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# VORTEX



# THE ORDEALS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

**PLUS! DOCTOR WHO: AMY PEMBERTON  
AND PHILIP OLIVIER INTERVIEWED!  
DORIAN GRAY • THE LOST STORIES**

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ISSUE 58 • DECEMBER 2013

# Sci-Fi Bulletin

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# WHO'S THERE?

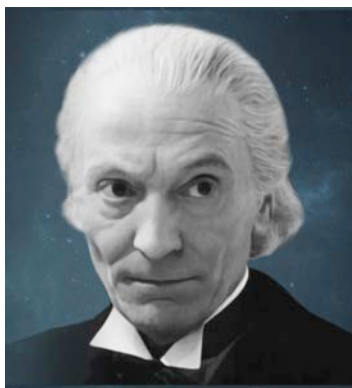
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## SNEAK PREVIEWS AND WHISPERS

### DOCTOR WHO – THE EARLY ADVENTURES: AN ORDINARY LIFE



The Doctor, Steven and Sara Kingdom have been on the run from the Daleks for a very long time. But what if they just stopped? What if events forced them to land on Earth, in London during the 1950s, and just live an ordinary life?

Matt Fitton's script is a wonderful **Doctor Who** adventure, and it's also a lovely, reflective character piece, putting Steven and Sara into a society which is totally alien to them – and yet one they feel they could adapt to. Their new friends are a group of immigrants from the Caribbean, who have settled in the UK with the hope of starting a new life themselves, but face prejudice and intolerance.

And out there in the snowy streets there is something sinister – something they will all face together...

*An Ordinary Life* stars Peter Purves, Jean Marsh, Ram John Holder, Sara Powell and Damian Lynch and is out in December 2014.

# EDITORIAL

I'm writing this at 5.30am. Not because I'm prone to bouts of insomnia; it's 11.30am in the UK, but I've been in the US for the last few hours and clearly my body hasn't quite worked out when it should be asleep. I'm at Chicago TARDIS for the second year in a row, and it's lovely to be back. Indeed, I feel like a bit of an old hand now, offering advice to those who are here for the first time! So far I've only done two things: partake in the quite magnificent Thanksgiving meal and go to an intimate meet and greet with some of the convention regulars, where the guests move from table to table having a chat. It's a really friendly, enthusiastic bunch and you're always made to feel welcome.

But before that it's been quite a month. Four days in studio with Nick Briggs taking photos, doing interviews and looking after the cast of the long-awaited **Charley Pollard** series – yes, it's happening! – followed swiftly by a weekend at the ExCel **Doctor Who** Celebration event. The **Charley** days were a joy; small but perfectly formed casts, with a couple of actors I'd actually suggested myself and a nine-months pregnant India Fisher giving her all as the character she loves in between doughnuts. And while I didn't get to see a lot of the Celebration (you may have heard the words 'free magazine' a lot if you passed me there), everyone seemed to be having a great time, with a huge array of **Who** talent on stage and signing, assorted workshops for sound, special effects and Big Finish itself, a host of costumes and props to enjoy (my favourites were the dinosaurs, inevitably) and, of course, the screening of *The Day of the Doctor*. Wonderful to enjoy it in a roomful of enthusiastic fans cheering and clapping, especially at those moments towards the end. A massive thanks to everyone who gave their time to us that weekend, setting up, selling CDs and signing. We had a lot of fun and hopefully a few people reading this are newcomers whose first order has come after discovering us at the event. Hello!

Anyway, must dash. Jason Haigh-Ellery (now unsure which time zone he's in after multiple global flights in the last fortnight), Amy Pemberton (you can read more from her later) and others were planning a Black Friday bargain hunting shopping trip for half eight, so I'd better get ready, get breakfast and wrap up against the cold Chicago wind. I could do with a new jumper.

I really hope December's a bit less hectic...\*

## PAUL SPRAGG

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\*A haggard designer concurs!

# LIFE STORIES

PHILIP OLIVIER (HEX) AND AMY PEMBERTON (SALLY) TRY TO AVOID SPOILERS AS THEY TALK TO PAUL SPRAGG ABOUT THEIR RETURN TO THE MAIN RANGE IN **AFTERLIFE**



Did either of you believe you'd be back after your last story?

**PO:** After reading the last script, *Gods and Monsters*, I was thinking, 'Oh no! What's happened here?' So I was delighted when I heard that the script was coming through the post.

**AP:** No, I actually didn't, to be honest! I was like, 'I'm blatantly not going back for ages – if I do go back.' So I was really excited when I got the call because I love coming in to do these, so yeah, I was excited.

As long as you're not feeling unwanted.

**AP:** Well, I was, but I'm over it now. I had the lunch! Everyone always talks about lunch. I had a huge lunch. Because you have to try everything that's there; I had a massive plate and ate it all.

**PO:** That's the only reason I've come down this year! Everyone says that, though, don't they? Lunch is unbelievable.

You've got a great guest star in this one.

**PO:** Jean Boht plays my nana! I was so over the moon, man. Liverpool legend!

How was she?

