistic licence with their character portrayals (Vlahos, I'm looking at you) – I thank you!

And last, but by no means least, to the listeners that have downloaded each episode – still an alien concept to me, by the way – you are the real heroes. Thank you from the bottom of my non-existent soul for loving and caring about this series. Here's to many more (well, I have got hundreds of stories to tell!)

That's enough of me... I'm off for a dip in the sea.

D.G. – over and out! xxx



EPISODE PREVIEWS

THE PICTURE OF LORETTA DEVINE

BY GARY RUSSELL

GARY: Inspiration comes from many weird sources – in this case, a curious mixture of the TV series *Supernatural*, my disappointment at CBS cancelling *CSI: Miami*, and the Death in Vegas/Iggy Pop song *Aisha*. (The last of which conjured up the imagery of a serial killer confined inside a portrait and contains Iggy's malevolent voice crooning, 'Aisha, I got out', which really was the theme of this story.)

"The story of Loretta herself is based on true events, including the horrific deeds she inflicted upon her staff in her secret rooms..."

From *Supernatural* I got the inspiration to research local folklore – originally in New Orleans where this story was set, amidst Mardi Gras, where Loretta would have used her zombie victims to attack Dorian as he and the then-male police sergeant dealt with the local krewes. The switch to Florida stripped away a lot of this rather cumbersome detail and made the two-hander far more interesting.

The story of Loretta herself is based on true events, including the horrific deeds she inflicted upon her staff in her secret rooms, her dealings with the crime lords and her unsolved disappearance (go look up the story of Delphin LaLaurie and prepare to be shocked). Evil as she was, she screamed 'Dorian's counterpoint' to me... and that brings us to *The Picture of Loretta Delphine*.

OUT NOW!

THE LORD OF MISRULE

BY SIMON BARNARD



Alexander Vlahos and David Menkin

SIMON: I'd wanted to write a story about legendary 1950s/60s record producer Joe Meek for a while, and then producer Scott Handcock asked if I had any ideas for Dorian, preferably ones that involved Dorian being a Mod in the Sixties, and the two things magically came together. Actually, I think Scott told me that Alexander Vlahos was keen for Dorian to ride a moped... why this is, I don't know.

Joe Meek was a pioneering musical genius who dabbled in the occult in his spare time, and was obsessed with his protégée, a good-looking young man called Heinz. So Joe became music producer Lenny Starr, and Heinz became Otto. I should hasten to add that's where any resemblance between Joe/Lenny and Heinz/Otto ends – Otto is a supernatural being who turns up on Lenny's doorstep the day after a séance.

The story is set over the summer of '64, when Mods and Rockers were battling it out on the beaches of Margate and Brighton – but what's the reason for the madness gripping the nation? Could Otto have something to do with it? Well, yes he could. There's sex, there's drugs and there's rock 'n' roll, and Dorian even gets to ride his moped.

OUT: SATURDAY 3 AUGUST

MURDER ON 81ST STREET

BY DAVID LLEWELLYN

DAVID: Writing stories is a childish way to make a living. I don't mean that in a bad way; it's just that the only thing I can compare it to is sitting in your bedroom as a kid and playing with toys. When I was six years old, those games were huge, multi-franchise crossovers: Boba Fett rescues Mr T from the clutches of Skeletor. That sort of thing.

"I had what I can only describe as a geekgasm."

Now, almost thirty years later, my toys are Dorian Gray, Dorothy Parker, 1930s New York, American Nazis and Jewish folklore. The inspirations for *Murder on 81st Street* were many: a biography of Dorothy Parker by John Keats (not that one), Philip Roth's excellent *The Plot Against America* and Paul Wegener's 1920 movie *Der Golem*.

Obviously I can't say much more than that (*Murder on 81st Street* is, ostensibly, a whodunnit), but when the series' creator Scott Handcock told me he'd cast Sarah Douglas in the role of Dorothy, I had what I can only describe as a geekgasm. She does a splendid job of capturing her effervescence – she isn't yet the bitter, tragic Dorothy Parker of the 1950s – and makes a brilliant foil for Dorian.

The subject matter of *Murder on 81st Street* is actually quite dark (the German-American Bund's activities had very sinister, real-world consequences) so it was important to me that the chemistry between Dorothy and Dorian act as a counterweight and give the story a bit of levity. Sarah and Alex completely nail that, and I only wish I could write more for them as a double act!

OUT: SATURDAY 10 AUGUST

THE IMMORTAL GAME

BY NEV FOUNTAIN

NEV: If you live long enough then you can bump into just about anyone. I should know, I've met Hugh Ross! HUGH ROSS!

"If you live long enough then you can bump into just about anyone."

On Big Finish Day, when Alexander Vlahos airily told me that they were considering Hugh Ross for the part of Dr Montague in my script, I'm not ashamed to say I did a little 'squee'. You see, in 1988 I wrote a fan letter to Mr Ross, the only one I've ever, ever sent, because I was bowled over by his performance of Jacques in an RSC production of *As You Like It*. You might not know the character but you'll probably know the 'Seven ages of man/all the world's a stage' bit, with the line 'They have their exits and their entrances...' Hugh actually went off stage on 'exits' and returned on the other side for 'their entrances'. I thought that was incredibly cool. Anyway, he sent me a very nice letter and a beautiful photo back, and it was bluetacked to my wall during all my seven ages (student, graduate, unemployed, teacher, shopworker, writer, middle-aged fart) and I went to the Moat studios all a-quiver, with my dog-eared photo, and I gushed, and I fawned. Mr Ross was wonderful and flattered, and kindly re-autographed it for me. It was such a long time ago it was even written 'To Steven' (my real name). How joyful and strange it all was.

