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GO FOURTH!

**TOM BAKER IS BACK AS THE DOCTOR FOR
THE ROMANCE OF CRIME AND THE ENGLISH WAY OF DEATH**

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ISSUE 71 • JANUARY 2015

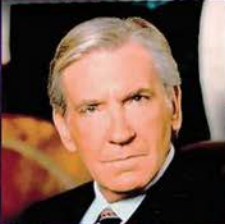
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Sneak Previews & Whispers



TerraHawks

TERRAHAWKS, STAY on this channel. This is an emergency!" With those nine words, we're just months away from the release of the first Big Finish series of Gerry Anderson and Christopher Burr's *TerraHawks*, the hugely-popular puppet show from the 80s.

The show was sadly ended after three series, despite scripts being ready for a fourth.

Producing the audio series is Gerry's son Jamie Anderson, who has picked up the baton left by his late father, saying: "It's bizarre, it's a case of doing the right thing – it would not be right to just stop and sit and let it rest – it's sort of the equivalent of Disney, and what they are doing today. We're continuing the legacy.

"I wanted to do this sort of thing when I was a kid, but my dad was worried about me having bad experiences in the industry, but doing what I'm doing feels like the right thing. In working with stuff associated with his name, it's accelerated the grieving process for me. It doesn't fill me with sadness any more – it's become a joy."

Jamie believes that *TerraHawks* has found itself the perfect home with Big Finish. He explains: "The great thing was with the characters and the comedy, that give it a unique identity, and we've been able to develop and explore that for the audios.

"Nick Briggs and Big Finish have given me the autonomy to do what I wanted, and have stories that do feel like they are the next few episodes that would have followed on from the original television series.

"For episode one, my little hand-crafted intro to the series, we've tried to lampoon the info-dump episodes you get in so many shows, to introduce the characters and set-up. I can't wait to hear it all come together. I'm on tenterhooks waiting for the first edits to come in."

VORTEX

Editorial

WHEN PLANNING ahead for this month's issue of *Vortex*, David Richardson suggested that I might speak to Tom Baker, to preview his new season of adventures, and the Gareth Roberts novel adaptations. That was one of those moments when excitement and fear hit me in equal measure. I mean, this is Tom Baker! TOM BAKER! I was born 11 days after he made his first appearance in *Planet of the Spiders*, so growing up, he was my Doctor. Of course, I love all of the incarnations of the Doctor, but there's always something a little bit special about speaking to your first love.

Over the years, through my day job as a newspaper reporter, I've met politicians, film stars, and sporting greats, but none of them filled me with that same feeling of fear that there was in talking to Tom.

But I needn't have worried – from the word go, he was fantastic. He very quickly put me at ease with his warm, friendly laugh, and I think we all recognise that he is a genuine national treasure in Britain.

Like you, I can't wait to hear the adaptations of *The Romance of Crime* and *The English Way of Death*. Having been a fan all the way through those wilderness years of the 1990s, I bought every Virgin **New and Missing Adventure**, and later the BBC novels, and I love hearing how Big Finish have adapted them and brought them to life.

But hearing the Doctor and Romana again is something I'm really excited by, especially as Gareth's books were such fun, perfectly evoking the banter and spirit of Season 17 on television.

And, with the first in a new series of adventures for the Doctor, Leela and K9, January's a good month to go Fourth...

KENNY

ISSUE 71 • JANUARY 2015 (HAPPY NEW YEAR!)

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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THE FOURTH DIMENSION

Tom Baker tells Kenny Smith it's another busy year for the Fourth Doctor

“YOU KNOW,” says Tom Baker, dropping his voice in a conspiratorial whisper, “I’m thinking of leaving my body to Big Finish when I pass away. They could have it embalmed, and put me in their lobby. Then, people could come and see me and pay money to have their picture taken with me.”

He pauses, and then roars with laughter: “Maybe I could get some advanced royalties on it!”

Tom is on great form today. We’re talking at the end of November, looking ahead to the fourth season of **Fourth Doctor Adventures**, and the release of **The Fourth Doctor by Gareth Roberts** box set. He continues: “You know, I’m going to be 81 very soon, but with Big Finish, we’re recording so far in advance that I won’t live to hear them! I think we’ve recorded about four years in advance – that’s fantastic, isn’t it?”

“At the rate we’re recording, you probably won’t be around to hear them either, Kenny!” And he lets rip with that wonderful, booming laugh again.

For someone who was once so reluctant to become involved with new audio adventures for many years, Tom is now the perfect ambassador for Big Finish. He said: "I do listen back to them – what they do in post-production is absolutely terrific, isn't it? It's just marvellous.

"When I talk about Big Finish, I've found that a lot of the younger fans haven't heard of them. I don't often meet young adults who've heard them. Then, when you go to a convention, you meet the older fans who have heard them all, which is marvellous.

"When you look at the back catalogue from Big Finish, there's hundreds and hundreds of releases. There's all the

Watson, you've been away for the weekend and you seem to have changed your face.'" Tom laughs that infectious laugh, again. "Nicholas Briggs plays Sherlock Holmes a lot," he continues. "He goes up to Nottingham to do it. "He's so good as a director. He has a sublime, light-hearted touch with the nuances in the scripts. He's so good with the actors, being one himself, and he is always able to make us enthusiastic."