**PO:** Unbelievable. Instantly recognisable, you know? She played a great character. She just lifted the words from the page because she's brilliant. She's really eccentric and then she goes into this 'Mrs Bucket' [from BBC comedy *Keeping Up Appearances*] posh accent when the Doctor's about, and it gives a bit of depth to the character. I thought she played it brilliantly and it's a pleasure to work with people like that.

Have you missed Sylvester McCoy (The Seventh Doctor) and Sophie Aldred (Ace)?

**PO:** Yeah, I have actually. I think the last time I saw them was at the Chicago [TARDIS] convention.

Which I was at too.

**PO:** Yes, I missed you very terribly too! It's nice to see them but obviously before



Philip Olivier

## “EVERY TIME I COME BACK THERE’S SOMETHING NEW AND SOMETHING FRESH TO DO.” PHILIP OLIVIER

doing this I gave *Gods and Monsters* another listen to find out where we’re at, and it brought everything flooding back. But it’s nice to see those guys, always.

**AP:** It’s always so much fun. I’ve just been tweeting and Facebooking ‘it’s so nice being back together’; it’s just so comfortable all being in those booths, I love it. Looking round, seeing everyone doing their thing, and it’s just really good fun.

**How do you feel about your respective characters at this point?**

**PO:** I love the character Hex. I love the fact that he’s inquisitive, he’s a bit slow but he’s picking things up, he’s got a great heart. I think the chemistry that Hex and Ace have got, the dynamic of those two, is brilliant, especially when Sally comes in. I like the flirting to do with that. Every time I come back there’s something new and something fresh to do. And the beauty about audios is it’s not constrained by

budget; on TV and films you’re constrained by what you can do with CGI, but with audios the stories are great because you can just go as far as you want with it. I love coming back every time to do this.

**AP:** I really like this time, purely because you feel like you’ve established yourself a bit more after the trilogy that I did, and then just reading it I felt like she’s a bit more settled in herself and her place with the Doctor. When Sally and the Doctor come back together, I think they’re on a different level. Rather than trying to impress constantly, now he’s going, ‘Why have you come back, what are you doing here?’ and she’s doing a little investigation and finding loads of stuff out, so it’s not waiting for him to tell her what to do, she’s going off on her own and doing her own thing, which is probably what she should have done before. Well, she would have done, but not without the Doctor saying something. It made me sad, though, reading it. I can’t say [why], I don’t want to ruin it!

**Speaking of sad, last time you got to do a death scene, Phil.**

■ Death scenes are, especially when you know you’re going to die, one of the most emotional things you can play, so I’m really pleased to get my teeth into it and I’m really pleased with the feedback off it as well. I’m proud of it, so thanks for giving me something I can show to others! I haven’t got much of that!

**Have you both listened to your previous stories?**

**PO:** I never used to when I started, but I remember Sylvester said you should always go back and listen because you get to see what happens in post-production and get to see the final effects and I think it really does help.

**AP:** When I went over to Chicago, I put them all on my iPod and I listened to them on the way over because you never hear what everyone else does; you hear your bit and you’ve read it and you know what happens, but when you hear everything together I think it’s brilliant. And I don’t listen to audio stuff that much, and it’s made me want to listen to more. You just get completely absorbed in it. I think that’s why people love it, you know? You can just imagine what’s going on; that’s the beauty of audio, isn’t it, you’re not just watching and being shown it, you’ve got to have your own thing in your head.

**Does listening to those older stories change how you approach your performance?**

**PO:** Yeah, obviously. You haven’t got the visuals for someone to see your face, so the only tool you’ve got is your voice and when I first started, this was my first audio job and I didn’t really realize. The Big Finish team have taught me so much here. I think that’s one of the greatest tools, to listen back, as

Below: Amy Pemberton

Inset: Amy Pemberton, Philip Olivier, Sophie Aldred and Sylvester McCoy



**“DEATH SCENES ARE ONE OF THE MOST EMOTIONAL THINGS YOU CAN PLAY, SO I’M REALLY PLEASED TO GET MY TEETH INTO IT AND I’M REALLY PLEASED WITH THE FEEDBACK OFF IT AS WELL.”**

**PHILIP OLIVIER**

what I mean? She was still quite ballsy and she was the one constantly saying, ‘No, no, we’re gonna do it like this’. And then she kind of started to stand up to her. But on her own, yeah, there’s no talk of her. [Lysandra]’s in Africa or somewhere at the moment and [Sally] makes some snide comment about, ‘She never really enjoys herself – as much as she *can* enjoy herself,’ so she’s obviously still got a bit of a cob on about her. I think she’ll be glad to be free of that pressure. She was constantly breathing down her neck, I think. That’s what I got from it.



As mentioned, we were all at last year’s Chicago TARDIS; how do you find the convention experience?  
**PO:** I’ve been to the LA convention a couple of times. I think this is probably my fourth or fifth convention over the years in the States, so now I understand what you all go through; it’s like, ‘Oh, there’s Johnny over there!’ and it’s great, it’s like everyone’s a family, isn’t it?

sometimes you think you’re doing certain things with your voice and it doesn’t really come across. So unless you listen, you won’t learn.

