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Sneak Previews & Whispers



Doctor Who: Short Trips

JANUARY SEES the return of the **Doctor Who Short Trips** audio range from Big Finish, under the auspices of Michael Stevens. He says:

"David Richardson invited me to produce a series of 16 **Short Trips** stories, for monthly download publication starting in January 2015.

"At the outset I had 16 stories to commission, across eight Doctors (two apiece). Once all the storylines are approved and commissioned, it's a case of looking forward to the fully written story. Each **Short Trip** is approximately 5000 words in length, which equates to around half-an-hour's listening time. Writers have to keep their prose tight and measured in order to convey a whole adventure in that time. Short story writing is a particular art, and it requires plotting of good measure and balance.

"It's at script level that I have most to contribute: it's my responsibility to ensure that a flawless script goes into the recording studio. Close editing can be laborious and time consuming, but it's rewarding when done, particularly when the writer enjoys the process too – which several of them tell me they have!

"I hope listeners will enjoy the opportunity to hop on board for 16 trips through time and space, from far flung edges of the galaxy to more familiar corners of the Home Counties. It's a chance to be with all of the first eight Doctors, and selected companions, again, and to relish the tropes and traditions of eras past. It's certainly been a delight to help steer the TARDIS on its way." **VORTEX**



Editorial

IT'S CHRISTMAS time – there's no need to be afraid... or is there? This month features the release of *The Rani Elite*, with Siobhan Redmond succeeding Kate O'Mara in the part. Whatever you think of the Rani's TV stories – I've a friend who thinks *Time and the Rani* is the greatest **Doctor Who** story ever, while I know others who feel the complete opposite – the character is always watchable and dominates the screen, thanks to the characteristics given to her by her creators Pip and Jane Baker, and Kate's unforgettable performances. She played every line with relish and gusto, and her disinterest and disdain at the Doctor's antics were always worth watching.

The Rani's amoral, and believes the end always justifies the means – which makes her an unpredictable and dangerous foe for the Doctor.

And we're in such good hands with our new Rani. When talking to Siobhan Redmond for this issue's *Vortex* interview, I was so impressed by her passion when speaking about the part. To date, she's only had a couple of days in studio as the Rani, but my goodness, she's so enthused by playing the Time Lady, I can't wait to hear the full story now! Siobhan's obviously had a ball playing her, and the part has made an impact on her.

I've always loved Siobhan's work (I'm rewatching her with *The High Life* on in the background as I type this, and I had a bit of a crush on her in *Holby City* as Janice Taylor. When her world was crumbling after finding out her husband had been cheating on her – oh, my heart broke for her!), and her casting is just right. She's perfect.

And we all know, you can never go wrong with a Scottish Time Lord!

KENNY

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Managing Editor: Jason Haigh-Ellery

Marketing Consultant: Kris Griffin

Editor: Kenny Smith

Web Services: Hughes Media

Executive Producer: Nicholas Briggs


BFP Administration:

Line Producer: David Richardson

Miles Haigh-Ellery, Cheryl Bly
& Alison Taylor

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Scottish Time Lords are a bit like buses. You wait ages for one to appear, and then suddenly you get three at once!

REIGN OF THE RANI

THIS YEAR has seen Peter Capaldi enjoy his first full season as the Doctor, and he was joined in the finale by Michelle Gomez as the regendered, regenerated Master. Now, it's a hat-trick of Gallifreyans from Glasgow, with the arrival of Siobhan Redmond as the Rani. Siobhan has stepped into the shoes of the late, great Kate O'Mara, who tragically passed away earlier this year.

"As I understand it," Siobhan says, "when it was apparent Kate wasn't going to be able to reprise the role, she let them know through her agent she was happy for someone else to play it.

"I have to out myself now, as one of the few people in the known galaxy who's never seen **Doctor Who**. It's my USP!

I grew up in a house with no television. My auntie had a telly so I did see some bits of it over the years, and I remember seeing the Daleks, so it's not completely foreign territory for me. I've not been living under a stone – but I just never saw much telly as a kid.

"When it came back a few years ago, I was in my middle-age, and I thought it would have felt a bit weird watching it, so I've not actually seen it. I said to people I might start watching it when Peter Capaldi went into it, but I think I'm just going to be destined to never see it!"

"I've been a fan of Siobhan's work for a long time in so many different series", says producer David Richardson. "And after working with her on **Doctor Who: Revenge of the Swarm**

last year, I found her to be such a delightful person. She's also a great friend of Hugh Ross, who is a great friend of mine, so I knew she would fit right in with what we do at Big Finish. A lovely person and an accomplished actor – what more could we want?"

For those wondering about her accent as the Rani, Siobhan laughs: "I'm playing it Scottish – **Doctor Who's** hoaching with us now!"

Until now, the Rani has only been played by the one actress, but Big Finish have stayed true to her roots with the new incarnation, while developing the character. David continues: "The great thing is Siobhan doesn't try to make her the same character that Kate O'Mara did. She defines her own

'I SAID I MIGHT START WATCHING IT WHEN PETER CAPALDI WENT INTO IT, BUT I THINK I'M JUST GOING TO BE DESTINED TO NEVER SEE IT!'

interpretation, just as all the actors playing the Doctor have. She's ruthless and classy and powerful and has an amazing presence."

Siobhan confirms: "I'd never seen Kate playing it in her style, but I did do a little bit of YouTube research to see her, and she's just magnificent, isn't she? They broke the mould when they made her.

"I said to Big Finish, 'Do you want me to play it as a homage to Kate?' but they said, 'No, we want you to bring a different tack to it, as it's a different incarnation of the Rani.

"Colin [Baker] and Nicola [Bryant] are really friendly – it's a whole new world for me. There's lots of lovely people working together, who have done these off-and-on for many years, in a variety of different situations, and Colin and Nicola were just so nice to me – their mortal enemy!

"It must have been strange for Colin especially, having known and worked with Kate for so many years, but I didn't see any evidence of that at all."

Writer of *The Rani Elite* is Justin Richards. He admits: "I had great fun writing for the Rani. She's different from the Master, for example, in that she's not actually evil – but she is totally amoral, and I suppose selfish and egocentric. It's not that she wants to cause harm to others or see them suffer. She just doesn't care about other people at all. Nothing matters except herself and what she's out to achieve.

"When we rewrote it for Siobhan, I think most of the dialogue actually remained very similar. There were some narrative things that got simplified. In the first version, for example, the Rani was in disguise so that Peri and – possibly – the Doctor didn't recognise her at first. As she now looks different anyway there was no need for the disguise, so



Siobhan Richmond is the Rani!
Photos: Tony Whitmore

that simplified things. But on the other hand, continuity got more complicated – because as soon as we made this a later incarnation of the Rani (which really it has to be), then she must know what's going to happen to the Sixth Doctor at the start of *Time and the Rani*

because that's already happened for her. She can't talk about it – that's against the rules, and she wouldn't want to risk pre-warning him anyway – but there are a few occasions where she has a bit of a gloat, where it's clear she knows that even if she loses this time she'll beat him later."