With Big Finish, Tom has been able to indulge in some time travelling of his own, working with his old companions again, like Louise Jameson and John Leeson. "It's always lovely to see them again," admits Tom. "I adore Louise, and



'I'm thinking of leaving my body to Big Finish when I pass away. They could have it embalmed...'



John Leeson really is the most extraordinary man – he has this wonderful voice, and goes around a lot promoting the programme, as K9. He also lectures people about wine – these days, I can't imagine having anything else but milk!

"Most of the time, we're talking about the past. People meet at lunchtimes, and they start talking about what happened at breakfast, or even five minutes ago. We're always harping back to things. Our childhoods

are so intense, and things like pop songs are often about memories. I think the greatest one of all is sung by Barbra Streisand, when she sings *The Way We Were*, by Marvin Hamlisch. I watch it on YouTube. Sometimes, these songs are so evocative, they can stop people in their tracks – and it's mainly for older people, as the younger ones don't have that large a past behind them.

"I'm a great fan of the music of Marvin Hamlisch, then when you hear Barbra Streisand – who's almost god-like in her aura and power – singing that song, and the camera pans out so you can see the people in the audience, all these middle-aged people are listening with tears running

old Doctors, with Sylvester, Colin, Paul, Peter and myself, but also all these releases based on other programmes.

"The great thing is that fans don't mind the changes in Doctor – we've all got our own audience. It's like when David Burke stopped playing Dr Watson alongside Jeremy Brett, who I adored as Holmes, and he was replaced for the next 10 seasons by Ted Hardwicke. It's amazing that Holmes didn't notice he'd changed his face: 'Oh, my dear



John Dorney goes behind the scenes at the recording of *The Fourth Doctor* by Gareth Roberts

A NOVEL APPROACH

In the booth Michael Troughton is doing something amazing.

It's the second time I've worked with Michael – the first was when he sort-of-created the Ice Warriors in my *Lost Story*, *Lords of the Red Planet*. But today, he's playing the equally sort-of-legendary artist Menlove Eward Stokes in our audio adaptation of *The Romance of Crime* – and he's pitching his panicked voice so high that he's actually making the music stand that the script pages rest on sing. It's one of the most gloriously beautiful performances I've had the privilege to witness.

And he's not alone. Frank Spiggot. The Nisbett Brothers. Percy Closed. Stackhouse, the biscuit magnate. If you're of a certain age, these are as iconic a set of characters as have ever appeared in *Doctor Who*. And yet all of them have, up to now, only existed on the printed page. There's a duty in recreating these characters in a different medium. For some listeners, this will be their first chance to meet them, so we have to do them justice. But the great thing is how everyone is at the top of their game. Marcus Garvey's Spiggot is a gorgeously under-stated contrast to Michael's exuberance. Terrance Hardiman brings all of his menace to the odious, and odoriferous, Stackhouse. There's not a weak link anywhere. I look forward to younger listeners discovering these characters for the very first time! **VORTEX**

'I just adored anybody who agreed with me, and used to get terribly insecure when they didn't.'

down their faces. They're all wondering, 'If you could do it again, would you?' It's irresistible heartbreaking, and expressed so well."

The highly-anticipated release of *The Fourth Doctor* by Gareth Roberts box set takes Tom back to 1979 for *The Romance of Crime* and *The English Way of Death*, alongside Lalla Ward as Romana, and John Leeson as K9, returning to the Season 17 period when Graham Williams was producer.

"Oh, dear, dear Graham," says Tom. "When Douglas Adams came in, there was an awful lot of fun. Graham was a lovely, gentle soul, but I didn't often agree with his views. I just adored anybody who agreed with me, and used to get terribly insecure when they didn't. I felt I knew what I was doing, and what the audience wanted, and Graham didn't always agree."

Being in studio for Big Finish is something Tom clearly enjoys, being a leading man once more at the age of 80.

He laughs: "It's wonderful, isn't it, climbing mountains and so on? Sometimes, we crack up and occasionally the girls who make our lunches will creep into the recording box and listen to us – they're absolutely floored by what we're doing as there's a lot of wit, which is all great fun!

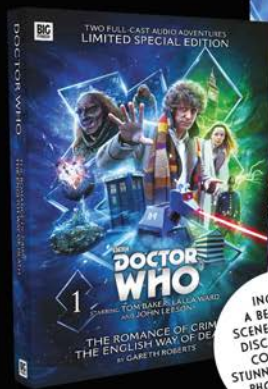
"Sometimes, I'll put in lines that I know won't go in, like seeing the villain and saying, 'Oh, I see you're not wearing any trousers today.'

"It produces an agreeable tension, and makes me feel very creative!"

The new series of the *Fourth Doctor Adventures*, and *The Fourth Doctor* by Gareth Roberts are available this month. **VORTEX**

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IT'S A RARE OCCASION IN THE DOCTOR WHO MONTHLY RANGE AS THE WRITER OF A TV STORY CRAFTS A SEQUEL TO THEIR OWN ORIGINAL TALE, BUT ANDREW SMITH TELLS KENNY SMITH THIS WAS NO...

Mist OPPORTUNITY

IT'S HARD to believe that for the best part of three decades, Andrew Smith's **Doctor Who** CV had just the one line on it – Writer, *Full Circle*. Then, in October 2010, almost 30 years to the day since the broadcast of the first episode of that Season 18 story, he returned to the **Doctor Who** universe with *The Invasion of E-Space*, for the **Companion Chronicles** range.

