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THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

JUDGE DREDD

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DOCTOR WHO

Scribe George Mann on Romana's latest jaunt

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EDITORIAL

Hello. More **Vortex!** Can you believe it? Of course you can, you're reading this. Now, if I sound a bit hyper here, it's because there's an incredibly busy time coming up for Big Finish in October. We've already started recording the next season of Eighth Doctor adventures, but on top of that there are more **Lost Stories** to come, along with the Sixth Doctor and Jamie adventures, the return of Tegan, **Holmes and the Ripper** and more **Companion Chronicles** than you can shake a perigosto stick at! So we'll be in the studio for pretty much the whole month. I say 'we'... I actually mean 'David Richardson'. He's our man on the spot, at every

studio session to make sure everyone is happy and that everything is running on time. And he has to do all those CD Extras interviews.

What will I be doing? Well, I shall be writing a grand finale for the Eighth Doctor season, doing the sound design for our three **Sherlock Holmes** releases, and writing a brand new audio series for Big Finish, which may or may not get made one day! More news on that story later, as they say...

Nick Briggs - executive producer

SNEAK PREVIEWS AND WHISPERS

Love Songs for the Shy and Cynical
A short story collection by Robert Shearman

Rob Shearman is probably best known as a writer for **Doctor Who**, reintroducing the Daleks for its BAFTA winning first series, in an episode nominated for a Hugo Award. However, he is also a master of the short story - his first collection, *Tiny Deaths*, won the World Fantasy Award for best collection, was shortlisted for the Edge Hill Short Story Prize and nominated for the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Prize.

Now he's back with a second collection, *Love Songs for the Shy and Cynical*, featuring the first love song in the world, as composed by a pig in the Garden of Eden, the Devil reinventing himself as a writer of romantic fiction and a man whose wife stores his heart in a Tupperware box.

By turns macabre and moving, horrific and laugh-out-loud funny, this new collection puts a bizarre twist on the love story. What is love, why does it hurt so much, and how is it we keep coming back for more?

Sometimes poignant, sometimes cruel - but always as startling and fresh as Shearman's fans have come to expect.

"Shearman offers us haunting, nightmare alternatives to our world that are still somehow utterly recognisable... He makes each story cling to you, forces you to make sense of it and somehow inhabit it."

Steven Moffat, executive producer, **Doctor Who**

AVAILABLE IN NOVEMBER
PRE-ORDER NOW FROM THE BIG FINISH WEBSITE

Bernice Summerfield
Secret Histories

This year's **Bernice Summerfield** book is a short stories collection, *Secret Histories*, a series of tales exploring both Bernice's personal history and human history, tied together with a framing narrative in which our intrepid archaeologist finds herself stuck telling stories to a bunch of animated skulls. Usually these collections feature about fifteen stories, but editor Mark Clapham decided that to keep the framing narrative clear it would be better to have fewer, longer stories - an approach which has created something a little different from previous **Benny** books. The nine stories include contributions from Lance Parkin, Mark Michalowski and Nick Wallace, as well as a new Bernice and Mycroft Holmes story from Jim Smith.

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HOLMES TRUTHS

For years, people have been asking why Big Finish has not produced **Sherlock Holmes** audios. We've never really had a good answer as to why not. So, on September 10th and 11th 2009, executive producer Nick Briggs took **Sherlock Holmes** into the studio...

It's strange what makes you decide to do a series. It's obviously a good idea to do **Sherlock Holmes** on audio. BBC Radio has adapted every single bit of Holmes literature by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and created some superb radio drama. But with the Great Detective out of copyright, and a number of excellent authors creating their own 'brand new' **Holmes** novels and short stories for many years now, producing 'new' **Holmes** adventures on audio surely seemed like a no-brainer.