So, yes, I believe if you live long enough then you can bump into just about anyone. I should know, and so does Mr Dorian Gray.

OUT: SATURDAY 17 AUGUST

RUNNING AWAY WITH YOU

BY SCOTT HANDCOCK



SCOTT: And so another series draws to a close with our final episode (until October, at least)... and this one explores a side of Dorian we've never seen before: his childhood. A time before he even had his portrait painted, when he truly was an innocent. But does that work, knowing what he eventually becomes?

Suffice to say, Alex rises to the challenge of portraying two Dorians at very different stages in his life, with Lalla Ward looming over him as the somewhat terrifying Constance Harker, and ghosthunter Brennan Doyle (Geoffrey Breton) linking the past and present together. It's an unashamed examination of the Dorian we've witnessed over the last two series and hopefully provides a fitting end to the current run.

But this isn't the end for Dorian! Not only do we have a full-cast adaptation of Oscar Wilde's original novel – *The Picture of Dorian Gray* – set to follow at the end of August (pre-orders come signed by Mr Vlahos), but we also have a Halloween special. And a secret little something else in the pipeline too!

Until then, let's see where Dorian's journey takes him...

OUT: SATURDAY 24 AUGUST

THE LUCIFER GAMBIT

THE LUCIFER GAMBIT WRITER ERIC WALLACE EXPLAINS HOW HE GOT INVOLVED IN THE MYSTERIOUS WORLD OF DARK SHADOWS



Shelia Steafel

Hello Eric. So what can you tell us about *The Lucifer Gambit*?

■ It's a supernatural coming of age story. In it, Amy Jennings confronts her fears about growing up in Collingsport and learns that it often takes a huge risk – a gamble, if you will – to overcome incredible odds. Especially when those odds involve demonic forces intent on your destruction!

So who is Amy Jennings?

■ Amy Jennings was a child resident of Collingsport during the TV series' original run. Her brother, Chris Jennings, was a werewolf, and her uncle, Tom Jennings, was a vampire. So this kid had a ton of macabre baggage to explore, but the series was cancelled before audiences could see her grow up.

The Lucifer Gambit is about Amy's difficult transition into adulthood. It's a baptism by fire, literally speaking, because we're dealing with Satanic forces in this story. Although Denise Nickerson originally played the part, Stephanie Ellyne – who has done a phenomenal job bringing this new version of the character to life – now plays Amy.

You've written for the Dark Shadows range before. How did that come about?

■ I've been listening to BF's *Doctor Who* audios since their inception. When I heard the first *Dark Shadows* story, *The House of Despair*, I loved it and immediately wanted to contribute to the range. So I stalked Jason Haigh-Ellery at a Los Angeles *Dark Shadows* convention and told him so! Looking back, I probably came off like a crazy fan. Thankfully, he and original producer Stuart Manning realized I wasn't an axe murderer and gave me a shot. That led to me writing *The Wicked and the Dead* and then co-writing *Kingdom of the Dead* with Stuart.

You've also written for television. What else have you been up to and what's next for Eric Wallace?

■ Next up this autumn is *Scribblenauts Unmasked*, an adventure video game for the whole family featuring superheroes from the DC Comics universe. I'm also currently writing several episodes of *Ben 10: Omniverse* that should air next year on Cartoon Network, as well as working on a creator-owned supernatural comic book series for summer 2014.

And finally, why should someone buy this story?

■ Because it's scary, sexy, and a helluva lot of fun!

VORTEX

A WILLING RETRACTION

A few months ago I wrote and said that I wasn't happy with you taking money for orders when the goods weren't available until months in the future.

Well, I've just proved myself wrong. I have just ordered tickets for Rick Wakeman's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* at the Royal Albert Hall next April and did so willingly, realising all the planning, rehearsing and designing that has to go into such a project. Then I thought, 'That's a bit of double standards on my part'. So I willingly retract whatever I said, and will happily order future products from Big Finish without any qualms.

Still loving all the ranges I buy. Just wondered whether you had ever thought of doing *Quatermass* or *Star Cops*? There seems so little *Quatermass*, which might have something to do with rights issues. Also, *Star Cops* was a brilliant TV series, which sadly only got one series on BBC2 and had the great David Calder in it. Would love to hear more from Nathan and Box (how that handheld computer reminds me of an iPhone).

Keith Andrews

NICK: Hi Keith, we really appreciate your writing and telling us you've changed your mind on this. Many thanks. No plans for *Quatermass* and *Star Cops*. I, personally, would love to do *Quatermass*, though.

AVENGERS EXCITEMENT

Very excited over the news about the upcoming release of the lost season of *The Avengers*!

Now if Big Finish will also consider doing *Ace of Wands*, *The Champions*, *Department S* and, dare I say, the third season of *Space: 1999* and the untitled *Maya* spin-off series that was in the works – along with more original *Stargate SG-1* – I'd be even more excited!

Joseph Baneth Allen

NICK: Well, I can certainly confirm I'd like to do at least four of the series you mention.