Since then, Andrew has become a Big Finish regular, writing not just for **Doctor Who**, but **Survivors** and **Blake's 7**.

This month, he returns to both the TARDIS and the planet Alzarius, for the sequel. "I really didn't expect it to happen," Andrew admits, "but there was something I had played about with a while back, an idea that never went anywhere, of a trilogy of Romana II in E-Space, and one of those stories was called *Mistfall*. In the end I didn't use any of the story elements from that, but I nicked the title!

"My novelisation of *Full Circle* has a passage at the end where the Marshmen return to the marsh, and I came back to that. When (script editor) Alan Barnes asked me if I had any ideas for the story, I sent a copy of that passage to Alan

and said, 'This might be a good basis.' The Marshmen have a mental communion and it's clear that their job is to protect the ecology of Alzarius. That was always going to feature, to match up with the book.

"Also, at the same time, I had provided a contribution to a book by James Goss and Steve Tribe, *The Doctor: His Lives and Times*. I had written a piece saying how much I love *The Ribos Operation*, and James also asked me to write a log entry showing what happened to the Starliner when it left Alzarius, written by the First Decider. In this, they find a new world to live on, and befriend local natives called the Haragi. I decided to use this, and among other things it's the basis for the character Drell. No one needs to have read either of these to understand things, but if they have, or come to it later, it all marries up nicely with *Mistfall*.

"It was really nice to write a sequel to my own TV story – Philip Martin has previously done it for Big Finish, although, despite having written the original, being so long ago I did have to recheck facts about *Full Circle* and what we know about E-Space."

‘My novelisation of *Full Circle* has a passage at the end where the Marshmen return to the marsh, and I came back to that.’



The cast of *Doctor Who Mistfall*, sequel to the popular 80s TV story *Full Circle*.

“I knew early on what the cliffhanger of episode two would be. The stakes are very much raised for everyone on Alzarius, and they are dealing with the consequences of that cliffhanger, in real jeopardy, throughout episode two.”

The story features a fine guest cast, with Jemma Redgrave – Kate Stewart in 21st century *Doctor Who* – taking on a key role.

“David Richardson sent over an email to myself, Matt [Fitton] and Jonny [Morris] before the studio recordings.

He asked, ‘Are you going to come along to the recording,’ and I said I could be there. He replied, ‘Oh, by the way, here’s the cast list...’, and sent me a PDF. I thought that was a bit odd as he doesn’t usually do that, and when I opened it, I just thought, ‘Oh... Jemma Redgrave... Wow!’

“She was just perfect for Decider Lana Merriion. I was so pleased with her casting, and it’s the first time she’s done a Big Finish. She was just excellent for the part.”

Andrew admits he’s excited to hear the finished play: “The writers don’t get to hear what it sounds like until it comes out – you’re

not involved in the process after the studio recording. When it’s released is the first time I get to hear it.

“Having heard the trailer, it really whets the appetite.”

Having gained plenty more life experience since writing his first *Doctor Who* story, Andrew was able to invest that in his play.

He concludes: “I didn’t want to rehash *Full Circle*.

You want to educate people a little bit more on what the characters are about, and I was a little wary at first.

“Lana Merriion is, in some ways, similar to Decider Login in *Full Circle*, but she’s her own character and is absolutely key when you get into the fourth episode.

“*Mistfall* takes another look at the role of the Decider, and the nature of making decisions. When you’re in authority, the decisions you have to make are often about choosing between two unpalatable choices.

“That’s the sort of thing I’m writing about, on a different scale, and wanted to get that across, as well as explaining something that’s unanswered in *Full Circle* – why were the Marshmen as hostile as they were in episode four? We will find out why they were so hacked off – and why they might have been quite entitled to be...” **VORTEX**



With E-Space being a pocket universe, it was explained in TV *Doctor Who* how difficult it was to get back there. Andrew explains: “The first thing to be worked out was how do they get back into E-Space and to Alzarius, and Jonny (Morris, author of *The Entropy Plague*, the third story in this new trilogy) had the idea of revisiting when Adric calculated the route back to E-Space in *Earthshock*, which is just perfect. We got that worked out fairly quickly, so the first time they came close to a CVE Adric’s calculations kick in, and the TARDIS brings them to Alzarius because that’s the only place Adric knows well and would be able to calculate co-ordinates for.”

For an audio script, listeners will discover that *Mistfall* is a very visual play. “It’s got its own tone,” says Andrew, “containing elements of, but distinct from *Full Circle*, and it moves along at quite a nice pace. I decided one of the first things we would see would be a group digging the Marshmen up.

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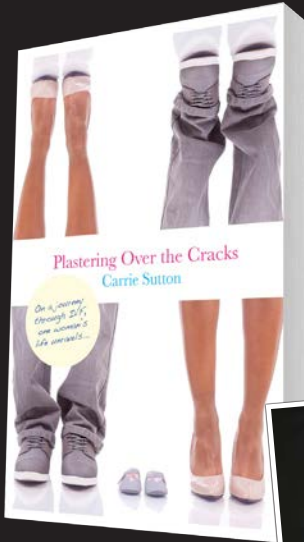
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Plastering Over the Cracks is the new novel from Carrie Sutton, author of *After the Break-Up, A Girl's Guide*, published by Big Finish Books in 2010. She tells Xanna Eve Chown about her latest work.