But it took the influence of a few theatre productions to jolt me into action. Having played Holmes in a London fringe production of *The Speckled Band* back in 1999 (actually during the post-production period for *Sirens of Time!*), I was only too pleased to return to the role when asked to play Holmes again last year at the Theatre Royal Nottingham. The play was **Holmes and the Ripper**, by Brian Clemens. And Brian actually came to see the show. In the bar afterwards, my on-stage Dr Watson embarrassed me into asking Brian if the play could be adapted for a Big Finish audio. Without hesitation, Brian said yes and that contracts would be a mere formality.

At some point during this 'mere formality', I walked past a poster for a one-man show called **Sherlock Holmes: The Last Act** (by that brilliant Sherlockian expert and author, David Stuart Davies). A few weeks later, I found myself in the Greenwich Theatre, watching it, enthralled by actor Roger Llewellyn's brilliant portrayal of Holmes... and several other characters too! The next day, I got in touch with Roger and found, to my delight, that he was very keen on the idea of releasing an audio version of his performance. He also revealed to me that there was a follow-up play, **Sherlock Holmes: The Death and Life** (also by David Stuart Davies). And then I knew I had my trilogy of plays to, hopefully, launch a fully-fledged series of exciting new Holmes adventures on audio. Whether the full series comes about, of course, is very much in the hands of our audience, and how many of them decide to buy the productions. But **The Last Act**, **The Death and Life** and **Holmes and the Ripper** were now definitely on the production slate.

So, on 10th September, I arrived at Moat Studios full of excitement and anticipation about working with Roger Llewellyn. You see, apart from the fact that he is an absolutely cracking actor, he has performed **The Last Act** about 600 times over the last ten years or so. He knows it inside out, backwards, forwards and probably sideways. But how would this performance transfer to audio?

I already knew, from seeing the plays, that they needed virtually no script adaptation. Even though the plays are very physical, the words are the engine that drives the narrative. And Roger's voice is so 'physical' in its expressiveness that every intonation kind of paints a new scene for us. But Roger himself has been used to his performances being... how can I put it? Moments of time that are seen and then lost. The idea of actually capturing one performance in a recording and preserving that for posterity and, hopefully, an unlimited audience across the years, was troubling

him somewhat. He is a perfectionist and wanted the plays to be just right, and I knew that he'd been practising for weeks with a microphone and cassette recorder at home. He'd also sought the invaluable advice of the shows' inspired theatre director, Gareth Armstrong.

I warned our resident studio guru Toby Robinson that we were either in for one of the most difficult studio days of our lives, or one of the easiest. I could imagine a scenario in which Roger, searching for the 'ultimate performance', would be continually unhappy with what he had delivered, demanding retake after retake.

Luckily, though, Roger couldn't have been easier to work with. And as I sat in the control room and listened to his performance, I found myself, as I had been at the Greenwich Theatre, drawn in to the narrative. We recorded each act in one take, all the way through. It was very nearly perfection first time. There were a couple of little pick-ups to attend to afterwards, largely for technical reasons, but essentially we got it all done in one go. It was amazing.

Now **The Last Act**, as I said, has been performed over 600 times. **The Death and Life** is a more recent piece of work, so at the end of our first day, Roger warned me that he had only performed **The Death and Life** a mere 120 times, so I should expect him to be less at ease.

The Death and Life is a more vocally demanding play. It features a lot of Conan Doyle speaking and quite a number of interjections by the evil Professor Moriarty himself. To maintain vocal consistency for these characters, Roger asked if he could record all his Holmes lines first, then do Doyle, followed by the particularly vocally exhausting Moriarty. So the second play was recorded in character blocks. But once again, the recordings went smoothly and with minimum pick-ups at the end.

I suppose I shouldn't be surprised when a vastly experienced actor, who has played a part for many years, turns up and delivers a belter of a performance. But I think that years of recording **Doctor Who** audios with actors who have only just received the script and who are, therefore, not always as *au fait* with the words on the page as they might otherwise be, have made me expect to have to answer many questions and solve all sorts of problems. But these **Holmes** recordings were an entirely different kettle of fish. After all, this actor knew the script inside out, and for most of the time wasn't even reading it. True, his eyes darted across the script, but when I looked through the glass from the control room, I wasn't watching an actor in a booth, reading. I felt like I was looking back through the mists of fictional time and was actually looking straight at Mr Sherlock Holmes himself...