**AP:** I think you have your initial thing about a character, don’t you, and then things change with how the character changes. I was in different [Big Finish] parts before I started *House of Blue Fire*, but it’s been nice to concentrate on one character and find a few more things. I’ve not been here for a year and a half, and I was like, ‘I’ve got to find her voice again’, so I was listening to it before I came back in going, ‘Okay, that’s the kind of tone and voice where she was last at’; I think she’s a bit more confident this time round.

Is that because Aristedes (Maggie O’Neill) isn’t around?

**AP:** Definitely. Well... my gut was to say definitely, but then... she was quite strong against Lysandra, do you know

The Chicago one was probably one of the best; the reasons why are Hex has got a back catalogue now, he’s got a story, people are asking me questions about Hex. Before I had nothing really to talk about, I kind of felt like a spare part. Second of all, I jumped right into the atmosphere of it with putting costumes on and doing activities and we’d go and see the sights. And finally because it’s the regular people that come back and come back, it’s familiarity really. So I really did enjoy the last one in Chicago and it’s great to be friends with the fans instead of them just being fans.

**AP:** That was my first convention ever. I meant to do one before and couldn’t.





Jean Boht and Sylvester McCoy

## DOCTOR WHO: AFTERLIFE

Hex is dead. And a distraught Ace holds the Doctor responsible.

She forces him to take a trip to 21st century Liverpool to break the news to Hex's beloved nan and, to pay tribute to Thomas Hector Schofield, the pair seek out his family and friends to tell them of his adventures. They're helped by Private Sally Morgan, who has her own peace to find.

The Doctor, Ace and Sally must each face the fallout of the loss of their friend – to commemorate him, remember him, and finally to move on. But can they do it together, or will their attempts drive them apart?

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**“WHEN I FIRST STARTED, THIS WAS MY FIRST AUDIO JOB... THE BIG FINISH TEAM HAVE TAUGHT ME SO MUCH.” PHILIP OLIVIER**

And it was only spoilt by the fool distracting you when you were doing a signing.

**AP:** Ah, you were brilliant! I had such a good time. I'd heard what they were like but I couldn't believe how many people were there. I know *Doctor Who* is massive, of course it is. But I loved it. I thought it was so much fun. Seeing the commitment to everyone being all dressed up and all that kind of stuff.

Where can we see you next?

**PO:** There's a thing called *The Spa* which is coming on to Sky Living at Christmas; it's a Christmas special. I just got on *Benidorm*, so that's out in January. That's a couple of things you can catch me up on; otherwise, just go to

[philipolivier.com](http://philipolivier.com)! **VORTEX**



# THE WRITE STUFF

THE CO-WRITERS OF THE **CONFESSIONS OF DORIAN GRAY** CHRISTMAS SPECIAL HAVE A BIT OF A CHINWAG...

**Alexander Vlahos:** Hello Jolyon.

**Jolyon Westhorpe:** Hello.

**AV:** So, you've been an actor in the **Confessions** range before – what episode was that again?

**JW:** That was... (*nervous laughter*)

**AV:** This is actually more of a test than an interview, by the way.

**JW:** (*after some thought*) I was in the one with all the music.

The mods and rockers one.

**AV:** It was called *The Lord of Misrule*.

**JW:** I was in that one.

**AV:** Okay – cracking start. So you've acted in the series before, but this is your first time writing for it, and Big Finish. Tell me how that came about.

**JW:** Can I say that we live together?

**AV:** Yes, you can.

**JW:** Well, I live with you. You're Alex and you play Dorian. We all know that. You've written for Big Finish before and you pitched an idea to Scott Handcock (series producer). He said yes, and then you started talking to me about it in the park over the summer. With permission, we decided to go for it together. That's how that came about.

**AV:** What was it like writing for **Dorian**? Did you enjoy the experience?

**JW:** I did enjoy it. It was immensely fun but also challenging. I found it a really exciting process.

**AV:** And what was it like writing with me?

**JW:** I think we worked great together. As a team. We both took on different roles. A lot of the time you were the one with the laptop. Writing away. I sort of sat there and corrected your spelling. Brought the knowledge and threw the odd joke in.



Alexander Vlahos

## “THE JOY OF HAVING DORIAN GRAY AS AN IMMORTAL IS WE CAN SET HIM IN A DIFFERENT TIME AND PLACE IN A NEW STORY”

**AV:** Was it helpful to have me in the room? Do you think you could have written the episode on your own?

**JW:** I don't think I could have. Not by myself. It probably would have been too large an undertaking. It was great to have the guy that plays the main character as one of the writers – it's almost cheating to be honest, because you're sitting there writing away and you think, 'Oh, would Dorian say that? Would he do that?' but you don't have to worry about that because I'd just ask, 'Alex, would you do that?' – it was so much easier.

**AV:** We decided to introduce a cliffhanger into *The Mayfair Monster*, which is the first time it's been done in the **Confessions** range. Now that you've listened back to the finished episodes – as a device, does it work?