ARTISTIC LICENSE

I'm sure readers would be interested in some details regarding your licensing agreement limitations. We've heard a bit about modern day elements not being allowed in the *Doctor Who* ranges, but I for one am a bit hazy on where the line is drawn. Obviously the TARDIS, the Master, the Daleks and the Cybermen successfully inhabit both the television and audio genres – yet you can't bring back the

Silurians again? How often do you folks meet with the Cardiffians to compare notes? Is it okay with them if someone primarily associated with the programme like, say, David Tennant decided to return to Big Finish in a role other than the Doctor? Finally, are there limitations on any of your other current franchises?

Frank Jay Gruber

NICK: There's no limit on us using the Silurians, as far as we're aware. We were just asked not to do a Silurian story a while back. I don't think that applies now. However, we don't have any plans for more Silurian stories for the foreseeable future anyway. Our contract currently allows us to use all elements of the series previous to the 2005 TV relaunch. Anything specific to that is the domain of the TV series. From time to time, our friends in Cardiff ask us to hold off on using certain elements – but that seems fair to us. Also, the approvals process is unconnected with casting. I'm not aware of any other limitations on other licences.

PULL TO OPEN

First off I just want to say how much I love your audio plays. I have just been listening to *Prisoners of Fate* and it is just awesome! I do have one critical point, though, about the design of the CD cases you use. At the moment for your releases that come with two discs, you use cases that have an internal part that opens towards the left to get at the second CD. I just wanted to say that this can make it very awkward to get to the second CD as I try to open it without using so much force that it breaks but enough to actually get it open. Before you used CD cases that had an internal part that opened to the right and these were much easier to deal with.

Is there any chance that you could go back to using cases that have the internal part that opens towards the right instead of the left?

James McLeod

NICK: I must say that I've found no difficulty opening them. We are rather at the mercy of our suppliers on this. There was no conscious change of CD case. But I will certainly look into this.

THAT NEW VORTEX SMELL

So the latest edition of *Vortex* just popped through the letterbox. Oh, that new magazine smell on opening it! Have you changed printers?!

Paul Oldroyd

NICK: Not that I'm aware of. Perhaps Paul Spragg knows. Paul?

PAUL: No, we've not. Maybe since I took over as editor it's just naturally started to smell of my powerful manly musk. Or perhaps not.

GREEN ROOM?

First of all, well done with the *Jago & Litefoot* series so far and I'm looking forward to the sixth series in September.

I'm also waiting with bated breath for *Dark Eyes 2*; Paul McGann is my favourite Doctor, and the *Eighth Doctor Adventures* are spectacular. I can't wait to see him at Big Finish Day 4! It's my first time going to an event like this, so hopefully things will go well.

Here's a question; listening to the *J&L* behind the scenes CDs, I always hear about the mysterious Green Room. Can you give us any insight into what it is? Is it full of tea and biscuits, with luxurious seats and Sontaran waiters?

Keep up the good work!

Ian Manning

NICK: The green room is the traditional name for where actors wait or relax before, after or during work in theatres, radio and television studios. There are indeed some tea and biscuits. It's not a lavish or luxurious affair, but there are a couple of sofas and some chairs. There are no Sontaran waiters, except for when Dan Starkey is in the cast.

SALES

I wanted to let you know how appreciative I am over the sales and the Fiver section you folks have. It gives me a chance to fill in a lot of blanks in my audio collection little by little and overall helps those of us whose income is taxed by day-to-day life get something small but great in our hands. I will continue to order as often as I can when I can.

Your output has been great and I really am glad that you guys add so much more to the *Doctor Who* catalogue. I've even got my two kids listening to some of the stories (*No Place Like Home* remains a favourite of theirs).

Shaun H

NICK: Thanks, Shaun. Glad you're liking the sales. There may be a few more in the pipeline...

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY? WRITE TO: FEEDBACK@BIGFINISH.COM



SYLV IN THE UNIVERSE

SEVENTH DOCTOR SYLVESTER MCCOY CHATS TO PAUL SPRAGG ABOUT REUNITING WITH KLEIN, SIZEISM AND FINALLY BEING ABLE TO TALK ABOUT **THE HOBBIT**

Hello Sylvester. So, you're back with Klein (Tracey Childs) in the monthly range at the moment...

■ Klein! Eine Kleine Nachtmusik! You know, they dug Mozart up recently and he was still decomposing.

What's it like having Klein back?

■ Great! Tracey's smashing and a marvellous actress and great fun. The Klein character is interesting because I don't think the Doctor's ever quite sure [of her], and that's good.

Most recently prior to this you've been back with Sophie Aldred as Ace. How do she and Tracey compare?

■ Well, Tracey's taller and Sophie's smaller. In radio terms, they're all whatever size the listener imagines, really. Although they keep talking about my smallness in the scripts. Wait 'til I see those authors! Or that editor... [laughs] But it's great. All grist to the mill. A variety of beautiful women to work with. What a wonderful job!

For this trilogy you've also got an additional assistant: Christian Edwards as Will Arrowsmith.

■ He's great fun; he's very light, very enthusiastic. It's a great character he's created, and who has been written for him.

It certainly gives the set-up a different dynamic.