Sherlock Holmes: The Last Act by David Stuart Davies and starring Roger Llewellyn is released in November 2009.

Sherlock Holmes: The Death and Life by David Stuart Davies and starring Roger Llewellyn is released in December 2009.

Sherlock Holmes: Holmes and the Ripper by Brian Clemens and starring Nicholas Briggs, India Fisher and Richard Earl is released in January 2010.



Right: Roger Llewellyn and writer David Stuart Davies examine the script for clues.

Below: Nicholas Briggs, Roger Llewellyn and David Stuart Davies.





PETER DAVISON

As the Fifth Doctor and Nyssa begin an extended stay in the sleepy village of Stockbridge, Peter Davison discusses the trilogy, the evolution of his Doctor and his links to the new series, with Paul Spragg

Hello Peter! It's the first day of recording *Plague of the Daleks*, née *Village of the Damned*. How are things going so far?

It's been a bit hot because I think at this moment this is the hottest day of the year. That's what they said it would be yesterday. We've been in a studio, so it's quite hot.

How have you found the Stockbridge trilogy?

Well, I think they varied in tone quite a lot. That's probably very good. I rather liked the first one [*The Eternal Summer*, to be released second]; The second one [*Castle of Fear*] I couldn't quite figure out, which is no bad thing, but I never really quite understood it. But that's fine. This one I'm understanding more now. It's very difficult because when we used to make the series, we used to rehearse for two weeks – well, in effect four weeks – so it's a long period when you got to know something very well. When you're doing radio you don't learn it, you just basically read it off the script and it's less in your head and therefore falls out of your head much quicker. So I'm terrified when I do interviews like this that you'll ask me about the last two stories, which I've almost completely forgotten already! Although I will reacquaint myself in the car when I play them back because they send me a nice copy of them and I play them to my children. I'm trying to brainwash my children into becoming their favourite Doctor again. At the moment I'm ranking a lowly third, I think.

Who's ahead of you?

David Tennant is, probably Christopher Eccleston. And very soon there'll be Matt Smith, so I could well drop into fourth place.

Plus you'll be giving away your 'Youngest Ever Doctor' crown too.

I don't really care about that. In a way I always wished that I'd been older when I played it anyway, so it doesn't really worry me. Although I have to say, thankfully, the one good thing about it is that I feel less out of place now than I did five years ago before the series restarted, because I felt that a young Doctor was out of place, and now I feel very much like the young Doctor is the thing and the older Doctors seem out of place, so for that I'm very grateful. But I don't particularly cherish the 'youngest Doctor' thing.

You are still the only 'original' Doctor to appear in the new series though, thanks to *Time Crash*.

I am that, yes! Which I'm very happy to be. I got to work on the new set in my old costume. We have got very friendly with Steven Moffat [*Time Crash* writer and *Who* executive producer] and his wife Sue [Vertue], because I worked for Sue, who runs Hartswood Films, and also we both have two little boys with very similar names; in fact one is exactly

the same. They have a Louis and a Josh and we have a Louis and a Joel. So it's pretty confusing when they come over as to who we're telling off at any given moment.

Apparently you've been doing a bit of research into the comic strips that first used Stockbridge.

What happened was I found this comic book that was lying around here of me in the Stockbridge stories, and I was quite taken with it because when I first took over the part of Doctor Who, they came along from *Doctor Who Magazine* and they took about 400 pictures of me, pulling every expression imaginable, and then they went away and drew almost completely unrecognisable cartoons of me. And I was quite taken with the fact that these are, for the most part, pretty good, they're pretty recognisable as me, although thankfully they do make me more muscular, thinner, and with a slightly more Hollywood jaw. So I went out and I ordered the book but it wasn't really research as such.