**JW:** The cliffhanger thing was kind of an experiment, wasn't it? I think it's really interesting because if you look at the episodes separately, they are very different from the other episodes in the range.

**AV:** Yes, completely.

**JW:** Individually they seem very different. Part one is more of a love story and part two is more fitting with what the listener comes to expect – but still it's also very unconventional.

**AV:** Of course we've listened to them one after the other, so that week of waiting, that inbetween time, wasn't there. Actually, what I should have done was given you part one to listen to and waited a week before giving you part two!

**JW:** Writing the cliffhanger was also interesting because we had several discussions about where it was going to be in the script. But I think where we have got it now is the best – especially with what the guys have done in the studio with it; Scott, Neil Gardner and James Dunlop. It really is perfect.

**AV:** The joy of having Dorian Gray as an immortal is we can set him in a different time and place in a new story – talk to me about *The Mayfair Monster* and the importance of where it's set.

**JW:** We've placed him at the dawn of the new millennium: 1999 and into the year 2000. It was one of our starting ideas – the whole millennium/Y2K thing. At that time, there was that fear of the 'end of the world'. That was the starting point. It later took a back seat as the story progressed – it's now a setting, as opposed to an integral plot point. It's a wonderful time to set it as that time evokes a special feeling – it's all about relationships and love and, most importantly, trust. The backdrop of the millennium sort of served as a nice mood for the story. It's crazy to think it was thirteen years ago now.

**AV:** We had to do research!

**JW:** We did.

**AV:** So, describe *The Mayfair Monster* in three words.

**JW:** Dorian. Gets. Naked.

**AV:** On audio? We can't tease people like that.

**JW:** Ha! No, it is... unexpected. I want to say violent but that's not right... volatile!

**AV:** Ooh, that's good!

**JW:** I know, it's because I'm sat here with a thesaurus.

**AV:** (*laughter*) And the other word?

**JW:** Audible?

**AV:** (*laughter*) You'd hope!

**JW:** I think it's funny. Yes, I do think it's very funny, in fact. Even though earlier we said I did a lot of the jokes...

**AV:** And on that note, thanks Jolyon.

**JW:** Thanks mate. Fancy a cuppa? **VORTEX**



# TOTALLY MEGA

**A VISIT TO THE ERA OF THE THIRD DOCTOR FOR FINAL LOST STORY **THE MEGA**, AND WHO BETTER FOR PAUL SPRAGG TO TALK TO ABOUT IT THAN KATY 'JO GRANT' MANNING AND RICHARD 'MIKE YATES' FRANKLIN?**

Hello Richard and Katy. What can you tell us about *The Mega*?

**RF:** I think it's a very interesting story. It's quite complex, [with] a very interesting anti-war theme and it comes out at the beginning in a discussion between the Doctor and Mike, in which Mike states quite clearly – which is actually the position of the British Army – that we're there to prevent war. We're not an 'I want to kill' machine and the question is how you prevent it, and Mike is saying sometimes, unfortunately, you have to use force. And Jo, of course, takes an extreme view of 'never use force'. So I think there's a very interesting theme that runs through this, and with Cassie [Bo Poraj] as

well; I think in some ways they're all aiming for the same objective, to avoid violence and killing.

**KM:** I have to be really perfectly honest with you, I lost the plot in this one! It's this massive story and I don't really know what's going on, but I'll be giving it everything I've got. What it brings for me is the fact that I'm working with Richard Franklin, which is a joy. Basically it's Jo as she was all those years ago in *Doctor Who*; it's kind of interesting to look at that back then. For me, it's of course pick the voice up, because I never use my own voice for Jo because my voice is much too butch, and my body was too girly, so to marry the two together I just lift. I've been playing the Doctor for so



Richard Franklin and Katy Manning

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**"FOR ME, IT'S OF COURSE PICK THE VOICE UP, BECAUSE I NEVER USE MY OWN VOICE FOR JO BECAUSE MY VOICE IS MUCH TOO BUTCH."**

**KATY MANNING**

long that I've almost become Jon Pertwee because I know every move that he makes. I suddenly get to a thing and I've got my hand on my hip and then I'm stroking my chin and I'm rubbing the back of my neck; all those mannerisms!

**Does it feel like old times?**

**KM:** We've only done a certain amount of it at the moment, but I'm seeing the relationship between Jo and the Doctor there. Because of the clothes she wore, people have put this sort of thing around [Jo], when in fact she was one of the girls who constantly offered her life for the Doctor's, which people have forgotten. She's up there with the great screamers; Jo hardly ever screamed. So there are a lot of untruths about Jo and I know that it's all built around the fact that I wore a miniskirt. I do have to, now, stand up and fight in Jo's corner that she actually was one of the brave; she was funny, she was caring, a great little character and, I think, very misunderstood.