Siobhan says playing a character like the Rani is a welcome break from real life for her – especially as she has nothing in common with the Time Lady.

"She's so self-contained, in a way," says the actress, "and so dismissive. She's not one to have happy chats about the past – in fact, she's quite anxious not to discuss the past. It's always interesting to play people who are full of the courage of their convictions, and it makes their lives easier, in a way.

"Obviously, and not wanting to sound too Californian about it, there are lots of things they don't pay attention to, because they are so incredibly focussed, and have no personal

Doctor Who: The Rani Elite



'I DID PUT A LOT OF ROLLERS IN MY HAIR AS A LITTLE TRIBUTE TO KATE... I PARTICULARLY ADMIRE THE FACT HER HAIR JUST DIDN'T MOVE - IF SHE FELL THROUGH THE SPACE/TIME CONTINUUM, YOU KNOW IT WOULD STAY IN ITS PLACE!'

anxieties. Someone else's hang-ups or professional deformities are as good as a holiday, as far as I'm concerned!

"It's always great fun to play these devious main characters – she's not above making jokes at other people's expense, which I also enjoyed."

David reveals that as well as playing the Rani for the play, Siobhan had to get into character for a photoshoot – and hints that Siobhan could be back as the Rani at some point soon. He laughs: "She didn't even flinch on the first day of recording when we did the photoshoot, and I asked her to wave a potato peeler around as if it was a sonic screwdriver! The illusion was later completed in photoshop, of course!"

Siobhan adds: "I did put a lot of rollers in my hair as a little tribute to Kate, I haven't done any back-combing, though! I particularly admire the fact her hair just didn't move – if she fell through the space/time continuum, you know it would stay in its place!"

Having joined the Big Finish family, Siobhan is another member of the ever-growing army of admirers of Toby Hrycek-Robinson's cooking.

"Everyone at Big Finish is just so lovely. The lunch was just amazing – if they weren't the most delightful people in the world, it would be worth doing it, just for the lunch. The cordon bleu food is just amazing."

David adds: "I can't wait until we work with her again."

Although unsure of any definite plans for a return of the Rani, Siobhan hopes to be back before too long. She smiles: "I understand there are some talks about her returning, but we'll see what happens. I hope to dust down the Rani's sparkling slingbacks at some point in the near future." **VORTEX**



DOCTOR WHO THE RANI ELITE

COLIN BAKER (THE DOCTOR)
NICOLA BRYANT (PERI)
SIOBHAN REDMOND (THE RANI)

SYNOPSIS

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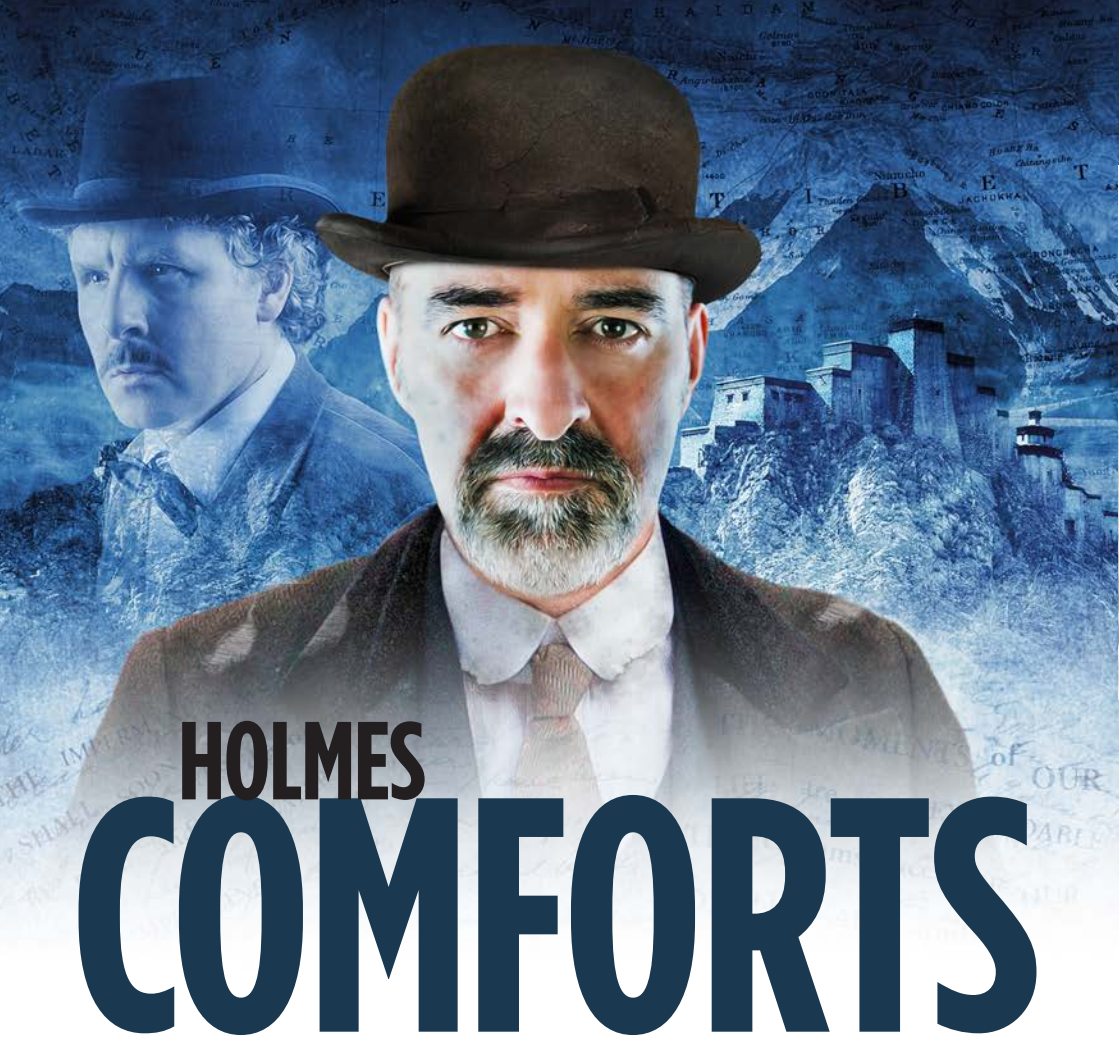
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Kenny Smith learns that Sherlock Holmes has many secrets – and this is the greatest of them, in **The Judgement of Sherlock Holmes** box set.