CRACKING UP



PLASTERING OVER THE CRACKS

"Yesterday, my world held two distinct possible futures: the one with children and the one without. Today is Sunday. I sit on the cold bathroom floor, half dressed, staring at the digital display. A big part of me knew already. I think I even knew when they gave me the little scan of it in there, the only souvenir I would ever have. A souvenir of my heart, my time and my £6000... Because that's what it has been. My investment: my time, my tears, my heart, my body. Not his. Because it is all for me, I am told. All of it. For me. Not for him. Not for us, like he said in the beginning. Just for me. And the pressure has been unbearable."



Hi Carrie. Can you tell us what the book is about?

It's the story of one woman's struggle to come to terms with her current situation, as she and her partner battle through IVF – 'battle' being the operative word! It's written in part as a diary, but we also hop backwards and forwards through time, listening in as their life together starts to come away at the seams.

It's written from the woman's point of view. What is she like?

She is a 30-something tough cookie, who has far too much to deal with and is on the brink of emotional collapse! She is torn between a career she loves, and a desire to be a wife and have kids. She tries to do her best by everyone – which means that she often ignores her own inner voice and overlooks her own needs.

What inspired you to write this book?

I had a very difficult experience of going through IVF myself, and had to watch a number of friends on similar journeys. I also witnessed two dear friends going through hugely traumatic divorces: one where there were existing children, one where there weren't any, but where her 'window of opportunity' was slipping away. I realised that the whole subject of modern relationships, especially with regards to women, children and careers, is a very interesting and tangled one.

What are your own thoughts about IVF?

I feel IVF is so very different from the way people on the outside of the process perceive it to be. You suspect it will be hard, a bit clinical, maybe painful even – but nothing prepares you for the emotional brutality. It's sold as a last resort, yes, but also as if it's almost certain that you'll fall pregnant eventually. You believe that the odds are good and that you'll be fully supported, when in fact, for the majority of women, treatment is ultimately unsuccessful. It is marketed very well. Hope, packaged beautifully! Not that hope is a bad thing, but I wanted to create a story that showed another side to it all – perhaps as a way of assuaging some of my own pain – but also to throw a different spotlight on this booming industry. I wouldn't say IVF is bad or shouldn't exist. It can and does help many people who would, without it, remain childless. For some it works. But for many it doesn't and it can destroy much along the way.

LUST FOR LIFE

Kenny Smith discovers that **Dark Shadows** has returned to its roots this month, with the arrival of a new series – *Bloodlust*.

BACK IN the 1960s, **Dark Shadows** was one of the hottest properties on American television, with millions tuning in from coast to coast to watch the daily horror soap.

Centring on the fortunes of the Collins family and the town of Collinsport, **Dark Shadows** was something that stood out from the crowd, until it ended in 1971 with its 1225th episode. But, like many of the characters in **Dark Shadows**, the series refused to die, with Big Finish bringing it back to life in 2006.

This month sees the start of a new series, which returns to the original full cast episodic format of the TV show, rather than the recent dramatic readings which Big Finish have released. Co-producer Joseph Lidster says: "We've always wanted to continue the full-cast audio series and Jason [Haigh-Ellery] gave us the go-ahead. I was very keen to do something that would be an ideal jumping-on point for new listeners and also something that was a bit of an event."

David Darlington [co-producer] adds that he wanted it: "To not be 'just a franchise spin-off'; to make something unique and distinctive that Big Finish hasn't attempted before."

What led the producers to go with the new thirteen part series? David says: "The soap opera form of **Dark Shadows** renders it distinctively different to any other franchise within which Big Finish operates; I've always thought that by only producing hour-long, largely stand-alone stories – as our dramatic readings, by default, have to be – we were slightly selling that distinctiveness short. **Dark Shadows** is, or was, a daily, half-hour soap opera and I really wanted to make something that reflected that – with characters popping in and out, proper cliffhangers, and so on.

So we started by analysing the TV show's presentation format – an episode a day for five years – and pared it down until we came up with a format that nicely reflected that while still being feasible to produce and distinctive: twice-weekly for thirteen episodes. Thirteen being a standard TV production block and, of course, unlucky for some..."

Joe added: "And I loved the idea. Doing a longer series of shorter episodes means more cliffhangers! And some of the cliffhangers in *Bloodlust* are great fun. The end of episode four is genuinely something I don't think has ever happened anywhere else in any piece of drama ever."

"I love soap operas and this is my opportunity to produce and write one. While the murder mystery forms the central strand of *Bloodlust*, there are a number of other stories and character arcs running through the series. We really approached it as a new serial drama. In the first meeting, I said to Alan [Flanagan] and Will [Howells], the other writers, that we needed to absolutely establish our groups of characters, our new families, our locations, before starting to mix things up. In many ways, it's very similar to something like *Twin Peaks*. A murder that impacts on different characters in different parts of the community which then causes ripples throughout the society."

David continues: "We really hope that the 'serial download' concept gets people talking about the event of episodes as and when they are, if you like, 'transmitted'. We're striving for 'watercooler moments', essentially."

By relaunching **Dark Shadows** in its new format, the production team have made sure it is still accessible to newcomers. "Again, this was something I said to the writers,

says Joe. "Obviously our characters have backstories but we needed to treat those backstories as a producer would in the first episode of any new drama series. For example, there's a character – Angelique – who's a witch but we can't assume that any listener would know this already. It's actually great, because it means things that we might take for granted in any other **Dark Shadows** audio are now played as big dramatic beats. It means that our supernatural characters are suddenly bigger and scarier. David Selby has played Quentin the werewolf in many of our previous audios but his first appearance in *Bloodlust* genuinely sends shivers down my spine."