**RF:** The thing is, that original line-up, which sadly has been much depleted through time, is an absolutely brilliant line-up of characters to play with. **Doctor Who** has always been a wonderful series, a wonderful story, and all sorts of very interesting other characters are brought in, not to mention the aliens. I think one should mention Barry Letts, the producer at the time,



Bo Poraj, Richard Franklin, Katy Manning and Derek Carlyle

## “LOOKING BACK ON IT NOW, WHO COULD POSSIBLY HAVE GUESSED THAT WE’RE STILL CREATING NEW STUFF?” RICHARD FRANKLIN

because he had a very clear idea of what made **Doctor Who** work and what didn’t. And one of the things is the total belief by the actors in what they are doing, in the characters that they’re playing. We all tried to pay it to the full. And certainly the characters were so strong that they’ve endured through time, and when I do something now with Katy, for instance, they’re the same two characters that they always were because they were very well rooted in the first place.

Is there a sadness that comes with the two of you and John Levene being the only remaining main cast members from the Pertwee era?

**KM:** Well, life is life. We’re all here for a period of time and some of us are here for long periods of time and some of us are here for short periods of time. Life is an adventure, as indeed so is death. I don’t even think about it because that’s an adventure I’m not having right now, but it will be an adventure because there’ll either be something or nothing.

At times, when we’re doing the DVDs and things like that, you’re suddenly looking at Roger Delgado and Jon Pertwee, people that’ve been such a huge and vital part of my life,

who’ve not only had huge input to me as an actress, but huge input to me as somebody growing up in this business. As Jo grew up, so was I. I knew nothing; I’d done one television series which had been very heavy drama and then this; there I was, it was like being given the privilege of doing television repertory with all these amazing actors, all helping me, all teaching me and Jon with all the wonderful stories. I learnt so much. And I get a strange sadness because I don’t believe when somebody’s not here. Because they’re so strong in my head, all the memories of everybody I’ve ever loved who no longer is here, I don’t believe they’re not here. And doing the DVDs, there’s a strange kind of sudden awareness that they’re not here and I think that’s why it makes me teary when we do that, if that doesn’t sound too convoluted and weird.

**RF:** May we fly the flag, I hope, for a long time. It was a very popular era and this is not trying to be big-headed, but I think it was rightly popular because we had very good writers at that particular time and it’s rightly called the classic period.

What are your main memories of the series?

**RF:** One word: happy. Looking back on it now, my memory of the series is that we were having a wonderful time, but looking back on it now, who could possibly have guessed that we’re still creating new stuff? I’m very, very lucky. But life is like this, isn’t it? Sometimes things fall into your lap and you don’t realize how lucky you are. At the time I don’t think any of us realised how lucky we were. But we do now.

**KM:** We didn’t realise everything that would follow. It had just started to happen with Jon; suddenly we got this cult following and it was all starting to explode and suddenly one wasn’t able to walk down the street without people rushing up and wanting to touch and be near you and get autographs and things. Who’d ever experienced anything like that? Not in this country. It was matinee idols in America and rock stars! This is what’s so wonderful about life; you just don’t know. Halfway across the living room, my entire life changes. That’s why I don’t like diaries; there are lots of pencil marks crossed out because things are always wonderfully changing, and we don’t control it.

And one other thing I’ve got to say: isn’t it lovely that people are now listening again? That audio is really trendy and fashionable? I think that’s wonderful because what’s beautiful about audio is your imagination. It’s like reading a book, isn’t it? It’s your take on it, and I like that. **VORTEX**

BBC

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# ORDEAL OR NO ORDEAL?

WRITER JONATHAN BARNES TANTALISES US WITH SOME OF THE SECRETS OF EPIC BOX SET **THE ORDEALS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES**

Hi Jonathan. What can you tell us about the *Ordeals of Sherlock Holmes* box set?

■ *The Ordeals of Sherlock Holmes* is – if it's not too grand a statement! – my attempt to tell the ultimate new Sherlock Holmes story. The set contains four one-hour dramas, all starring the now-classic BF team of Nicholas Briggs and Richard Earl [as Holmes and Watson], each about a different period in Holmes' life, which build into a much bigger narrative. I've tried to tell stories that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle might have given us, but with an edge – as if he'd

had more time or greater license or some slightly different perspective, perhaps.

How did you get yourself in the right frame of mind for each Holmes era? Did you revisit the books?

■ Of course! There's never been a year, I think, in the past twenty when I haven't revisited at least some of them. Having to write my own versions was the perfect excuse to go back to them once again. Watson's voice, as Doyle writes it, is highly distinctive and you really have to spend a lot of





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Nicholas Briggs, Jonathan Barnes and Richard Earl

**“I’VE TRIED TO TELL STORIES THAT SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE MIGHT HAVE GIVEN US, BUT WITH AN EDGE.”**

time immersed in the books to have a hope of sounding at all convincing. Not sure I’ve always succeeded but I’ve certainly done my best!

It’s quite a task to give yourself, a whole box set on your own. Did you ever hit a point where you felt it might be too much or was it a labour of love?

■ I’m very grateful to Nick and all at Big Finish for letting me loose on so big a project which was, as you suggest, a real labour of love. I’m not sure I ever felt it was too much, though. It is, in many ways, like a novel and I’m very proud of the results – the scripts have been just beautifully brought to life.

There’s a fine selection of nasty, violent characters in this one for Holmes and Watson to confront; which were your favourites to write and why?