BIG FINISH'S *Sherlock Holmes* range is back this month, with an all-new four part adventure. Having garnered plenty of critical acclaim, Nicholas Briggs and Richard Earl return to Baker Street as Holmes and Dr Watson. The team behind the previous box set, *The Ordeals of Sherlock Holmes*, are back too, with Jonathan Barnes writing the four plays – *Poppyland*, *At The Gates of Shambhala*, *The Man in the Moonlight* and *The Tragedy of Pargetter Square* – with Ken Bentley directing again.

"Well, we've got into a bit of a pattern," says Nick. "As we were recording *The Perfidious Mariner*, the writer, Jonathan Barnes, suggested his idea for a box set called *The Ordeals of Sherlock Holmes*. So, you've guessed it, when we were

recording *Ordeals*, he was suggesting *Judgement*. Jonathan's scripts are so irresistibly good that I find myself saying, 'Yeah, okay' pretty quickly when he sends me his proposal. From there, he moves to a detailed plot synopsis and, with actually no notes at all this time, he goes to the scripting stage. By this time, director Ken Bentley is on board, so he and I give notes and Jonathan rewrites."

How does Jonathan approach writing a box set of new adventures for Sherlock? He laughs: "With a combination of trepidation, excitement and gratitude! I've been a fan of Arthur Conan Doyle's wonderful stories since I was a child so there's always a terrific relish in being let loose in his world, as well as a certain reverence for his writings and a sense of responsibility



Richard Earl and Nicholas Briggs.
Inset: Gemma Whelan.

'It feels like Conan Doyle but is, dare I say it, more speakable?'

NICHOLAS BRIGGS

A real treat is in store for fans of **Holmes** with the box set. "Well, it's all one big adventure, really," says Jonathan, "a proper, no holds barred four-hour epic. There's something appropriate about it coming out at Christmas. I'm hoping it will be a real seasonal treat. It all takes place during the years when Holmes was supposed to have died at the Reichenbach Falls alongside Professor Moriarty but when he was actually travelling the world, disguised (for reasons which Doyle

never quite makes clear!) as a Norwegian called Sigerson.

"These explorations – full of blood and thunder derring-do as well as a more spiritual quest – are set alongside Watson's own, distinctly peculiar experiences during this era. Grieving for his friend, the doctor finds himself, against his will, being drawn into a mystery which begins with the arrival of a tormented clergyman in his consulting room late one summer's afternoon. It



in presuming to add to them. Of course, once I actually sit down to write, I have to set all of this to one side and just concentrate on telling a rattling good yarn.

"To Nick, I pitched the central idea – that this would be a sequence of tales set primarily in the years when Holmes was missing, presumed dead – and, to my great good fortune, he encouraged me just to go away and write it. After the first draft, he and the peerless Ken Bentley had some great notes and guidance."

Nick adds: "I've learnt that Jonathan Barnes can be trusted. I really do love his work. It feels like Conan Doyle but is, dare I say it, more speakable? It has the tang of authenticity about it without being slavishly authentic. Jonathan is very daring and creative."

With so many people having created their individual interpretations of **Sherlock Holmes** over the years, which voice does Jonathan hear when he's writing the lines?

"It is always Doyle's Sherlock that I try to write – the original man! – and I put out of my mind all other performances, iterations and variants. A satisfying pastiche needs, I think, to sound as Doylean as possible – as a writer, despite what his critics might believe, he always had a very distinct voice. That said, you can push things quite far. The walls of Doyle's invented universe are surprisingly elastic! In terms of writing the characters themselves, Nick and Richard Earl are so very accomplished that I can simply write my ideal Holmes and Watson then sit back and watch in awe as they interpret. I don't have to worry either about writing anything that's outside their limitations as actors as they don't seem to have any!"

may not altogether surprise you to learn that these two strands, initially discrete, are revealed, eventually, to be profoundly (and perilously!) connected."

Doctor Who fans who know their stuff often remember throwaway references that writers have picked up on in later years – are there similar things for fans of **Sherlock Holmes** lore to tap into?

"Of course!" says Jonathan. "Doyle filled his stories with gaps, ellipses, loose ends, unexplained allusions, mentions of old cases, tantalising hints and throwaway suggestions. The canon (as fans have playfully named the stories) is shot through with opportunities for new adventures. The gap between Holmes' 'death' at the Falls and his subsequent reappearance (what aficionados call 'the Great Hiatus') has long proved especially irresistible to writers. I'm no exception and I've always wondered how the detective spent this time.

"Certainly, Doyle doesn't give us much more than this: *I travelled for two years in Tibet, therefore, and amused myself by visiting Lhasa, and spending some days with the head lama. You may have read of the remarkable explorations of a Norwegian*

The Judgement of Sherlock Holmes

named Sigerson... I then passed through Persia, looked in at Mecca, and paid a short but interesting visit to the Khalifa at Khartoum the results of which I have communicated to the Foreign Office. Returning to France, I spent some months in a research into the coal-tar derivatives, which I conducted in a laboratory at Montpellier, in the south of France.

"So, yes, a fair amount of extrapolation was required! But I've also always wondered – in some ways even more – how poor Watson got by whilst Holmes was travelling. It would not have been easy for him, I think, this dark time. He would have had to have dug deep into his reserves of resilience and courage just to survive..."

Nick has been delighted at the successes of all of the previous plays. He explains: "I think the real success is that we've never really had a bad review. Richard and I seem to have been accepted as a credible duo. We're all very proud of that. Richard is, of course, painfully modest to the point of ridiculousness, but I think we all feel a little humbled that we've been welcomed by devotees of the Great Detective."

What can **Holmes** – and indeed non-**Holmes** fans – expect from this set? Nick adds: "The brilliant thing about the way Jonathan writes is that his stories work for people who know all about Holmes or someone who – if there is such a person – who knows nothing about **Holmes**. They are good stories. And this one is particularly intriguing, because it's about that time when Watson thought Holmes was dead.

"What Jonathan has cleverly done here is weave a story that really does engage. You'd think it wouldn't work with Holmes and Watson being separate, with Watson not knowing Holmes is alive, but there's a rather clever way he's got over that problem and indeed made it a strength. There's a framing sequence that we revisit from time to time throughout, and the juxtaposing of scenes really does interweave Holmes and Watson's experiences. And the plot itself is a truly dastardly and scary thing!

"I have so many favourite things I do for Big Finish. I feel very lucky. The only thing I feel I can legitimately complain about is having too much to do. But then, that sounds very churlish. The central thing for me about doing **Holmes** is the trusting

'I think the real success is that we've never really had a bad review.'