David adds: "An advantage of using a mix of old and new characters, plus introducing them gradually over the course of several episodes, means that they all interact with each other in very different ways, and any information the listener needs to follow what's going on can be presented in a pretty natural way as conversational 'backstory'; meanwhile, people who've



Above: Matthew Waterhouse.
Inset: Kathryn Leigh Scott, Lara Parker and Andrew Collins.

'DOING A LONGER SERIES OF SHORTER EPISODES MEANS MORE CLIFFHANGERS!'

followed the likes of *Kingdom of the Dead*, *The Happier Dead* and *Beyond The Grave* – or, indeed, the original TV series – will perhaps occasionally be half a step ahead... but only half a step. And, maybe, their knowledge of previous stories might lead them to leap to the wrong conclusions... it's an 'equal but different' way of enjoying it."

One of the returning stars for this series is Kathryn Leigh Scott, as Maggie Evans. She says: "We've been doing these recordings for Big Finish for quite a number of years and always look forward to getting back in the studio. It's a great treat to work with my **Dark Shadows** colleagues again some 48 years after we started doing the series in 1966. I was in that very first episode playing Maggie Evans, which is my role in the new Big Finish CD. Lara Parker (Angelique) and I had a ball recording our lengthy, very dramatic scenes together. We're pals in real life; not at all the rivals our characters are in **Dark Shadows**.

"The entire experience is a pleasure. As actors do, we play the moments without giving much thought to format. We record straight through, much as we did in the original series, playing each scene and moving on. The difference is that with these recordings we rely on our voices alone to



convey everything without being able to utilize body and facial expression. It's quite fun!"

Also back as Barnabas, from the Big Finish reincarnation, is Andrew Collins. "I'm delighted to be returning as Barnabas," he says. "These are some terrific scripts, and the cast is tremendous. I can't wait to hear

the final mix! It was a privilege to once again breathe life into such an iconic character. (Can you breathe life into a vampire? You know what I mean..!)"

Listeners to the previous full cast Big Finish **Dark Shadows** range know things were left dangling at the end of the last release. "The previous full cast series, *Kingdom of the Dead*, ends on a cliffhanger which is obviously a bit tricky for us in that we want to tell a new story," says Joe. "What we've done is incorporate the repercussions of that cliffhanger later on in the series. Again, you don't need to have listened to what's come before.

"We do, by necessity, pick up the threads of *Kingdom of the Dead*," agrees David. "We just don't do so immediately or obviously or, indeed, by instantly resolving that cliffhanger.



That serial is now five years old, we reflect that in how we report and follow on from the events it portrayed..."

Joining the cast as a new character, journalist Andrew Cunningham, is *Doctor Who*'s Adric – Matthew Waterhouse, who previously appeared in another role in the Big Finish series. "I loved doing *The Creeping Fog* and a couple of cameos in *The Crimson Pearl*," reveals Matthew, "so I'm delighted to be able to say that recording *Bloodlust* was every bit as exciting and enjoyable. Every bit as pressured too! We do them quite fast and the material is very intense so after a day in the studio everybody is pretty drained and ready for a glass of wine. It's extremely rewarding because it is about bringing to life interesting characters in interesting, frightening situations.

"As often with very intense work there is a lot of laughing and banter between takes. The Big Finish *Dark Shadows* makes use of as many of the original TV actors as possible as well as introducing exciting new characters that fit in the universe. Everybody involved loves it. I had the pleasure of meeting Kathryn Leigh Scott recently, who played Maggie in the TV series and has been one of the biggest stars of the audios, and having been associated with it for so many years she still finds it exciting work. David Selby has the same enthusiasm. I have found this to be the case across the board. Fans adore it and the people who make it adore it too."

Talking about his new character, Matthew Waterhouse says: "Joe Lidster told me to keep the word 'charming' in mind, though my character is not by any means charming all the time! He's an English journalist, recently married to a wonderful American woman and with a son from an earlier relationship. Ambitious and successful, for a while he was

a reporter in Washington. His wife comes from Collinsport and wants to return there but my character finds a very good reason to be in the town as well!"

David and Joe are delighted with the cast they've been able to assemble for *Bloodlust*. Joe says: "We'd worked with Matthew Waterhouse before and knew he was a big *Dark Shadows* fan, so his character was created for him. Stephanie [Ellyne], who plays his wife, has played Amy in some of our other dramas and she's just brilliant, so there was no way her character wasn't going to be in *Bloodlust*. I'd written for Scott Haran in *Wizards Vs Aliens* and I always thought he was a fantastic actor. We'd talked before about me writing something else for him so, again, the character was written with him in mind. A few of the other younger actors – such as Alex Donnachie and Daniel Collard – are people I've worked with on a number of theatre productions, so I knew they'd be perfect."

David adds: "In addition to the guys from the original series and previous *Dark Shadows* plays from Big Finish, it's been our usual combination of people Joe's worked with on TV or in theatre, and actors I've worked with on audio plays or talking books; I brought in Jeff Harding and Lachele Carl, for instance. The only one who's completely new to both of us is Daisy Torme, who came recommended by one of our stars, Kathryn Leigh Scott, and who is brilliant as new lead Melody."