■ I’m glad you think so! One of the difficulties with Holmes – and you feel this even in the original stories – is how to present him with a worthy adversary. Professor Moriarty aside, the books are full of opponents who one

Below: Nicholas Briggs and Richard Earl  
Inset: Michael Cochrane



doesn't feel offer too much of a challenge to someone of Holmes' genius-level intellect. Female characters, however, seem to make particularly strong antagonists for the detective – Irene Adler in *A Scandal in Bohemia*; Gale Sondergaard's character in the 1944 film *Spider Woman*; Cecile Stapleton in Hammer's *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. As to why this should be so... well, I think he's frightened of them, frankly! There are several strong female characters in *The Ordeals* – my favourite is probably Tess, a woman utterly opposed to Holmes and all that he stands for, played superbly in our production by Caroline Keiff.

We've got two successful contemporary Holmes series now, *Sherlock* and *Elementary*; what do you think these add to the canon, did they influence what you did (or didn't do) here, and what do you think the period setting adds to these stories?

■ The screenwriting guru Robert McKee once said that there's no such thing as a portable plot – well, the success of *Sherlock* and *Elementary* would seem to disprove that! I love Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss' take on Holmes but

“AT THE RISK OF SOUNDING GREEDY, I'VE GOT A PITCH IN MIND FOR A SECOND, QUITE DIFFERENT BOX-SET!”

what those shows also demonstrate is the imperishable talent of Arthur Conan Doyle. What's striking about *Sherlock* is not how much is changed but how little – the essentials are all in place. In many ways, Doyle's stories are about a lifelong friendship between two men – and what *Sherlock* does, brilliantly, is to reframe that relationship for the twenty-first century.

You were in studio for these stories; what and who most impressed you?

■ I was able to come to the studio for three out of the four days and I can't remember a happier time professionally. Ken Bentley's a brilliant director – brisk, highly efficient yet also very sensitive to the scripts. I felt that the process was a truly collaborative one. And he conjured up such a terrific cast – what a thrill it was to meet the remarkable Michael Cochrane and the extraordinary Blake Ritson. As for Nick and Richard... well, they've never sounded better. As Holmes and Watson, they're absolutely at the height of their powers.



Do you feel you've made your mark on Holmes with this or do you have further ideas you'd like to do?

■ I feel very fortunate indeed to have been able to work on this project and on its prequel, *The Adventure of the Perfidious Mariner*. I've still got lots of ideas for Holmes stories. At the risk of sounding greedy, I've got a pitch in mind for a second, quite different box-set! There's also another, non-Holmes story which flows out of *The Ordeals* which I'd love to tell one day.

What other projects do you have on the go at the moment?

■ I'm working on a new novel – *Cannonbridge* – which should, hopefully, see the light of day in 2015. Before then, I've been lucky enough to collaborate again with Nick Briggs – on a ghost story, just in time for Christmas. So I'm keeping busy! **VORTEX**

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## LISTEN AGAIN: **CRIME OF THE CENTURY**

**AS THE LOST STORIES  
CONCLUDE THIS MONTH,  
WE LOOK BACK TO ONE OF  
SYLVESTER MCCOY'S 'SEASON  
27' ENTRIES**

**O**ld ideas are never thrown away – sometimes, they just take years to be developed fully. That was most definitely the case with the Seventh Doctor *Lost Stories*, which were scrapped when the BBC pulled the plug on the show in 1989.

But you can't keep good ideas down, and on a suggestion from Sylvester McCoy, Big Finish set the wheels in motion to create the lost season 27.

Script editor and writer Andrew Cartmel recalls, "I became involved when David Richardson phoned me. I'd known him when I briefly worked with him at a magazine company, so I knew who he was and it was nice to be approached."

The first story recorded for the season was the one which was released second, *Crime of the Century*, which was written by Andrew and featured the debut of Beth Chalmers as new companion Raine Creevy.

Producer David Richardson says, "It's a sprawling caper of an adventure, and one that shifts between locations and characters as it builds to its big finale in which our heroes battle it out with a platoon of robots. A big challenge for any director, and I think Ken Bentley did a wonderful job with this – capturing all the contrasts and shifts, and delivering a story with its own unique tone."

The season opener, *Thin Ice*, was written by Marc Platt.

Andrew says, "I think Marc and I were writing in parallel, when he was doing *Thin Ice* I was busy doing *Crime of the Century*. We were talking a lot and reading what each other had done.

"The Cold War setting of *Thin Ice* had got me thinking, and I worked out Raine would be in her twenties or whatever by this time, and that made me think about what was happening in the world just then.

"One of the things was the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, so that came into my thinking, and I came up with Kafiristan, an archaic name for that part of the world. I felt the Soviets invading would be an interesting thing to develop.

"I remember doing research about how you fly a helicopter as part of it – it's a good thing to get a level of factual detail into a story."

Sophie Aldred was delighted to have a new companion join Ace and the Doctor in the TARDIS. "It was wonderful having Beth come along – she's just so great to work with, and really just fitted in with Sylvester and myself. She got on with us really well, and we'd worked with her before as she had a long history with Big Finish.