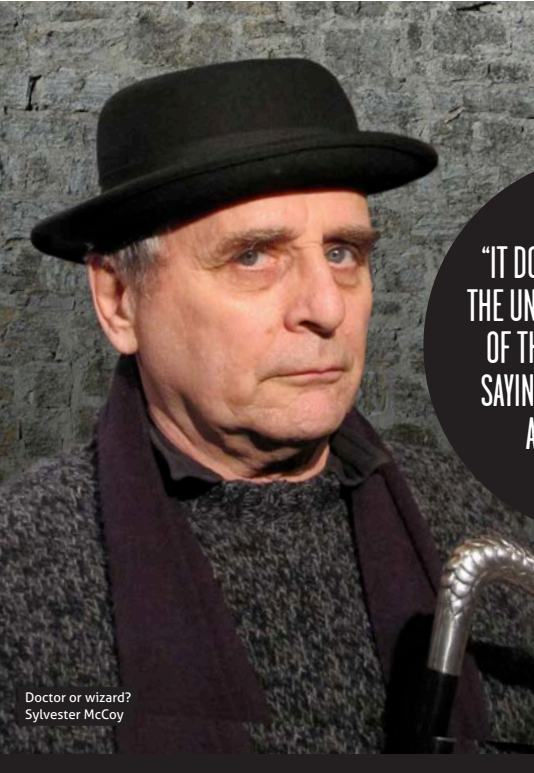
■ He is a bit of a scientist and an enthusiast, so he gallops off like a little puppy, chasing some scientific theory – and sometimes gets it right!

The trilogy ends next month with Daleks Among Us.

■ It's twenty-five years since I did a television Dalek story. I didn't really think I could lay claim to being a real Doctor until I'd battled and defeated the Daleks. Every now and again you've got to test your mettle against the Daleks' metal.

It's been a while since you've done an audio Dalek story, and the first time you've done any story with Terry Molloy as Davros since Remembrance of the Daleks.

■ I've worked with Terry anyway. I've known Terry since 1976 because I did a series of three plays in Coventry and Terry was in them with me. That's where I met him. A young man as he was then, as I was. That was the year my first son was born. It's a joy working with Terry. He's so professional. He's Mr Radio, isn't he? He knows it inside out. And in front, all the way up and down – and in stereo! Although I keep getting disappointed in my Doctor because he keeps seeming to defeat the Daleks but never does,



Doctor or wizard?
Sylvester McCoy

“IT DOES GET TIRING SAVING THE UNIVERSE REGULARLY. ONE OF THESE DAYS I FEEL LIKE SAYING, ‘OH UNIVERSE, LOOK AFTER YOURSELF.’”

Is it good to be able to talk about *The Hobbit* at last now the first film's been released?

■ God, yes! It was a nightmare not being able to talk about it because it was a fascinating and extraordinary adventure I was on and I loved every moment of it. And I'm going to love more, I know, because I'm doing another batch of filming in May, June or July. Sometime in those three months, not all of them. So that's good. I look forward to putting on the beard and the bird poo and getting on with it.

How many times have you watched the film now?

■ I've seen it three times.

I've not seen it yet.

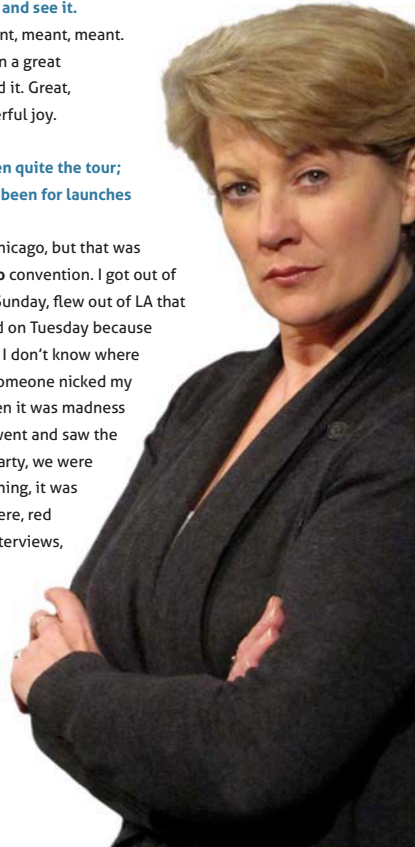
■ Yeah, you should really. I love you interviewers who interview people about subjects and they haven't even DONE ANY RESEARCH! [grins]

I did mean to go and see it.

■ Oh, yeah, meant, meant, meant. Anyway, it's been a great adventure. Loved it. Great, madness, wonderful joy.

It must have been quite the tour; where have you been for launches and the like?

■ I've been to Chicago, but that was for a *Doctor Who* convention. I got out of Chicago on the Sunday, flew out of LA that night and landed on Tuesday because we lost Monday. I don't know where Monday went. Someone nicked my Monday. And then it was madness from there; we went and saw the film, went to a party, we were up the next morning, it was the world premiere, red carpets, press interviews, photographs, hundreds and thousands of people to sign autographs for, watching the film a



quite... I'm sure the audience are pleased really, secretly, because they want them to come back.

The last trilogy was quite focused on the companions; do you mind the odd Doctor-lite story?

■ It's just nice to do it, really. Sometimes it can be a bit overpowering, the amount of stuff we have to do. So I quite enjoy coasting through for a little while. Takes the pressure off a little. Because it does get tiring saving the universe regularly. One of these days I feel like saying, 'Oh universe, look after yourself'.

Which is sort of what the Seventh Doctor is trying to do here.

■ These stories are all about him trying to tidy up things because he knows his time is coming to an end; it's happening just before the *Doctor Who* film where Sylvester McCoy hands over to Paul McGann so it's quite interesting with him tying up the loose ends so that the next Doctor might not have it so bad.

He evidently doesn't have much faith in the Eighth Doctor.

■ None whatsoever! He's so unreliable!