Matthew is encouraging Big Finish fans who've not tried *Dark Shadows* before to give it a go.

"I have heard a large number of Big Finish's *Dark Shadows* range," he says, "and a very good and simple reason for listening to them is that they are so inventive and entertaining. They've made around 50 episodes now and have covered a huge range of styles that fit the gothic genre. Sound drama is great for atmosphere and suggestion and a sort of intimate, seeping unease. If you love old *Doctor Who* and Hammer Horror films you can't go wrong. *Bloodlust* is one of the most ambitious, exciting and original projects Big Finish have embarked on in any of their ranges. The idea is to revive the magical experience of following a serial."

Kathryn adds: "Even five decades later, I'm still astonished that *Dark Shadows* not only retains its original audience of kids who ran home from school to watch, but that we continue to attract new generations of fans. I think the timeless stories and the novelty of having a band of actors playing multiple roles in different time periods still intrigues.

"We have our 50th anniversary coming up and with technology available today that wasn't even dreamed of in 1966, I can't begin to imagine what's next! But I do hope we continue to attract new fans to the show and that the *Dark Shadows* actors have many more opportunities to work together. We all look forward to creating a lot more Big Finish CDs!"

Summing up the series, Joe thinks: "It's *The Killing* meets *Broadchurch* but with vampires, werewolves and witches."

And David smiles: "It's the best thing ever fashioned by human hand. Or it will be, if I ever get it finished..." **VORTEX**



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KENNY SMITH CHATS WITH
LUCY BRIGGS-OWEN, WHO'S
BACK AS CAROL WILSON
IN **THE AVENGERS LOST**
EPISODES VOLUME THREE!

WARM RECEPTION

THE FIRST season of *The Avengers* is all about Dr David Keel and his mysterious associate John Steed, but it shouldn't be forgotten that the debut series is a three-handed game.

This time, John Dorney's 'Mission... Highly Improbable' has been to adapt *The Springers*, *The Yellow Needle*, *Double Danger* and *Toy Trap* (the latter by Bill Strutton, writer of *The Web Planet* in *Doctor Who*'s early years).

The master minds at Big Finish cast Lucy Briggs-Owen as receptionist Carol Wilson, alongside Anthony Howell's Dr Keel, and Julian Wadham's Steed, and the trio return in the latest four adaptations of episodes long-lost from the TV archives. The actress is having a great time doing the series.

"I'm a little young to remember *The Avengers* from the first time around," admits the 28-year-old, "but I do remember seeing repeats of episodes in the background when I was a child. When I heard from my agent that they wanted me to come in, I was thrilled to be involved in the whole project. It's very entertaining."

Producer David Richardson says: "Lucy was in fact put forward by her agent, because she'd wanted to get into audio work. I'm always up for taking on a suggestion, especially if it's a great one, and Lucy proved to be ideal for the role – she plays Carol with that perfect period RP (Received Pronunciation) that's so essential for early 60s *The Avengers*. It's been fun, over the course of three volumes, to watch the team bond and become friends – the three actors now have an easygoing repartee in the recording booths, and there are lots of glorious giggles between takes."

'IT'S FUN TO DO BECAUSE IT'S VERY DIFFERENT, AND THE WAY THEY SPEAK IS SO DIFFERENT FROM HOW WE TALK NOW.'

Lucy continues: "Before I started, I did a bit of research to see how it was played – I had some memories in my mind, of Diana Rigg, and I watched a bit of her. She's just gorgeous – strong and classy – but I didn't watch too much so you make it your own, rather than copying the way someone else played things.

"I really like Carol – she's great to play. It's interesting trying to find the period voice – a lot of it is in the writing, and the RP that Carol has is perhaps a little more clipped than, say, how the BBC would do it now, but that's in the writing and that does so much for you. The vocabulary and choice of phrase are what really help you find the period.

"It's fun to do because it's very different, and the way they speak is so different from how we talk now. That's quite a challenge, but a very enjoyable one. So much has changed in that time – the relationship between the men and the women is fascinating, and what's interesting is seeing how Carol has the strength of character to keep up with the boys.

"I think the listener gets to appreciate just how much she actually sees going on – perhaps the chaps don't realise just how much she manages to see."



JOHN DORNEY DESCRIBES THE WORK THAT WENT INTO ADAPTING THE LATEST EPISODES OF *THE AVENGERS*

This month sees the release of the third boxset of our *Avengers* missing episode adaptations – or restorations as I prefer to think of them.

Having already worked on eight scripts, I was beginning to hit my stride by this point. I was able to get a bit more flavour into the bridging material, get more of Steed and Keel's characters across in the writing, and still, hopefully, managing to do so almost invisibly.

But each new script brings new challenges, and these four were no exception. All of them were represented by telesnaps, still images photographed off the screen at time of transmission, which were incredibly useful at filling in the gaps of film sequences absent from the camera script.

Sometimes they weren't much help at all – a key sequence in *The Springers*, for example, appears to go one way in dialogue and another in the images, so I had to find a way of satisfying both versions of the story.

Other issues were of tone, with *The Yellow Needle* veering perilously close to offensive in its portrayal of Africa which required careful handling.

But the end results were worth it, as it's another strong batch of scripts, filled with memorable moments and characters – in particular, the final scenes of *Toy Trap* feature an electrifying confrontation between Steed and Keel that's worth the price of the set on its own!