Of the trilogy, *Castle of Fear* is a little jokier than some productions; it almost has a tinge of *Spamalot* about it. Well, that was my fear about it, that it might be a bit *Spamalot-y*, because there are a lot of 'Sir so-and-so of something' and there were odd references that made me think maybe the writer was a **Monty Python** fan. There are a couple of very **Pythonesque** jokes in it. It's a voyage of discovery when I do these scripts; it's interesting. They're always fun to do, so hopefully they work out okay.

Do you like a more comedic story occasionally or do you prefer drama?

I think humour is a very important part of it, so I prefer to do ones that are comedic. I like when the Doctor is written that way anyway. I'm a great believer that you can merge the two together. I don't know that I'd like things that are just comedy, a comedy story wouldn't be good. But I do think comedy has always been a very important part of **Doctor Who** – still is – but I think you can combine that with the tension and the 'real' qualities, the scary stuff, so that's good.

Do you play the Doctor differently now to how you did on screen?

There's no conscious change, but obviously I get older every time I do it, so I think it does inevitably change a little bit. But I am very aware that I'm still meant to be that 30-year-old prancing around in stripey trousers and cricket jumper, so you have to kind of strike a balance between the two. You can't be too much of a grumpy old man as the Doctor when I know that, on the covers at least, I'm still the Fifth Doctor. I picture myself as that highlighted blond-haired, rather agile Doctor leaping around the place, and I hope that takes care of it.

You certainly dashed around in *Time Crash*...
Yes, that's true. I've still got it. [laughs]

Would you return to the series if you were asked?

Well, yes, of course I would. I don't think it will happen though, and I wouldn't encourage anyone to do it because I think it's highly unlikely. It's a great series and it's very well written; who wouldn't do it? Don't forget, I watched the series; I've got two little boys of nearly eight and ten, and they watch the series avidly, so I, as a consequence of that (and probably I would have done anyway), watched it. I've seen every episode of the new series about two or three times. So I feel close to it, in a way, although I'm not involved in it. Someone told me we were doing a multi-Doctor special for **Children in Need** but no one knows anything about it. Certainly I don't.



Peter Davison likes to torment Sarah Sutton with his Matrix impression.

What do you think when you hear the finished Big Finish product?

I'm amazed by the finished product. Here we just literally do the lines. It's not like at the BBC where they often feed in sound effects at the same time and do everything in one go, here you're only doing the bare bones. It's fun to listen to, and the ones I do, I like the pace. I try to belt through them because I enjoy it when it's pacy. I haven't, in fairness, listened to anybody else's; I did listen to the one Colin Baker, Sylvester and myself did. Didn't understand a word of it! I don't mean to be unfair to Colin or Sylvester because I'm sure theirs are very, very good, but understandably I don't want to sit on a long car journey and listen to Colin Baker or Sylvester. Because I'm just like that.

So what you're saying is you like the sound of your own voice...

No! I try and think of it in terms of my kids, and as long as they like it then I'm quite happy. I'm really not trying to brainwash them, but there was this blissful period before **Doctor Who** came back when my oldest son, who was old enough to watch it, used to only know me as the Doctor, so he would sit and he'd watch various **Doctor Who** stories and would refer to me as Doctor Daddy. And he would tell his friends at school about **Doctor Who** and they'd go, 'Doctor what? What's that?' And then of course it came back and everything changed. It's quite fun to have two little boys and have been **Doctor Who**. I probably do force them to listen to it on the car journeys, but it's a great opportunity: 'Damn well listen to this!' And it's just nice to hear what the hell the story was about as well, I suppose. That's always a nice thing. [laughs]

You mentioned the pace of stories; you were always a fast-moving, breathless Doctor.