Tracey Childs, Sylvester McCoy and Christian Edwards

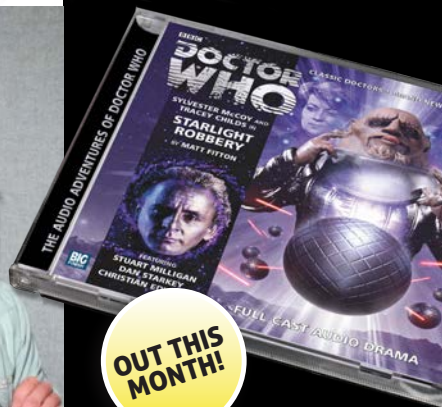
“NEVER WORK WITH THE WIZARDS OF WETA’S UPSTAGING ANIMALS, I’M TELLING YOU!”

second time, another party... it’s a hard life. Flying back to London then, a week later, going to another press gig, Ian McKellen had a party at his house for all of us – that was the night before the European press – we got to do that, sign all sorts of autographs, watch the film, meet some prince – a future king – and then another party! So I was knackered, but it was good fun, it was great. It was just such fun.

Did you make any new friends in the process?

■ Yeah, of course. You always make friends when you’re working, especially when you work on something for a little while. You can sometimes go into a film and see hardly anybody; you might have a scene with one other actor and leave and never see the whole lot. I was working principally with animals who weren’t there, it was green screen and I had to imagine them and then the wizards of WETA created them. Never work with the wizards of WETA’s upstaging animals, I’m telling you! They’re so brilliant.

But I did do a few scenes with some of the other actors and got to know them. And I knew some anyway. I knew Billy Connolly, Ian McKellen and Ken Stott. But I got to meet Cate Blanchett. I’d have done the whole thing for nothing – but I wasn’t going to tell them that – just to act with Cate Blanchett. She’s definitely royalty. She’s real royalty. She’s earned it. **VORTEX**



DOCTOR WHO: STARLIGHT ROBBERY

Written by Matt Fitton
Directed by Ken Bentley

Sick of the same-old slaughter-appliances? In need of a killer new killing-machine? Then look no further than Garundel Galactic’s secret arms auction. Blasters, tanks, missiles and bombs – no bang too big or micro-laser too small. If you’ve got the credits, Garundel’s got the kill-sticks. (Cash buyers get preferential rates.)

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DOCTOR WHO: STARLIGHT ROBBERY IS AVAILABLE THIS MONTH ON CD AND DOWNLOAD FROM BIGFINISH.COM

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SALMON

DEREK
RIDDELL

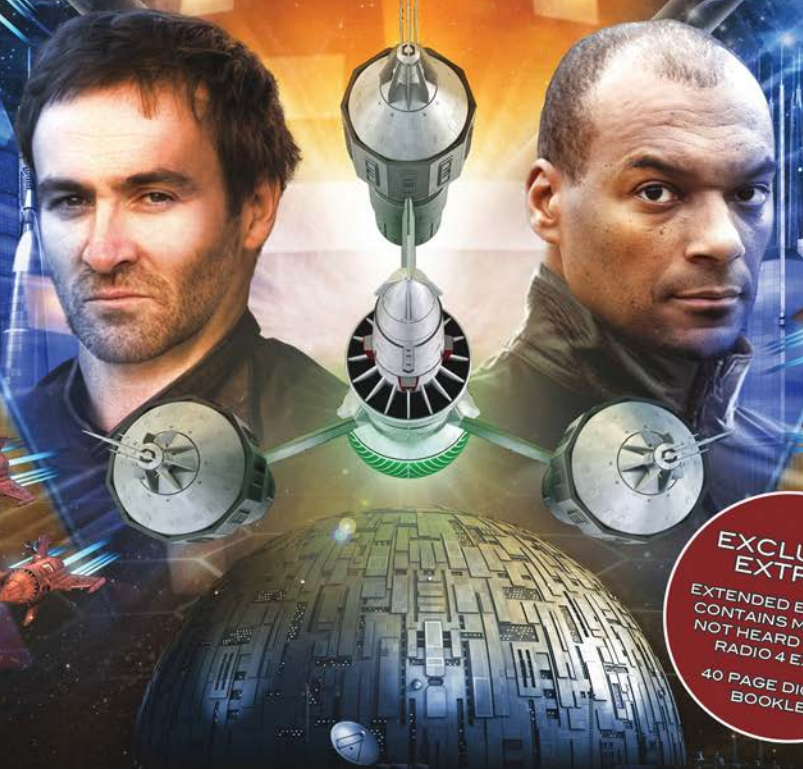
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IT'S A LOCK!

ALISTAIR LOCK, SOUND DESIGNER, COMPOSER AND ACTOR, DISCUSSES WITH PAUL SPRAGG HIS VOYAGE FROM AMATEUR TAPE RECORDER ENTHUSIAST TO **BLAKE'S 7**

Hello Alistair. What drew you to music and sound design originally?

■ Since I was a kid, I've always been interested in sound and tape recorders and how that all worked, and my Dad, one of his jobs was to maintain the tape recorders at the RAF base he used to work at. He would bring them home to fix them, and he let me play with them. So I recorded my voice and played it back and speeded it up and slowed it down and was able to play it backwards. Then I started writing sketches with a friend of mine, Steve Allen, who I've known since we were at school.

You've been working for Big Finish on and off as a musician and sound designer since our very first Doctor Who audio, *The Sirens of Time*, but you were also involved with Audio Visuals, the group whose members ultimately formed Big Finish.