I hope the listeners enjoy discovering these stories as much as I did. **VORTEX**



Julian Wadham, Anthony Howell and Lucy Briggs-Owen.

Lucy has had a tremendous time working with Julian and Anthony. She says: "There's a lovely rapport between us. We get on really well, and although the two boys have a bit more to do than I have, it's great when we meet up every six months or so when we record these.

"It's pretty interesting the way we all slip straight back into it, as if we'd only been together the week before, but I suppose the writing does that for you. You do build up a relationship, which is there in the scripts, and in the green room. We get to have a really good laugh – and there's such a wide variety of characters and guests in each episode."

Lucy's heard the finished plays, and has been stunned by the work that goes on in post-production to transform them from the dead studio atmosphere, into the completed works.

"They sound very, very authentic, don't they? I've listened back to some of them, although not all of them yet, as I dip in and out. It's very helpful to hear how the whole piece comes together, because so much is done afterwards in post-production, since we don't have the sound effects as we're doing them. And it can only help your own performance if you know how you're sounding."

Lucy's aware of how well the plays have been received. "I'm not on social media much," she admits, "but I know that on Twitter and wherever, the responses have been fabulous. We're really lucky because we've got such a clever, creative team. It's a fabulous bunch.

"I'm also being sent box set and CD covers to sign every now and then and it's really nice to know people are enjoying what we're doing."

Bringing a new take to a previously established character isn't a new experience for Lucy. Having stepped into the shoes of Ingrid Hafner, who played the original Carol, she's currently following in the footsteps of none other than Oscar winner Gwyneth Paltrow in the stage adaptation of *Shakespeare In Love* (and continues until 10th January). She adds: "I've been in this since the summer and it's been going really well. It's lovely to be in a long-running show, as you really get to know the character well. It's a lot like playing a character in a series. You get to feel it as it changes." **VORTEX**

Listen again...

THE HOUSE OF DESPAIR



Dark Shadows returns to Big Finish this month with a new series, but Kenny Smith turns the clock back to September 2006 for the release of *The House of Despair*.

DARK SHADOWS fans were very like **Doctor Who** fans had been when we started doing the audios in 1999," says Big Finish managing director Jason Haigh-Ellery. "They had been starved of their favourite show for years, and we were able to satisfy that demand."

For years, **Dark Shadows** had a cult following in the USA, and the demand from fans that it return never went away. With spin-off movies and a rebooted TV series, new versions popped up over the years, but people always want their original heroes – and Big Finish satisfied that demand. Jason continues: "The first person to actually bring it up had been John Ainsworth, many, many years before we did it. He had seen some of the TV episodes and heard the two audios which had been done, reuniting the cast members. It's also a good thing for us to build a following in America, using a series which is as loved there as **Doctor Who** is in the UK."

"Then, years later, Stuart Manning came to me with a similar pitch, and we also had more of an 'in' as he knew the actors and had interviewed them, and was actually very friendly with a lot of them. Because of that, we knew he would be able to get access and was able to find out in advance that they would be willing to take part."

Writer/producer Stuart Manning recalls: "I don't think there was ever any question of directly picking up where the television series left off – too much time had passed and certain key actors had passed away."

"However, we didn't necessarily want to present our cast as 60-somethings either, so we arrived at an unspecified midway point between the original show and

'It's good to build a following in America, using a series which is as loved there as **Doctor Who** is in the UK.'

the present day. That allowed us to cover the narrative gaps and kick off with a bit of mystery too.

"The cast were decided mostly by location. Lara Parker, David Selby, John Karlen and Kathryn Leigh Scott were all LA-based and enthusiastic, so they formed our initial core cast, with a storyline devised to explain that the rest of the Collins family were in hiding. In some respects, that wasn't an ideal narrative explanation, but it allowed us to pay lip service to some of the departed cast and hint at where those characters might have ended up."

Stuart wrote the first play, bringing back the Collins family. He explains: "*The House of Despair* was really a nuts-and-bolts job. It had to do a lot of specific things as an opening episode, so it made sense for me to write it. We needed to establish our stripped-down cast and their relationships, explain the show's basic premise to new listeners, reintroduce Barnabas... That didn't really leave a lot of room for a story, so it made sense to set it after a crisis, with Quentin arriving and piecing together clues. That gave it a little more breadth and tension, but it did make it very Quentin-centric – getting the ensemble side of the show across was going to take more than a single CD."

"Given all the things it had to juggle, I was pleased with the story we ended up with." **VORTEX**

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FORMATIVE FIFTH

I've recently finished listening to **The Fifth Doctor Box Set**. I wanted to drop a line and say how much I enjoyed the stories. Growing up in America, we only got as much of the classic Doctors as were available on our local public television station, and the last I saw of them on TV was the Fifth, so this box set was very special to me. I especially enjoyed the return of Adric, a character whom I readily identified with as he was a boy, like me, and about my age when I last watched the classic Doctors. And of course, BF story and writing quality is light years beyond 80s television: as much as I enjoy watching a DVD of a classic broadcast, I find myself appreciating the BF product more and more as I get older. Thank you very much for your work. Please give my congratulations to the writers, director, cast and crew of **The Fifth Doctor Box Set**. Keep up the great work, and here's to **The Fifth Doctor Box Set**, volume two, and more appearances of Adric!