NICHOLAS BRIGGS

of others. Trusting Jonathan to write great stuff, trusting Ken to do a great job of directing, trusting the other performers, particularly Richard as Watson, and trusting Jamie Robertson to do a brilliant job of the sound design and music. Being in the studio, playing Holmes is a beautifully freeing experience. It's also a vital part of my job as executive producer. That role puts me in a 'boss' role. I'm a manager of people.

"And the best way to be a manager is to have experience of the jobs the people you're managing are doing. I write, I direct, I produce, I do sound design and I compose music. I can't do cover design – that's a skills gap of mine! Naturally, I act... but there's something very different about playing the leading character. I've done it a lot on stage over the years, but playing the leading man in an audio series is a timely reminder to me of the weight of responsibility this puts on actors. Every time I do it, it gives me renewed respect and understanding for those who play the leading characters in all our ranges. So, aside from it being a brilliant part and a joy to play, it's a great life lesson for me."

Jonathan adds: "I've always been so thrilled by the final result. Sitting in on recordings is a treat but listening to the full story on CD is unbeatable. Acting, direction, sound design, music – all are absolutely first-rate, enriching and deepening my story, bringing out the best of it and skilfully disguising my flaws! I'm very proud of the earlier **Holmes** stories that I've written for Big Finish – *The Adventure of the Perfidious Mariner* and *The Ordeals of Sherlock Holmes* – and it's my hope that *The Judgement* will prove a worthy successor. Indeed, it may even be the case that these tales, subtly interconnected, are building, inexorably, to a crescendo..." **VORTEX**



THE JUDGEMENT OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

Sherlock Holmes had many secrets. This is the greatest of them. Our knowledge of the life and career of Mr Sherlock Holmes is necessarily partial and inexact. Riddled with lacunae and ambiguities, its parameters are defined chiefly by what his friend and colleague, Dr John Watson, saw fit to record. One

era in particular – those enigmatic years in which, believed dead at the Reichenbach Falls, the Great Detective roved the world incognito – has been shrouded in obscurity and doubt, the particulars of that time too terrible and too strange to be set down in full. At least, that is, until now...

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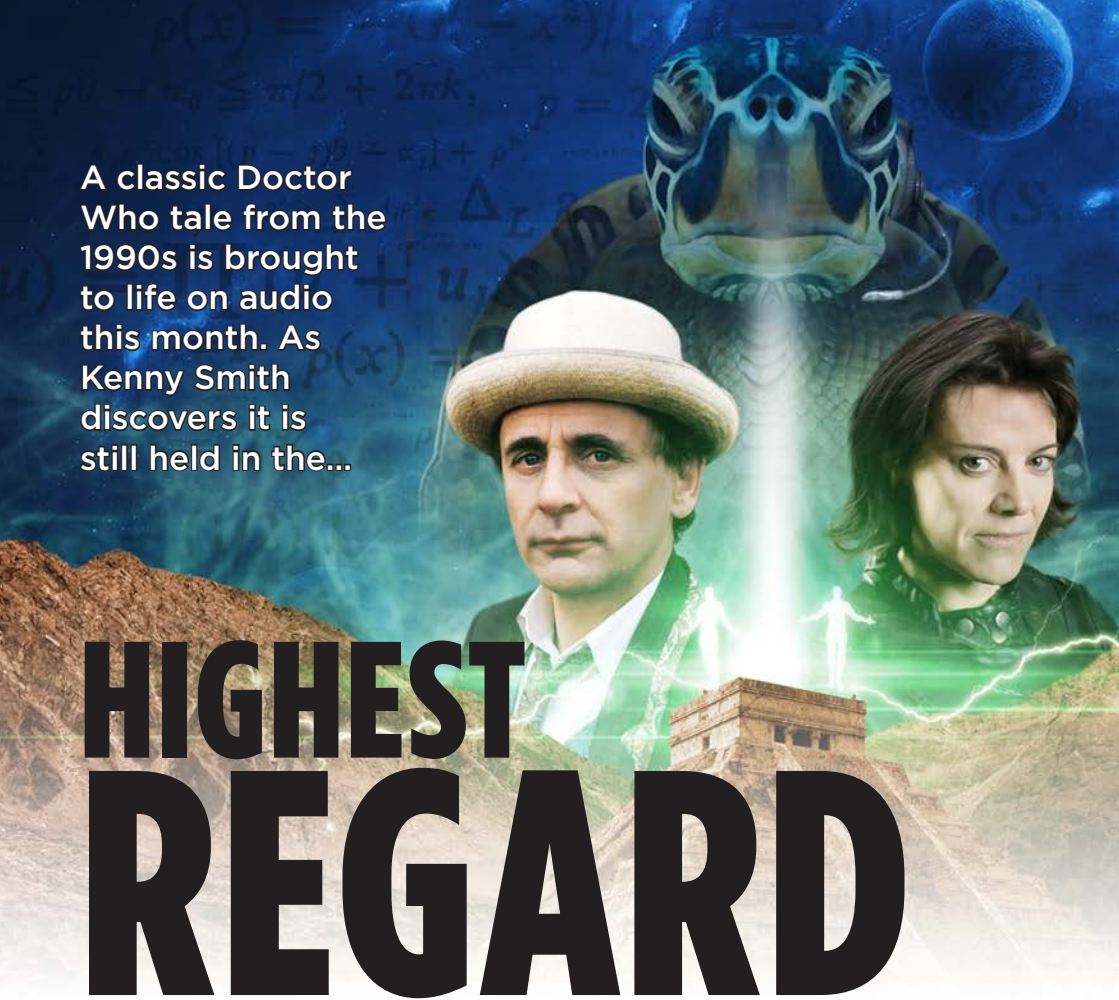


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A classic Doctor Who tale from the 1990s is brought to life on audio this month. As Kenny Smith discovers it is still held in the...

HIGHEST REGARD

THE HIGHEST Science is one of those Doctor Who novels that everyone fondly remembers – Bernice Summerfield’s first solo trip with the Seventh Doctor, the introduction of the memorable tortoise-like Chelonians, and the first Who story by future TV show writer Gareth Roberts.

Two years ago, Big Finish released an adaptation of Paul Cornell’s *Love and War*, to commemorate the 20th birthday of Bernice Summerfield, and it started a clamour for more adaptations of classic original Who novels. With versions of three of Gareth’s classic Tom Baker adventures coming next year, along with Russell T Davies’ *Damaged Goods*, Big Finish are again giving the fans what they want.

“It was one of those no-brainers”, says producer Cavan Scott. “When I was asked to take over as producer of the New Adventures adaptations, I started asking people which ones they would like to see, and *The Highest Science* was on every single list.