■ I was fascinated by this and thought, 'Oh my God, there's other people doing what I do, mucking about with tape recorders and stuff,' and this actually inspired me to write my own sci-fi play and record and edit and produce and do music for it with Steve Allen, and we did all the voices, just to see whether I could do this. And then I met Gary Russell at a *Blake's 7* convention. I either gave him a copy or told him about it and sent him a copy, and then a couple of weeks later I got a phone call from Nick Briggs saying, 'We got the tape, and we listened to the whole thing and thought, "This is rather good,"' so that's how I came to be involved in some of the later Audio Visuals stories doing sound effects for one of them and music and edits for another one. And I was in one of them; I played a character called Magog, which was this supercomputer – ha! Little did I know that years from then I'd be playing Zen. Oh, the irony.

How did that lead to doing other Blake's 7 work?

■ At another convention I met Alan Stevens, who was really, really into **Blake's 7** and he dragged me into helping him produce a couple of audio plays. The first one was called *Travis: The Final Act*, that was a sort of drama documentary, where we were looking at the character of Travis, both Stephen Greif's interpretation and Brian Croucher's. What we did was, rather than have it as a straight documentary, it was a drama documentary in that we got Peter Miles to narrate but as the character of Rontane, which he played in two episodes of **Blake's 7**.

Then you finally moved up to playing Zen in the stories collected in the Rebellion Reborn box set; had you always hoped to do it?

■ Was it a childhood dream? [laughs] Well, I'd always hoped. I couldn't, and didn't, assume. I played Zen in the **Rebellion Reborn** reboot in 2007 onwards, and so was very happy when David [Richardson, producer] said yes, you're cast as Zen [for *Warship*]. And was pleasantly surprised when I saw that I would also be playing Orac, because oddly enough, even I didn't know if I could successfully pull off Orac. When we did the reboot series, Orac never appeared. So somebody had faith in me, whether

"IF HE WAS STILL WITH US, I WOULD PREFER PETER TUDDENHAM TO BE ZEN"

it was David or Peter Anghelides, who wrote *Warship*. So I went away and I made sure that I could do Orac. I listened endlessly to Peter Tuddenham [the computers' original voice] because the fans would prefer Peter Tuddenham and if he was still with us, I would prefer Peter Tuddenham to be Zen and Orac. So I came to it almost by default.

The main reason I was cast as Zen for the reboot series was when we had the first table read of the scripts we gathered some people together, some of whom ended up being in the reboot series. In the

morning I was just doing general computer voices and Trooper 2 and Vagrant 3 or whatever, and I jokingly said, 'I'll only do the post-production for this if I get to play the robots.'

What are your memories of your involvement in A Rebellion Reborn?

■ We recorded the first trilogy in December 2006. I remember that the first day's recording was on 3rd as it was my brother Robert's birthday, and his 'present' was to play the captain of the prison ship, The London, which carried the prisoners – including Blake – to the far-off penal colony of the planet Cygnus Alpha.

Unlike the Big Finish Studios, which are equipped with separate booths for the actors, the Sound House Studios are more open plan, which means you can actually block scenes and allow for movement. I'd have the actors leaning backwards at ridiculous angles to get the feeling of real effort into the voice when the Liberator breaks orbit! There was a lot to get through, recording three episodes in five days.

Editing began in earnest in January 2007. The first episode took quite a while to come together, as not only

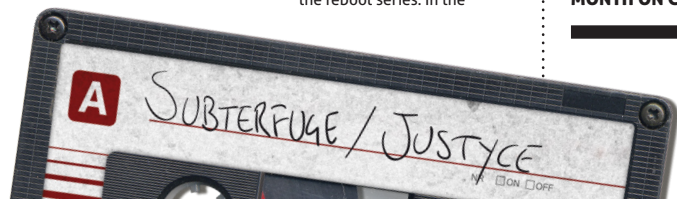
was I editing the performances, I was also building the Liberator! I rebuilt everything, which meant that I had more dynamic control over it in my editor. The Liberator flight deck alone has many elements running together.

The advantage of doing both sound and music means that I can decide when sound should take centre stage, or music should heighten the scene, mixing and matching accordingly. I can shift sound effects or dialogue to accommodate. Also, I can re-record Zen if I'm not entirely happy with a line. I'm a very self-critical computer...

Are you pleased with how well the Blake's 7 stories you've sound designed have turned out?

■ I bumped into Paul Darrow when the first **Blake's 7** box set came out and I was joking about: 'Yes, but don't forget, Paul, I'm the guy that makes you sound good!' and he gave me a look and I said, 'Let me edit that. I'm the guy that makes you sound even better!' And he smiled, so all was well. **VORTEX**

BLAKE'S 7: A REBELLION REBORN IS AVAILABLE THIS MONTH ON CD AND DOWNLOAD FROM BIGFINISH.COM



WRIGHT PLACE, WRIGHT TIME



WE FIND HOW MARK WRIGHT APPROACHED WRITING AND PRODUCING FOR THE FOURTH SERIES OF IRIS WILDTHYME ADVENTURES

Hello Mark! So, I assume we'll be getting the usual Iris in series four: quiet, restrained, tee-total...? What does she get up to?