"We make a fantastic team. There's a grudging admiration from Raine for both the Doctor and Ace – and the fact it's someone who is standing up to Ace is quite refreshing – she's no shrinking violet." **VORTEX**

**HAVE I TOLD YOU LATELY?**

I love you. Have I told you that today?

It's not enough that you got together and decided to make the greatest multi-Doctor story ever devised. It's not enough that you cast all the living classic Doctors together, giving us a feeling of closure over Tom's absence thirty years ago in *The Five Doctors* (Thirty?? Can it really be?). It's not enough you returned to us the pleasure of hearing Geoffrey Beevers' delightfully insidious performance as the Master. But you went and released the whole thing a month early??? I love you!

Couldn't have been anticipating **The Light at the End** more, and couldn't have been more pleased! It was everything I wanted. A perfect love letter to the history of the series, wrapped in a genuinely imaginative plot. All the Doctors and companions were flawless in their performance, and where age might have changed some aspects of their styles now, their heart, timing and dedication to detail were exactly what I remember from them on screen.

If nothing else, getting Ace to interact with Six was a treat unto itself. Also please note, in **The Light at the End** Colin Baker's Doctor is simply the very best I've ever heard or seen him. On or off screen. This should be the story that all Sixth Doctor fans and Colin Baker himself points to when asked, 'How did you want to play Six?' The Sixth Doctor impressed me without losing any original characterization from the show. I am dying to see Colin as Six on screen again! But, even if that never happens, I adored every second of this story. Every facet of this audio is what I was hoping it would be. I cannot express the sheer joy you people have produced for me. It's been a very, very tough year personally, and this coats the wounds and heals the bruises for me.

Seriously, thank you. From me as a person, to whoever is reading this as a person. Thank you as a **Doctor Who** fan. Thank you as a consumer. Thank you as a fellow human being. You have made my year.

The most fun this American has ever had listening to a Big Finish audio. Well done and bravo all around!

Your fan for life,  
**Devin Copeland**

**Nick:** Cheers, Devin, that is the most fantastic email! Thank you so much for writing in. We've had so many positive responses to

*The Light at the End*. As you can imagine, I'm so pleased and proud. We are all particularly pleased that everyone liked the fact that we released it a month early. We're so pleased to have got it so right for so many people.

**COMMON PRAISE**

I just wanted to say that I really loved 1963: *Fanfare for the Common Men*. The story was so intriguing and wonderful! The Beatles erased from history? One of the best ideas you lot have ever had. The jumping around time zones and years definitely kept me on my toes keeping track of it all. And the music was great! I loved *The Common Men* singing. Those tunes will be stuck in my head for a while yet. So it is a good job they sound so good!

**James McLeod**

**Nick Briggs:** Great music by Howard Carter and the boys in the band!

**ASTONISHING GRAY**

**The Confessions of Dorian Gray:** what an astonishing series, Big Finish! I'm not the sort of person to usually contact a company directly to let them know how much I have enjoyed something – I usually rant about it on my blog – but this was simply the most sublime week's listening, one episode a night, and I had to tell you guys how much I enjoyed it. I've already contacted Scott [Handcock, producer] and Alex [Vlahos, Dorian] personally and congratulated them on their fine work, but I think the company deserves some recognition for pushing the boat out and producing something as innovative and unique as this series.

I am waiting in eager anticipation for news of a third season. Top stuff.

**Joe Ford**

**Nick:** When Scott came to me with the original idea, I could see that it might find an audience, and it did. I join you in your congratulations to Scott and his team of writers, actors, the sound designers and composer. Great work.

**CORSAIR?**

I've been a huge fan of your **Doctor Who** audios for a long time, and was wondering if it would be feasible to have a series featuring the Corsair? Or perhaps a Corsair cameo in one of the other Doctors' episodes? Just curious.

**Allison Fenner**

**Nick:** The Corsair is a new TV series character, and our licence only covers what was once called the 'classic' series.

**FROM THE THRONE**

So, there I was sitting on the throne enjoying the latest copy of *Vortex* when I got to the Feedback page and a question was asked regarding the possibility of Big Finish making audio plays with the Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Doctors. As I read it I was thinking, 'Well, everybody knows Big Finish doesn't have the rights... it'll never happen'. Then I read Nick's reply and I was so shocked I almost dropped my *Vortex* into the bowl (God knows what consequences to the space/time continuum that would've caused... especially if I'd flushed). If I understood correctly, this is now a possibility!?!? I was then perplexed by the last line of the reply: 'Perhaps this will be something for us to investigate in the future'. My perplexedness (new word there) was caused by the use of the word 'perhaps'. Listen Nick, I love the work Big Finish does and I collect all your **Doctor Who** ranges and spin-offs. I have spent a small fortune pre-ordering all those ranges (right up to December 2015... I still get excited that I am guaranteed Big Finish **Doctor Who** 'til then), but if you announced that you were releasing box sets of Nine, Ten and Eleven I would beat my way through your door and would be pumping money into your hand, eagerly and with a bit of manic drool on my chin. Let's face it, David would come back to the fold in a heartbeat. Chris... maybe you could wave a Big Finish lunch under his nose. And I'm sure Matt would love it too. And I bet the same would be said for their companions as well!