“Everyone remembers it really fondly, as it was Gareth’s first published Doctor Who story, it introduces the Chelonians, and there’s lots of interconnected events which shouldn’t happen but are connected by the Fortean Flicker. It really does sum up that era of the New Adventures.

“The other reason was that I wanted to give Benny a story on her own with the Doctor. “We’ve tried to keep this as near the book as we possibly can, although we’ve had to change some things for modern sensibilities, but we’ve found a way around it. We wanted to keep it as pure as possible.” Gareth himself said: “It’s deeply strange to have had a career long enough that you can be put in a box set! Or is it ‘boxed set’? I’m not sure. I’ve tried to keep myself away from the Big Finish version cause I didn’t want to put anybody off. I wanted everyone to have a free hand – and also I’m looking forward to hearing it so didn’t want to spoil myself!”

Handling the adaptation is Jacqueline Rayner. Cav explains: “Jac did *Love and War*, and of course, she adapted the very



Sylvester McCoy heads up the cast of the Big Finish adaptation of classic 1990s Doctor Who novel *The Highest Science*.

need to keep in character stuff, or what's the point of dramatising it?

"There were two enormous challenges with *The Highest Science* – the first was that it had to be written for a pretty small cast, so a lot of characters had to be dropped or merged. We managed to stretch it out by doubling up some voice-treated roles and by having some characters who'd only be needed for one recording day – but that added extra challenges as it restricted the characters' interactions. (I did spreadsheets!)

Director Scott Handcock brought the recent **New Adventures of Professor Bernice Summerfield** box set to life, and he was delighted to work with Sylvester McCoy and Lisa Bowerman again.

He says: "The Doctor and Benny are obviously a joy to direct. They're both so established, and even

'We've tried to keep this as near the book as we possibly can.'

first New Adventures for Big Finish, so in many ways we're going back to Big Finish's roots – and it was a no brainer to ask Jac."

"*Love and War* wasn't that long ago," says Jac, "so I'd already got back into the adaptation zone. The challenge is always the same – keeping the shape of the original despite all the restrictions posed. What you'll find with authors like Paul and Gareth is that everything is intertwined – nothing happens in isolation, so things which may initially seem ripe for cutting turn out to be essential to the story. Great for the reader, aaaargh! for the adaptor. Then, because you have such limited space to tell the story, you need to make sure everything in the adaptation is necessary – but at the same time you

though Sylvester and Lisa have only worked together a handful of times over the last 15 years, they slip effortlessly back into their dynamic. And of course, it's still early days for Benny, which means they both get interesting material to play with as their experience and relationship develops."

As director, Scott had the tough task of finding a talented cast to bring the play to life. "Sheldukher is a really tricky character in a lot of ways," says Scott. "He has the potential to be cartoony because he is absolutely a villain. Some of the lines he has – 'reports of my breath have been greatly exaggerated' – are sublime, but it meant I needed someone who could embrace the fun of the role, while at the same time giving him the credibility he needs. His reputation precedes him – he's extreme – and Dan Brocklebank gives his mania a twinkle that keeps the threat fun but real.

"His associate Rosheen is a far more sympathetic character and Sinead Keenan gives her a really dry wit and intelligence. She's a brilliant balance to Dan, and even when she's been thrust into the most extreme scenarios, she's constantly questioning and involved in the story. And blimey, does she go through a lot!

"The Cell was a bit of a tough one – it's one of the key players in the story (it gets them all to Sakkrat, after all) – but

Doctor Who: The Highest Science

could easily have just been a monotonous computer type. Reading the script, however, you get a real sense of its innocence, so I wanted somebody who could bring a childlike naïveté to it. With that in mind, Sarah Owens was always top of my list. She's vulnerable, intelligent, and projects a character with enormously but minimal experience or exposure to the outside world."

One of the biggest challenges was finding the voice for the Chelonians, which have been so memorable as villains they earned a mention in *The Pandorica Opens* on TV. "The Chelonians were really difficult in some ways, because they've been so established. I think Cav went to Gareth and asked for his thoughts, and Neil Gardner worked up some test voice effects – and, of course, we had to do something that could work in the upcoming adaptation of *The Well-Mannered War* – so it was all quite complex. Ultimately, they

'The Chelonians have been so memorable as villains they earned a mention in *The Pandorica Opens* on TV.'

couldn't sound robotic, so the effect had to be subtle. Instead, their nature had to be conveyed in the actor's performance.

"In that sense, we were really lucky to have Tom Bell on board. Not only is he a brilliant actor, he's also a massive *Doctor Who* fan, so actually came in with his original copy of the 90s Virgin novel. We both had similar thoughts about playing up the tortoise, drawing upon mention in the novel of them chewing on leaves and the like, and he created a lovely familial dynamic between Fakrid and Jinkwa.

"Usually, I try to avoid doubling up major roles – particularly ones that interact with each other as much as Fakrid and Jinkwa do – but having Tom play both roles allowed for a lovely continuity. They're both very different characters, but you get the sense that they share a common bond. I think Tom was indirectly channelling Stephen Fry and Hugh Laurie from *Blackadder Goes Forth!*"

Although it's been a long journey for all involved, a new take on a familiar story is on its way. Scott explains: "It's always tough taking a story meant for one medium and converting it to another, and Cav's been instrumental in ensuring Jac Rayner's adaptation focuses on all the right areas and makes it a cracking audio adventure in its own right. I've worked with sound designer Neil Gardner on loads of projects before now – he's an absolute genius – and Howard Carter's provided us with the most sublime score, leading the listener through the various layers and really helping to guide the story."

Gareth adds: "I look back on the story with great affection. I was so young then – and I've forgotten so much I'm intrigued to hear what it's all about."

Cav concludes: "There's more book adaptations that have been announced, with *Damaged Goods* next year, and I can say we're working on a couple more at present. The good thing is they're going down really well and people seem to want more – and if that remains the case, I'm sure people will get more."