Yes, which I think David Tennant has shamelessly stolen from me! Because I think that was really the one thing I had over the others: I felt in many ways, as I say, a bit out of place, but I could move faster than the others so I took advantage of that. I just kind of like, in these radio things, when it's pacy. It keeps the action going. Sometimes radio plays fall into the trap of being slightly slow and spelt out, which can be good, but not in **Doctor Who** I don't think. Years ago, I remember, I did one of the first on-location radio plays, and it seemed, when we did it, like the most insane and stupid idea that anyone had ever come up with, that people would actually go

off to a location and record a play. Because you just thought, 'Why? It's radio!' But it made the most enormous difference because it knocked that sort of voice modulation thing out, which can be common with radio actors – indeed, any actor when they get in a radio studio. They start to do things with their voice rather than just play it as you would, say, in a TV thing. And I remember listening to it back and thinking, 'You can absolutely tell it's on location'. It just sounds so much more real and live and accurate rather than a studio-bound thing where everybody seems to get a little too precise about everything.

You're back working with Sarah Sutton as Nyssa after quite a long break. How's it been?

It's fun. I like to torment her! She's not very well today so I've been giving her hell all day about that because I keep saying, 'Oh, we'll just do this, save Sarah's voice'. And then she told me I had tomorrow morning off and she lied through her teeth. I don't have tomorrow morning off so now she's gonna have to face another day of torment. I'm going to come in invigorated! No, I like Sarah. She was my favourite companion. I think she worked best; she complemented the Doctor.

It's an 'equal partnership' relationship not a million miles from the new series Doctor/companion relationship.

Yes. I think she engages in the story more than any of the other companions. That's the thing. There were great bits with Sarah, with Janet [Fielding] and with Turlough, and I loved working with them, but in terms of their characters engaging in the story, they rarely did, because Janet's character, Tegan, never wanted to be there, it was always like, 'Pffft, why do we have to do this, Doctor?' and Turlough was always trying to kill me! Whereas Nyssa's character kind of got into the story, and we were working as one; she was almost as excited about whatever was going on as I was, and that's quite important. As much as John Nathan-Turner cast Janet and then Mark [Strickson] as sort of a counterpoint, I don't think it ever really quite worked for me. When Sarah left, I felt sometimes I was dragging the other companions round. But we are doing some stories with all of us next year, which I'm looking forward to doing. That's going to be a challenge.

You've also been very involved in the DVD releases doing commentary.

I love doing those. I feel that we're going to run out soon. I think we should go back and do some more, go back and do some of the Blu-ray releases maybe. It's such a shame, they miss such a trick these commentaries, I think, they kind of censor us. For a start, personally – this is a very personal opinion, and only a personal opinion, it does not represent the views of either Big Finish or the BBC – I don't think

you should allow directors or writers in with the actors when they're doing commentaries. Either have the actors or have the director and the writer, because the actors are necessarily far more trivial, much funnier, far more scandalous and gossipy and we can't be anywhere near as rude if you have the writer or director there. When you don't have the writer and director there we just let rip and it's tremendous fun. I think they're also most successful; when people have said, 'I love the commentary', it's always been the ones without a director or a writer there. I said, 'Why don't we just do an uncensored commentary for the 2020-whatever release where everyone's dead and it doesn't matter?' They keep telling me, 'You can't say that. We have to stop you there, could you go back and redo that?' and you think, 'Why?' Okay, I understand why for now, but record it, let us have that unexpurgated thing down, so you've got it before we all die off.

Do your stories still stand up?

Some do, some don't. I let it be known when I don't think they do. I always offend someone because it's always their favourite story! But that's fine, I guess. You have your favourites. As you get older you just turn, generally, into a grumpier old man, so you're less concerned about saying, 'That's rubbish!' I'm always reminded by Steven Moffat you have to watch it in the context in which it was made. You cannot do a direct comparison between **Doctor Who** then and the new **Doctor Who**. We were making them before the introduction of any digital effects at all, all we had was green screen, which is nothing. We had to work within the confines of what we had, and from that point of view, some of them worked very well, some of them don't. I think with all these things, the ones that were well-written work and the ones that weren't well-written don't. With the one exception of *Time-Flight*, which I think was quite well written but we had no money and so we were doing it virtually against black crepes, which is a terrible disappointment, I think. We filmed exteriors inside Studio 8 at the BBC, which is the smallest video studio, with a model of Concorde in the back, this miniature model meant to be a perspective set. It was nonsense! And then we had polystyrene blobs as monsters. You don't have that problem on radio!