So, not wanting to go all 'Mastery' on you, but can you please pretend I am your Master and obey me by forgetting that word 'perhaps' and go out and get investigating? I love Big Finish stories as much as you love telling them and I salivate at the thought of what you guys could do with so-called 'new' **Doctor Who**...

Keep up the fantastic work!

**Robin Dal Pozzo McVay**

**Nick:** In the paraphrased style of the kind of answer they give in the Commons in the British Houses of Parliament... I refer the honourable gentleman to the answer I gave a few issues ago.

# FORTCOMING RELEASES

## DECEMBER 2013

Doctor Who: **Afterlife**  
(1.81, Seventh Doctor, Ace and Hex)

Doctor Who: **Night of the Stormcrow**  
(Fourth Doctor and Leela)

Doctor Who: **Trial of the Valeyard**  
(Sixth Doctor – Subscriber Special)

Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles:  
**The Dying Light** (8.06, Second Doctor)

Doctor Who - The Lost Stories:  
**The Mega** (4.04, Third Doctor)

The Ordeals of Sherlock Holmes **Box Set**

The Confessions of Dorian Gray:  
**The Mayfair Monster**

Bernice Summerfield: **Missing Persons Box Set**

## JANUARY 2014

Doctor Who: **Antidote to Oblivion**  
(1.82, Sixth Doctor and Flip)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor Adventures:  
**The King of Sontar** (3.1, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles:  
**Luna Romana** (8.07, Fourth Doctor)

Blake's 7: **Fractures** (1.1, Full Cast)

The Avengers – The Last Episodes:  
**Volume 1** (Box Set)

Pathfinder Legends: **Rise of the Runelords –  
Burnt Offerings** (1.1, Full Cast)

The Confessions of Dorian Gray:  
**Series: One and Two Box Set**

## FEBRUARY 2014

Doctor Who: **The Brood of Erys**  
(1.83, Sixth Doctor and Flip)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor Adventures:  
**White Ghosts** (3.2, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles:  
**The Sleeping City** (8.08, First Doctor)

Doctor Who: **Dark Eyes 2** (Eighth Doctor)

Blake's 7: **The Liberator Chronicles – Box Set 7**

Blake's 7: **Battleground** (1.2, Full Cast)

Vienna: **Series One (Box Set)**

Bernice Summerfield: **Adorable Illusion**  
(Missing Persons tie-in book)

## MARCH 2014

Doctor Who: **Scavenger**  
(1.84, Sixth Doctor and Flip)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor Adventures:  
**The Crooked Man**  
(3.3, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles:  
**Starborn** (8.09, First Doctor)

Blake's 7: **Drones** (1.3, Full Cast)

Pathfinder Legends: **Rise of the Runelords –  
The Skinsaw Murders** (1.2, Full Cast)

## APRIL 2014

Doctor Who: **TBA** (1.85, TBA)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor Adventures:  
**The Evil One** (3.4, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles:  
**The War to End All Wars** (8.10, First Doctor)

Jago & Litefoot: **Series Seven Box Set**

Blake's 7: **Mirror** (1.4, Full Cast)

## MAY 2014

Doctor Who: **TBA** (1.86, TBA)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor Adventures:  
**Last of the Colophon**  
(3.5, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles:  
**The Elixir of Doom** (8.11, Third Doctor)

Blake's 7: **The Liberator Chronicles – Box Set 8**

Blake's 7: **Cold Fury** (1.5, Full Cast)

Blake's 7: **Novel 5** (Author TBA)

Pathfinder Legends: **Rise of the Runelords –  
The Hook Mountain Massacre** (1.3, Full Cast)

## JUNE 2014

Doctor Who: **TBA** (1.87, TBA)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor Adventures:  
**Destroy the Infinite** (3.6, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles:  
**Second Chances** (8.12, Second Doctor)

Survivors: **Series One Box Set**

Blake's 7: **Caged** (1.6, Full Cast)

## JULY 2014

Doctor Who: **TBA** (1.88, TBA)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor Adventures:  
**The Abandoned** (3.7, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

The Avengers – The Last Episodes:  
**Volume 2** (Box Set)

Pathfinder Legends: **Rise of the Runelords –  
Fortress of the Stone Giants** (1.4, Full Cast)

## AUGUST 2014

Doctor Who: **TBA** (1.89, TBA)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor Adventures:  
**Zygon Hunt** (3.8, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

Doctor Who: **The Fifth Doctor Box Set**  
(Fifth Doctor, Adric, Tegan and Nyssa)

Blake's 7: **The Liberator Chronicles – Box Set 9**

## SEPTEMBER 2014

Doctor Who: **TBA** (1.90, TBA)

Doctor Who: **TBA** (1.91, TBA)

Doctor Who - The Early Adventures:  
**Domain of the Voord** (1.1, First Doctor)

Pathfinder Legends: **Rise of the Runelords –  
Sins of the Saviors** (1.5, Full Cast)





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