VORTEX



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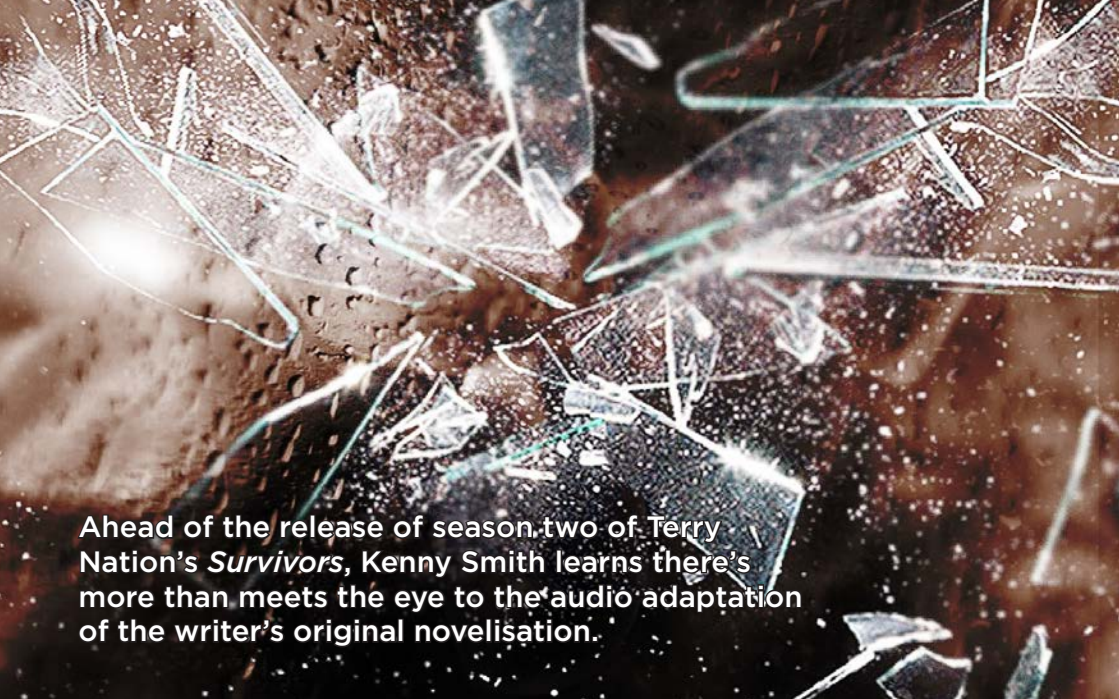
A promotional image for the audio drama 'Frankenstein'. It features two men in 19th-century attire. The man on the left is clean-shaven with short brown hair, wearing a white shirt and a dark vest. The man on the right is bald with a prominent, jagged scar across his forehead and a dark, bruised area around his left eye. He is wearing a dark, heavy coat. The background is a misty, outdoor setting with a large, dark structure in the distance.

ARTHUR DARVILL AND NICHOLAS BRIGGS IN
FRANKENSTEIN

BY MARY SHELLEY DRAMATISED BY JONATHAN BARNES

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Ahead of the release of season two of Terry Nation's *Survivors*, Kenny Smith learns there's more than meets the eye to the audio adaptation of the writer's original novelisation.

SURVIVOR INSTINCT

WHEN BIG Finish released the first series of *Survivors* earlier this year, there was universal acclaim for the box set. All four plays garnered critically positive reviews, with praise – rightly – being lavished upon the series (for example, Paul Simpson at Sci-Fi Bulletin awarded 10/10, saying “There’s been a lot of talk about this being the best thing that Big Finish has ever done, and I would agree... A triumph across the board.”).

Ahead of the release of the highly anticipated series two, Big Finish have secured the audio rights to Terry Nation's original 1976 novelisation of the show, based on the events shown on television, and is available this month.

“I thought it was the perfect companion piece to our original full cast audios,” producer David Richardson says. “It gave us an opportunity to witness the opening of the story for Abby, Greg and Jenny (even if the course of the novel does differ from the canon of the TV series).”

The novelisation tells the tale of Abby Grant, as she ventures out into the streets of a devastated Great Britain,

with her husband having died, and she does not know the fate of her son. Along the way, she encounters Jenny Richards and Greg Preston.

In the first Big Finish series, Lucy Fleming and Ian McCulloch returned to the parts of Jenny and Greg, while Carolyn Seymour briefly featured as Abby. The audiobook is read by Carolyn, and David was delighted to ask her to perform the task. He said: “Carolyn is sheer class, and much of the novel is centred on the character of Abby and her search for her son Peter. Carolyn did a wonderful job – recording the whole thing in just two days, and she brings so many rich characters and voices to the reading that it feels like a cast of thousands! There are major differences, but I like the fact that the novel is self-contained and its own world.”

Carolyn, who now lives in the south west of France, returns to the UK several times a year and was delighted to be able to bring the novelisation to life.

She explains: “Being asked to do the talking book was a total surprise to me, as it’s a very different story. I hadn’t

read it before, and hadn't realised Terry Nation felt in a particular way about the characters, so it was a real shock."

Having left *Survivors* behind in the 1970s, Carolyn – who went on to appear in numerous TV shows including *Hart to Hart*, *Cagney & Lacey* and *Magnum, PI*, *Star Trek: The Next Generation* and *Quantum Leap*, admitted that returning to the part of Abby wasn't something she anticipated happening. She says: "I didn't expect any of this to happen at all – I had no idea anybody was doing this, but of course, I'm very glad that Big Finish are."

"I love doing it – we are such good friends, all of us who worked together on the show, even though at the time we didn't have a good time with the producers, so this is just fantastic with Big Finish."

Carolyn feels that the story of *Survivors* is more important than ever in the 21st century. "Nowadays, it's so relevant, and very apt when you think of

'NOWADAYS, IT'S SO RELEVANT, AND VERY APT WHEN YOU THINK OF THE DANGER THAT WE'RE FACING TODAY.'



COMING SOON!

THE SURVIVORS SERIES TWO

1: DARK RAIN

BY KEN BENTLEY

Months after the plague, storms batter the country. As Abby resumes the search for her son, Jackie and Daniel fight for their lives.

2: MOTHER'S COURAGE

BY LOUISE JAMESON

Introducing: Fiona Sheehan as Molly
The search for Peter leads to Aberystwyth, and a community of women who have cut themselves off from the outside world. But what appears to be a safe haven could be nothing of the sort...

3: THE HUNTED

BY KEN BENTLEY

Greg, Daniel and Russell need the help of survivalist Irvin Warner, who is hiding out in the Brecon Beacons. But predators are roaming in the barren countryside too...

4: SAVAGES

BY MATT FITTON

Wounded, split apart and fighting for their lives, the survivors discover that survival isn't everything...

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the danger that we're facing today with the threat of Ebola. *Survivors* has never lost its appeal, as it's so possible, and it's not too difficult to imagine that something like that could really happen."

Carolyn's scenes for series one were written and recorded late in the day to add into the other plays, but she is in from the start for series two. She reveals: "I did a couple of scenes for series one, and have also done series two, and it's great to be back with the others. That's the best part about it."

Carolyn has also been impressed by the dedication shown to the audio reincarnation of *Survivors* by David, script editor Matt Fitton, and the writing team. "The writers and producers are all devotees of the show – they are completely obsessed by it," she says. "David Richardson is an extremely clever producer – he's really quite extraordinary."