Peter Davison, thank you very much.

Doctor Who - Castle of Fear is out this month



FORTHCOMING RELEASES

OCTOBER

- Doctor Who – Castle of Fear (127, Fifth Doctor/Nyssa in Stockbridge)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – Worldwide Web (3.8)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Pyralis Effect (4.4, Romana II)
- Stargate Atlantis – Meltdown (2.6)
- Judge Dredd: Crime Chronicles – Stranger Than Truth (1.1)

DECEMBER

- Doctor Who – Plague of the Daleks (129, Fifth Doctor/Nyssa in Stockbridge)
- Doctor Who – An Earthly Child (Subscribers to main range only, Eighth Doctor and Susan)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – Death in Blackpool (Christmas Special 4.1, Eighth Doctor/Lucie)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Mission to Magnus (1.2)
- Cyberman 2 (Box set)
- Iris Wildthyme – The Claws of Santa (Christmas Special)
- Judge Dredd: Crime Chronicles – The Devil's Playground (1.3)
- Sherlock Holmes – The Death and Life
- Bernice Summerfield – Secret Histories (Book)

FEBRUARY

- Doctor Who – Survival of the Fittest/Klein's Story (131 Seventh Doctor/Klein)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – The Hollows of Time (1.4)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (4.7, First Doctor)
- Dark Shadows - Audiobook 11

APRIL

- Doctor Who – TBA (133, Sixth Doctor/Jamie)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Point of Entry (1.6)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – Shadow of the Past (4.9, Third Doctor)
- Dark Shadows - Audiobook 13

JUNE

- Doctor Who – TBA (135, Sixth Doctor/Jamie)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – The Song of Megaptera (1.8)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (4.12, Sixth Doctor)

NOVEMBER

- Doctor Who – The Eternal Summer (128, Fifth Doctor/Nyssa in Stockbridge)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – The Nightmare Fair (1.1)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – Ringpullworld (4.5, Turlough)
- Judge Dredd: Crime Chronicles – Blood Will Tell (1.2)
- Sherlock Holmes: The Last Act
- Love Songs for the Shy and Cynical by Robert Shearman (Book)

JANUARY

- Doctor Who – A Thousand Tiny Wings (130, Seventh Doctor/Klein)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Leviathan (1.3)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – Bernice Summerfield and the Criminal Code (4.6, Seventh Doctor)
- Judge Dredd: Crime Chronicles – Double Zero (1.4)
- Dark Shadows - Audiobook 10

MARCH

- Doctor Who – The Architects of History (132, Seventh Doctor/Klein)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Paradise 5 (1.5)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (4.8, Second Doctor)
- Dark Shadows - Audiobook 12

MAY

- Doctor Who – TBA (134, Sixth Doctor/Jamie)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – The Macros (1.7)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (4.10, Fourth Doctor)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (4.11, Sixth Doctor)
- Dark Shadows - Audiobook 14

JULY

- Doctor Who – TBA (136, Fifth Doctor/Tegan/Turlough/Nyssa)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – Situation Vacant (Eighth Doctor and TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (5.01, First Doctor)