■ What doesn't she get up to?! I think series four goes from the sublime to the ridiculous as we develop further the arc that we started at the beginning of series three. Somebody has been after Iris [Katy Manning], and in our cliffhanger ending, we discovered it was Iris's future self – a colder, harder figure, trying to stop her past self from... well, we don't know what that is. At the beginning of this series, Iris is living the life of Riley, bouncing from one party to another all through time with her best friend Alex. Meanwhile, Panda [David Benson] is enjoying the life of an international jet-setting writer, his career managed, as usual, by the divine Amanda. But that can't be right, can it?

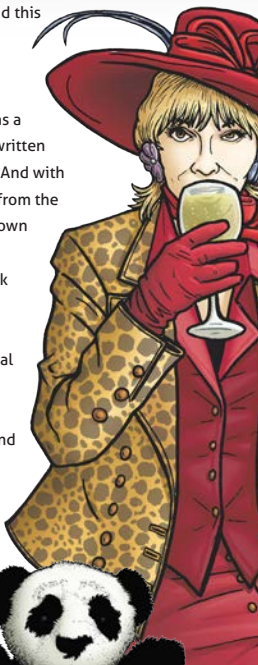
She's then off to the Ponside World Darts Championships where the fate of the multiverse rests on the result of a single darts match – and it turns out Panda is a big darts fan and Iris is a dab hand with the arrows. And then we finish off with a visit to the offices of multiversal music publishers Terpsicorp on the moon

of Semi-Quaver, where a sentient lift has designs on destroying creation – and Panda is set to be the next big thing.

So yes, business as usual really!

Has Iris evolved over the series she's been in?

■ Definitely. I think as a character – and this is as much down to [her creator] Paul Magrs' vision for her as anything else – she stands on her own two feet now. Most of the audience knows Iris as a spin-off from the **Doctor Who** novels written by Paul, but she had a life before that. And with the audios, I think we've moved away from the **Doctor Who** trappings to give her her own universe to exist in. While the stories have elements of broad comedy, I think they work as science fiction/fantasy adventures in their own right – there's real danger that Iris and Panda face, real consequences – as we see at the end of this series. Iris still likes a drink, of course... We also have Katy Manning and David Benson who really care about the characters, and that has helped them develop over the last couple of years.





IRIS WILDTHYME: THE COMPLETE SERIES FOUR

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO IRIS WILDTHYME?

Written by Cavan Scott and Mark Wright

■ Iris is living the life she always dreamt of, swanning from one party to the next. But who are those sinister ticking figures hiding in the mist?

IRIS AT THE OCHE

Written by Mark Wright

■ As down-at-heel pub darts player Ted Taylor steps up to the oche, Iris realises that the fate of the entire universe depends on the result of this one game of arrows.

A LIFT IN TIME

Written by David Brayer

■ Ever get a tune stuck in your head? Annoying, isn't it? Especially when it transforms you into a mindless, murderous zombie.

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David Benson and Katy Manning

You've written a decent chunk of this box set; was that always your wish or did it just pan out that way?

■ It's just the way it panned out. Cav [Cavan Scott, Mark's usual writing partner] wrote one solo for series three, and I have a solo credit in series four, along with the joint credit for both of us with *Whatever Happened to Iris Wildthyme?* That sort of mirrors our careers a bit at the moment, still writing lots together, but developing our solo endeavours. It's the best of both worlds.

You wrote *Iris at the Oche*; are you a big darts fan or just a fan of Bullseye? Or did you just want people to learn how to spell 'oche'?

■ I love the arrows! Every January, I'm glued to the BBC darts coverage from Lakeside. It's a serious business, and the technical side is fascinating – so many mathematical calculations, always narrowing it down for the check out. That was the inspiration for *Iris at the Oche*. Along with the actors, [musician] Davy Darlington has really recreated the feel of a darts tournament. And then we had Bernard Holley [the voice of *Axos* in *Doctor Who*] join us for the story, and then – and this is the icing on the cake – Sophie Aldred [*Doctor Who*'s Ace] as our villain, Lady B'wen.

What are the things that make *Iris and Panda* – and the series itself – such fun to write?

■ They adore each other, but rarely show it. With the first story of this run, we really look into what makes their relationship tick, and how much they need each other. Katy and David always play it beautifully, and you know they're going to just run with the lines. There are more – I hesitate to use the word gags – more moments of out-and-out humour in the series, even now. That can help move a plot along, keep the pace up when you can have those little spikes punctuating a script.

How do you adjust your thinking to writing *Iris* as opposed to writing *Doctor Who*? Can you get away with more?

■ Difficult one. With *Iris* you can be cheekier, a little naughtier in what she can get away with and how she deals with the jeopardy in a situation. You can definitely push it a bit more, even break the fourth wall sometimes. *Doctor Who* has those little nods to the audience, but with *Iris* it can be a full-on wink and thumbs up for the audience, hopefully bringing them in on the joke. But that, I hope, is never at the expense of the adventure.

What does Katy bring to the role?

■ So, so much! Everything, in fact. So much energy, charisma, enthusiasm. She loves this character and really wants to give it her all. Every studio session she amazes me, always trying different things, keeping it moving, making suggestions. And Katy will always have thoughts on the scripts before we get to studio, always wanting to throw things in and shape things along with myself, Cav and Gary [Russell, director]. We are very lucky to have her playing Iris! **VORTEX**



LISTEN AGAIN

KENNY SMITH TAKES A TRIP TO THE WORMERY IN SEARCH OF REBELLIOUS TIME LADY IRIS WILDTHYME...