"David totally understood my character, which made a real difference from (TV producer) Terence Dudley, who didn't like strong women. Terence never understood my character and was fighting it on every level, which was very, very hard. Thankfully, David and the writers completely understand her, and that makes it much more enjoyable for me."

David feels that the audiobook adaptation is going to disturb listeners. "I powered through the edits when they arrived," he says. "Terry Nation's writing is so chilling and thought-provoking, and Carolyn gives the piece all the gravitas it needs – and more. The first disc, with the outbreak of the plague, is terrifying – a really sobering view of a society in collapse. I'm indebted to the Terry Nation estate for giving us the opportunity to record it."

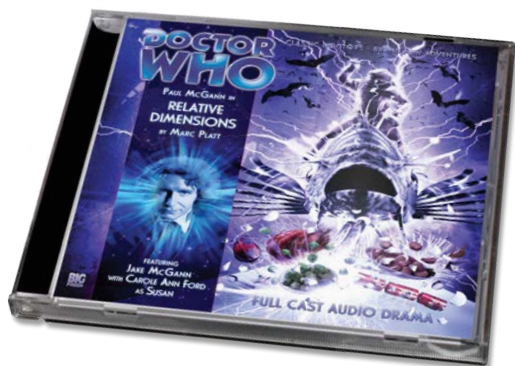
Carolyn and her colleagues completed recording on season two in October this year, which will be released in June next year, and season three will follow in November.

The audiobook adaptation will be released as a six-disc CD set and as a digital download this month. **VORTEX**

Listen again...

RELATIVE DIMENSIONS

It's the festive season, and what better way to celebrate than by inviting the family round for Christmas dinner? Kenny Smith joins the Doctor, Lucie, Susan and Alex as they prepare a turkey dinner.



THERE'S NOTHING like a family reunion, coming together and celebrating during the Christmas break, reminiscing and also looking to the future.

There have been various Big Finish stories that have been set at and around Christmas, such as *Doctor Who's* *The Chimes of Midnight* and *Death in Blackpool*, *Iris Wildthyme and the Claws of Santa*, and *Dark Shadows: A Collinwood Christmas*, and 2010's Eighth Doctor adventure *Relative Dimensions*.

Written by Marc Platt, he explains: "Alan Barnes asked for a Christmas special with just the Doctor, Lucie, Susan and Alex in the TARDIS. At that point, I had no idea what Alan and Nick had in store for Lucie and Alex (probably just as well!), although Alan did ask for a major shift in relationships at the close to mess up the Doctor's own plans for his newly-discovered grandson."

Once Susan and Alex enter the fray, it's a TARDIS-based story with just the regulars. "It's a bit of a *Beyond the Sun* moment," says Marc, "a great chance to step outside the usual helter skelter of events that make up the Doctor's life and to dig over the relationships of the regulars. They're such strong characters that they write themselves. It's one of those Christmases where families are shunted together

'A great chance to step outside the usual helter skelter of events that make up the Doctor's life.'

in an enclosed environment, and the dirty washing soon comes out. Susan has issues with her grandfather after having been left so long; Alex would probably rather not be there at all; Lucie is the awkward outsider, dutifully supportive and taken for granted. The Doctor inevitably has his own agenda. He has a lot of catching up to do with his new grandson, but he's out of his depth when it comes to doing the perfect Christmas. He can supply the ingredients, the tree, tinsel and turkey, but the dynamics of the family event elude him. And, even after all this time, the Doctor still has secrets that only family could unearth."

Marc created the character of Alex in *An Earthly Child*, but did he expect that the Doctor's great-grandson would be back so soon? "Not that quickly, no. But the concept of a new blood relation for the Doctor was obviously too good to leave sitting on the shelf for long. We are all part of the giant plan that Alan and Nick, *Guardians of Light* and *Darkness in Time*, have formulated for us all, characters and writers alike!"

He adds: "I love this one to bits. I even got to rehash the 'Leonardo visits Bethlehem' story that originally turned up in the *Unbound* short story *The Innocents* with the Geoffrey Bayldon Doctor. I love Barney Edwards's direction and Jamie Robertson's Christmas cantata of a score. I love Alex being wiser than the Doctor about the festivities and Susan being wiser than the Doctor over practically everything. And I adore the glorious Sheridan Smith (so wonderful to write for) forging her own heroic battle with the turkey, the gravy and the Doctor's relations." **VORTEX**

VORTEX MAIL

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SHORT TRIP UPGRADE?

On the back of a question in *Vortex* magazine from Colin John Francis regarding the **Short Trips** you are releasing next year. If I were to subscribe, receive the downloads and then you released them on CD (box set or similar) would I be able to pay the difference and ‘upgrade’ my purchase and receive the CDs? I too am not a fan of download only releases but I do understand it from a business model. Either way I’m very excited that you are doing them as I really enjoyed the four CDs of **Short Trips** you released. Also, if you can give me one reason to attend Big Finish Day in January I will!

Richard Jackson

Nick: I sincerely don't know what our plans for the Short Trips are beyond the download releases. Our plans often change, depending on what customers want and what we can afford. There are currently no plans to release the Short Trips on CD. But if they were to be released on CD, I can't guarantee any complex upgrading price scheme. That would probably be almost impossible to administer. Sorry if that isn't helpful. There's always a good reason to come to a Big Finish Day convention. They're the most fun conventions of all, because it's a very specific Big Finish crowd who mostly very specifically love Big Finish. Much fun is had by all!

SPACE FOR TIME AND SPACE

As much as I enjoy your various ranges, I'm rapidly running out of space at home to house them all! Could any

consideration please be given to reducing the number of CD cases in boxed sets wherever possible? The recent **Philip Hinchcliffe Presents** boxed set could, for example, have easily been accommodated in three double CD cases rather than five individual ones. It may not sound much, but when you buy as many releases as I do saving space is something of a priority. Also, it must surely be cheaper and more environmentally sound to try to reduce the amount of plastic used?

Chris Orton

Nick: Hi Chris! Good point. It's something we're currently investigating. We're looking at more cost-effective box set designs. Changes should start coming through next year.

CAMPION?

I was reading in the latest *Vortex* that David Richardson tends to make suggestions for new series based on TV programmes he loved growing up. I'd like to make a similar suggestion – **Campion**. I started watching this series simply because it starred the Doctor; but have since read – and thoroughly enjoyed – everything of Margery Allingham's that I could find. I would like to think that I am not the only one who feels this way and that this could prove a success.

Ken Merchant

Nick: Thanks, Ken. It's a lovely idea. Not sure it would have a big enough audience. Mind you, if you presented us with a thousand signatures on a petition...

SCORCHIE LOVE!