love songs
for the shy
and cynical

by world fantasy award winner
robert shearman



with an introduction by
steven hall

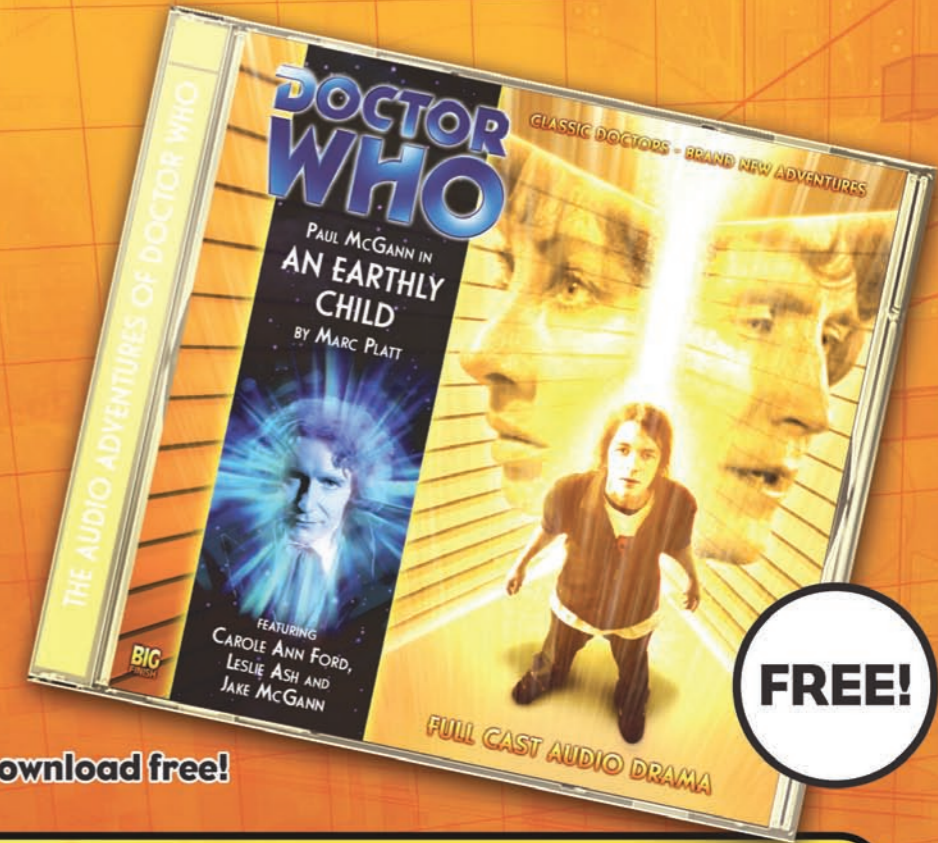
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* Doctor Who: An Earthly Child only available to subscriptions that include release #129 in December 2009. Title will not be available to buy separately for at least one year from its initial release.

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BIG FINISH

ASCENT OF MANN



This month's **Companion Chronicle**, *The Pyralis Effect*, finds Romana on a hunt for the Doctor and comes from the busy pen of fiction writer George Mann...

What are the challenges of writing a Companion Chronicle?

I think the main challenge is finding a way to tell a **Doctor Who** story without a Doctor.

The Doctor is the nucleus of any of these stories, of course, and it's up to the writer to ensure that he remains central to proceedings and pivotal to the plot, whilst at the same time having him at one remove, seen through the eyes of his companion. It's a challenge, but definitely exhilarating at the same time; you get to cast a different light on the character and allow the companion to express their own views and opinions.

After that it's about getting the tone and feel right for the era you're writing about, and accurately recreating the relationship between the TARDIS crew.

Were you particularly keen to write one for Lalla Ward as Romana?

Yes! I love the banter between Romana II and Tom Baker's Doctor. I think the relationship is one of the best Doctor/companion pairings the classic show ever had, with a perfect balance of knowing humour, wit and adventure. I really wanted to try to capture some of that sparkle with *The Pyralis Effect*.

Did the story change much along the way?

It did. Originally the crew of *The Myriad* was looking for Gallifrey and the Time Lords. After much consideration, however, we decided that it would have much more of an impact if they were actually trying to locate the Doctor. It made it a much more personal story too, and allowed me to explore some of the dark side of the Doctor's role: what happens to the people he leaves in his wake as he whizzes from place to place saving the universe? Do they come to rely on him? Do they become lazy, imagining that whatever they do he'll always appear in his magical blue box to save them? The story became much more about consequences and less about spectacle.

How would you describe the tone of *The Pyralis Effect*?