JOHN WOLANSKI

NICK: Many thanks, John. Those 'formative' eras of Doctor Who are always the most special to us, aren't they. I will pass on your praise.

PIECES OF EIGHT

I'm 22. I've been following you since the age of something like 12. That's 10 years. I love you guys. I saw that you're releasing novel adaptations from the **Missing Adventures** line which, if I may say, is rather bloody amazing! Growing up in the pre nu-Who era these books and you guys were of course my only hope and to see a connection between the mediums nearly brings a tear to my eye. But then I thought of a bigger premise, a premise

that actually was more stunning than Tom Baker's cameo in the 50th. I thought, "What if... they were to adapt the Eighth Doctor BBC Book adventures?" Well, let's just say, I became a small quivering fan girl at this particular moment in time. McGann is my favourite in the audio range and the Eighth Doctor BBC Books were at the time very experimental and almost a turning point within the history's legacy of fiction as they could take risks and bring a new formula and style of writing. To hear a full cast audio drama of them would be beyond a magical dream come true.

GEORGE ATKINSON

NICK: We don't currently have any plans to adapt the Eighth Doctor books.

CASTING CALL?

I've been greatly interested in the **Doctor Who Early Adventures** range which has just started and its idea to allow you to tell stories with the 1960s TARDIS teams with a full-cast. I was wondering if you have ever given thought about casting John Guilor as the First Doctor in any future releases because of his phenomenal William Hartnell impersonation and/or Frazer Hines or David Troughton as the Second Doctor. Their skills at imitating the earlier Doctors are amazing and it would be lovely to hear them play the Doctor in full-cast audio plays alongside the original companion-actors someday. Keep up the good work! I love your stories!

SIMON HENDY-IBBS

NICK: The format of the Early Adventures is that there is some narration and the narrators do the voice of the Doctor. So, for example, Frazer Hines narrates and does the Second Doctor.

WISHING WELL

As a newcomer to the Big Finish audio adventures, I'm enjoying my time exploring the further adventures of the good Doctor (in whatever incarnation he may take) and am quite taken aback by the vast range and quality of output available. What next, I wonder? Perhaps **Dark Eyes**, or maybe **Philip Hinchcliffe Presents**? I'm spoilt for choice. The more I browse your catalogue of stories, the more I think how good it'd be to have a wishlist facility on accounts where listeners can bookmark releases they intend to buy in the future so that they don't lose track of them. How about it? Looking forward to wrapping my ears and imagination around the next adventure already!

DAVID COOK

NICK: Glad you're enjoying what we do. Several of the things you say would work as new straplines for Big Finish. 'Big Finish – what next, I wonder?' and 'With Big Finish, you're spoilt for choice!' The wish list functionality is on our wish list for site functionality... if you follow me. We have a long list of items on our 'to do' list with our wonderful web developers, Hughes Media. One day, that wish list will make your wish come true. (That's enough wishing – Ed)

PLANNING AHEAD

Next year I thought you could do a 15 years since the Eighth Doctor first came to Big Finish with the Eighth Doctor, Charley and Molly, with Nick Briggs as the Cybermen, Daleks and the Dalek Time Controller. I have a title idea – **Friends Forever**.

JAMES LOVELL (AGE 12)

NICK: Thanks, James. That's actually a lovely idea. Might be a logistical nightmare, though.

Coming up...

RELEASE SCHEDULE

New and forthcoming audio releases

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* (5.01, 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: *Mindset* (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* (5.02, 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* (5.03, 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)
- Jago and Litefoot: *Series Nine Box Set*

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* (5.04, Download only)
- Blake's 7: The Classic Audio Adventures 6: *Truth and Lies* (Full Cast)
- Terrahawks *Volume 1* (Full Cast)

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* (5.05, Download only)
- Doctor Who – Novel Adaptations *Damaged Goods / Well Mannered War* (Special edition)
- Doctor Who – Novel Adaptations *The Well Mannered War* (Fourth Doctor)
- Doctor Who – Novel Adaptations *Damaged Goods* (Seventh Doctor)
- Blake's 7: *Book 7: Lucifer: Genesis*
- Dark Shadows: *Ghost Ship*
- The Omega Factor: *Series 1 Box Set* (Full Cast)

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* (5.06, 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 Krellos* (4.7, Fourth Doctor and Leela)
- Doctor Who – Short Trips: *Dark Convoy* (5.07, 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* (5.08, Download only)
- Blake's 7: *The Liberator Chronicles – Box Set 12*
- Charlotte Pollard: *Series Two Box Set*
- Dark Shadows: *48: TBA*

SEPTEMBER 2015

- Doctor Who: *TBA* (203, Seventh Doctor and Mel)
- Doctor Who: *TBA* (204, Seventh Doctor and Mel)
- Doctor Who – The Early Adventures: *The Yes Men* (2.1, Second Doctor)
- Doctor Who – Short Trips: *Etheria* (5.09, Download only)
- Dark Shadows: *49: TBA*

OCTOBER 2015

- Doctor Who: *TBA* (205, Sixth Doctor and Constance)
- Doctor Who – The Early Adventures: *TBA* (2.2, Second Doctor)
- Doctor Who – The Third Doctor Adventures: *Box Set*
- Doctor Who – Short Trips: *The Way of the Empty Hand* (5.10, Download only)
- Jago & Litefoot: *Series 10 Box Set*
- Survivors: *Series 3 Box Set*
- Dark Shadows: *50: TBA*



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