Encore of the Scorchies – amazing. A bravura performance from everybody (including the score by Howard Carter and James Goss) and the plot by James also. Some lovely jokes, some great scenes of pathos in the middle of the mayhem. This really should win awards (and not just DWM). I really cannot say how much this deserves to be heard by everyone. It really did sound like a live recording of a stage production with full orchestra and vocalists of the highest calibre. A huge round of applause and a standing ovation.

Bryan Simcott

Nick: They all did a wonderful job, didn't they?

MORE DOYLE?

Are you still planning on doing the Conan Doyle **Sherlock Holmes** adaptations? I really enjoy the new ones, I'm just not all that familiar with the classic **Sherlock Holmes** either and I feel it's a nice way to bring myself up to speed on those as well. I just haven't heard anything about it since my question that was answered on the Christmas podcast, so I fear that you guys aren't planning on doing them anymore.

James Sparrow

Nick: We are planning on doing it. Unfortunately, our production schedule hasn't allowed for it yet. It will happen. Apologies for the delay, James. There's just too much going on in my life at the moment. Not that I'm complaining...

Coming up...

RELEASE SCHEDULE

New and forthcoming audio releases

DECEMBER 2014

■ Doctor Who: *The Rani Elite*

(194, Sixth Doctor and Peri)

■ Doctor Who – The Early Adventures: *An Ordinary Life*

(1.4, First Doctor, Steven and Sara)

■ Doctor Who: *Trial of the Valeyard*

■ Doctor Who: *The Highest Science*

■ Blake's 7: The Classic Audio Adventures 2: *Fortuitas* (Full Cast)

■ The Judgement of Sherlock Holmes: *Box Set*

■ Survivors *Audiobook*

(read by Carolyn Seymour)

JANUARY 2015

■ Doctor Who: *Mistfall*

(195, Fifth Doctor, Tegan, Nyssa and Turlough)

■ Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *The Exxilons*

(4.1, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

■ Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor by Gareth Roberts *Box Set: The English Way of Death/The Romance of Crime* (Fourth Doctor and Romana)

■ Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor by Gareth Roberts: *The English Way of Death* (Fourth Doctor and Romana)

■ Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor by Gareth Roberts: *The Romance of Crime* (Fourth Doctor and Romana)

■ Doctor Who – Short Trips: *Flywheel Revolution* (05, Download only)

■ The Avengers – The Lost Episodes: *Volume 3* (Box Set)

■ Pathfinder Legends: *Rise of the Runelords – Spires of Xin-Shalast*

(1.6, Full Cast)

■ Blake's 7: The Classic Audio Adventures 3: *Mindsett* (Full Cast)

■ Dark Shadows: *Bloodlust – Episodes 1-7* (Full Cast)

FEBRUARY 2015

■ Doctor Who: *Equilibrium*

(196, Fifth Doctor, Tegan, Nyssa and Turlough)

■ Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *The Darkness of Glass*

(4.2, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

■ Doctor Who – Short Trips: *Little Doctors* (06, Download only)

■ Blake's 7: The Classic Audio Adventures 4: *Ghost Ship*

(Full Cast)

■ Dark Shadows: *Bloodlust – Episodes 8-13* (Full Cast)

■ Vienna – Series 2 (Full Cast)

■ Gallifrey: *Intervention Earth* (Full Cast)

MARCH 2015

■ Doctor Who: *The Entropy Plague*

(197, Fifth Doctor, Tegan, Nyssa and Turlough)

■ Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *Requiem for the Rocket Men*

(4.3, Fourth Doctor, Leela and K9)

■ Doctor Who – Short Trips: *Time Tunnel* (07, Download only)

■ Doctor Who: *Dark Eyes 4*

(Eighth Doctor)

■ Blake's 7: *The Liberator Chronicles – Box Set 11*

■ Blake's 7: The Classic Audio Adventures 5: *Devil's Advocate*

(Full Cast)

■ Blake's 7: Lucifer Revelation: *Audiobook of Novel* (Read by Paul Darrow)

APRIL 2015

■ Doctor Who: *The Defectors*

(198, Seventh Doctor)

■ Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *Death Match*

(4.4, Fourth Doctor, Leela and K9)

■ Doctor Who – Short Trips: *The Ghost Trap* (08, Download only)

■ Blake's 7: The Classic Audio Adventures 6: *Truth and Lies*

(Full Cast)

■ Terrahawks *Volume 1* (Full Cast)

■ Jago and Litefoot: *Series Nine*

Box Set

MAY 2015

■ Doctor Who: *Last of the Cybermen*

(199, Sixth Doctor)

■ Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *Suburban Hell*

(4.5, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

■ Doctor Who – Short Trips: *The King of the Dead* (09, Download only)

■ Doctor Who – Novel Adaptations *Damaged Goods / Well Mannered War* (Special edition)

■ Doctor Who – Novel Adaptations *Well Mannered War* (Fourth Doctor)

■ Doctor Who – Novel Adaptations *Damaged Goods* (Seventh Doctor)

■ Blake's 7: *Book 7: Lucifer: Genesis*

■ The Omega Factor: *Series 1 Box Set* (Full Cast)

■ Dark Shadows: *Panic*

JUNE 2015

■ Doctor Who: *The Secret History*

(200, Fifth Doctor)

■ Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *The Cloisters of Terror*

(4.6, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

■ Doctor Who: The First Doctor Companion Chronicles – *Box Set 1*

■ Doctor Who: Short Trips *The Sisters of Serenity* (10, Download only)

■ Survivors – Series 2 *Box Set* (Full Cast)

■ Dark Shadows: 46: *The Curse of Shurafa*

JULY 2015

■ Doctor Who: *We Are The Daleks*

(201, Seventh Doctor and Mel)

■ Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *The Fate of Krelon*

(4.7, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

■ Doctor Who – Short Trips: *Dark Convoy* (11, Download only)

■ Counter-Measures – Series 4 *Box Set* (Full Cast)

■ The Avengers – The Lost Episodes: *Volume 4* (Box Set)

■ Dark Shadows: 47: *And Red All Over*

AUGUST 2015

■ Doctor Who: *The Warehouse*

(202, Seventh Doctor and Mel)

■ Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *Return to Telos*

(4.8, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

■ Doctor Who – Short Trips: *Foreshadowing* (12, Download only)

■ Blake's 7: *The Liberator Chronicles – Box Set 12*

■ Dark Shadows: 48: *TBA*

SEPTEMBER 2015

■ Doctor Who: *TBA* (203, TBA)

■ Doctor Who: *TBA* (204, TBA)

■ Doctor Who – The Early Adventures: *The Yes Men*

(2.1, Second Doctor)

■ Doctor Who – Short Trips: *Etheria*

(13, Download only)

■ Dark Shadows: 49: *TBA*



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