Iris Wildthyme: two words that are enough to send a shiver down the neck of any self-respecting Time Lord. Iris, played by Katy Manning, had appeared in the *Excelsis* mini-series, and the character made such an impression on producer Gary Russell that it wasn't long before he was planning to bring her into the monthly range.

The result was *The Wormery*, by Paul Magrs and Steve Cole, bringing Iris face-to-face with Colin Baker's incarnation of the Doctor.

Gary recalls, "Katy worked as Iris in *Excelsis*, and I just wanted to do a 'Doctor meets Iris properly in the main range' story. I wanted it to be for Colin because they get on so well together.

"I handed it over to Paul and Steve, and they came up with it together."

Steve says with a smile, "I think I shamelessly hopped onto Paul M's play! He had got the commission, and he thought it would be fun to write it with me. Happily, Gary did not object.

"It was a lovely way of working. We chatted it over at Paul's house in Norwich while I was visiting, worked out a synopsis. Paul set the style of it really – the framing device and the way it was narrated, and he had that brilliant idea of revealing who Mr Ashcroft was right at the end. We just swapped it over email like a relay – he would write some, and I would pick up from that point

and write for a bit, then he'd carry on. I think I weighed it down with some plot because that's more my thing."

The play also features a show tune, *She's Famous For It*, and Gary says, "I don't remember saying to them that I wanted them to do a musical, but I do recall them asking, 'Can we have a song in it?' So we had just the one song that ultimately became the theme tune to the Iris series."

Writing the music was Jason Loborik. He says, "The whole process of doing the music was a real joy, to be honest, mainly because I did the music with Steve producing and giving great feedback as we went along. Steve can also write great lyrics ridiculously quickly, and so doing the songs together seemed more fun than anything else. I'm sure it would have been more difficult if I'd just done everything on my own! Plus, it was a real laugh playing Iris's theme in the studio, with Katy singing along in character. She's definitely a one-off that woman, and she did it superbly!"

Steve adds: "The most surreal moment was coaching Katy Manning and the voice of *Eurotrash* [Maria McErlane] in the singing of one of the songs that I'd written with Jason Loborik around this piano. They both hurled themselves into it tremendously, it was a real buzz. Jason and I kept swapping looks: 'How the hell did we find ourselves here doing this?!' I shan't forget doing *The Wormery* in a hurry..." **VORTEX**

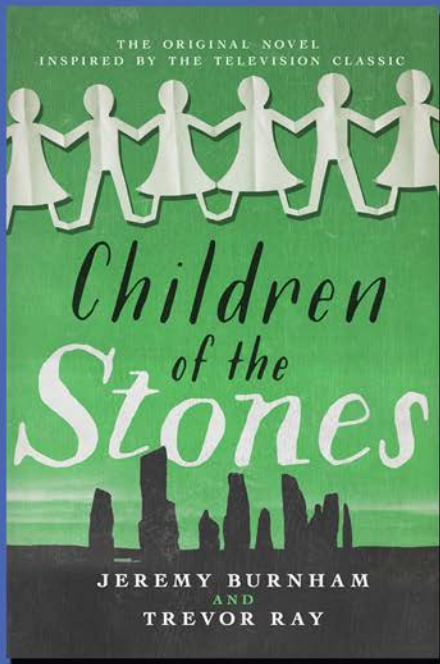
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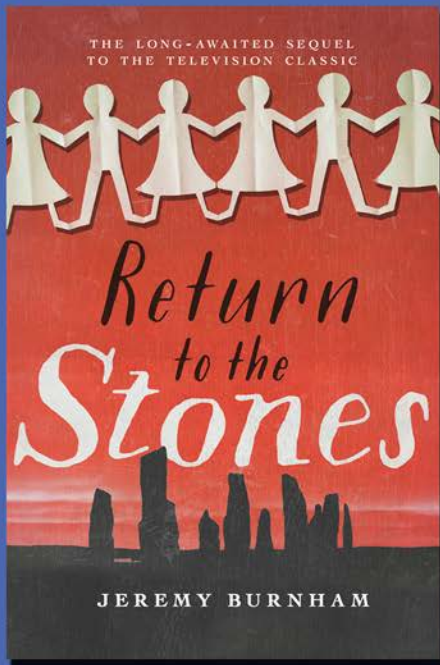
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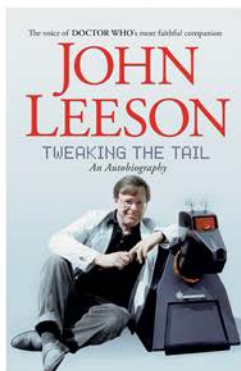
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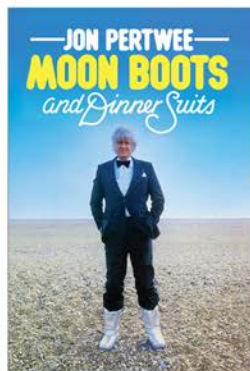
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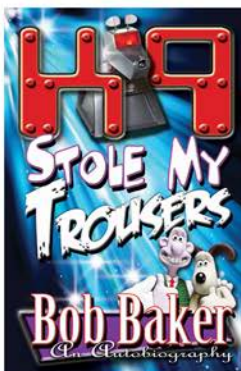
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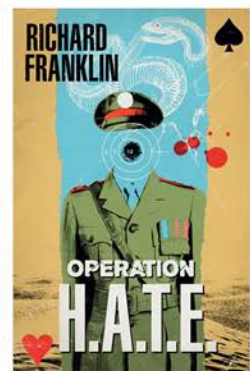
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