I was aiming for something dark and claustrophobic. I wanted to give the Doctor and Romana something to get their teeth into, and I wanted to give them a mystery to solve. It's intended to be creepy, but to still capture the playful banter that this TARDIS crew is known and loved for. It all takes place aboard a single space vessel, with a small crew. But whilst the setting is small and compact, the ramifications of what *The Myriad*'s crew is up to are huge. Again, it all comes down to consequences.

What was it like attending the studio recording and meeting Lalla and Lisa Bowerman, the director?

It was always a boyhood fantasy of mine to meet Lalla, and I hope I managed to keep my cool. I probably came across as my ten-year-old fanboy self. But it was a great experience to hear a script I'd been working on for so long suddenly brought to life. The actresses did an amazing job, and Lisa is such a talented director – she knows just what to say to get the best out of everyone there. Lalla managed to make Romana come to life again in that recording booth, and it was a joy to listen to.

Is it hard, after writing books for print, to deliver a script and then hand it over to other people to act, direct and sound design?

There's certainly a difference between writing prose and writing a script. With a novel, you're the writer, the director and the actors; everything the characters say or do belongs to you. With a script, it's never really yours alone. It belongs to everyone involved, and an actor or actress will make the script their own, interpret it in their own way. This kind of collaboration, though, can often make for something better in the long run. If you can accept that kind of organic approach to the script, then it's not hard – just different. It was a great experience and I can't wait to have another go!

Tell us about your other writing work.

Well, I'm currently in the midst of writing my third novel. It's called **Ghosts of Manhattan** and is the first in a new series set in 1920s New York, revolving around a 'steampunk' vigilante and a mob boss who isn't everything he seems. It's an adventure story at its heart, with rooftop chases, biplane dogfights and ancient occult magic.

My first two novels, **The Affinity Bridge** and **The Osiris Ritual**, are both stories of Newbury & Hobbes, an investigative duo who work for Queen Victoria to search out wrongdoing in the Empire. These are steampunk stories in the truest sense; they take place in an alternative version of Victorian London in which clockwork automata roam the streets, airships fill the skies and a zombie plague is ravaging the slums. Again, the adventure quotient is pretty high!

You work for Games Workshop; Big Finish has produced a number of audiobooks from your Warhammer scripts. Tell us about those...

The **Warhammer** and **Warhammer 40,000 Worlds** lend themselves so well to the audio medium. For some time now I've worked for The Black Library, the publishing arm of Games Workshop, and we've published over 250 novels set in these fantasy worlds. They're rich with flavour and character, and it's been a real pleasure to work with Big Finish bringing this to life on audio, capturing the dark tone of the settings and the themes of war and corruption. We've had some great scripts and some great actors too. Long may it continue!

Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles - The Pyralis Effect is out this month



DAVID BISHOP



With the start of the **Judge Dredd: Crime Chronicles** this month, we asked some searching questions of regular Dredd-head David Bishop.

Hello, David. We hear Judge Dredd has been part of your life for a long time; how did you first encounter the character?

I grew up reading comics in New Zealand, and distinctly remember seeing an issue of *2000 AD* where Dredd encountered a man thought to be rich because he wore a cloak made entirely of soda can ringpulls. The idea that something considered disposable junk might be worth a fortune in the future had never occurred to me before. I didn't take much notice of Dredd again until I emigrated to the UK in 1990 and got a job on the newly

launched *Judge Dredd Magazine*. Old Stony Face has been a semi-constant presence in my life ever since, one way or another. It reminds me of Tony Soprano's favourite quote from **The Godfather Part III**: "Just when I thought I was out – they pulled me back in!"

How has Dredd developed in the time you've been writing for the character?

Dredd has gotten older, unlike most other comics characters. But he's a remarkably stable character – it's the environment around him that changes and fluctuates. Mega-City One is arguably more multi-dimensional than Dredd himself, thanks to its oddball citizenry and satirical underpinnings.

You came up with the title **Crime Chronicles**. Does that subtitle result in a certain type of story? What was the producer's remit?

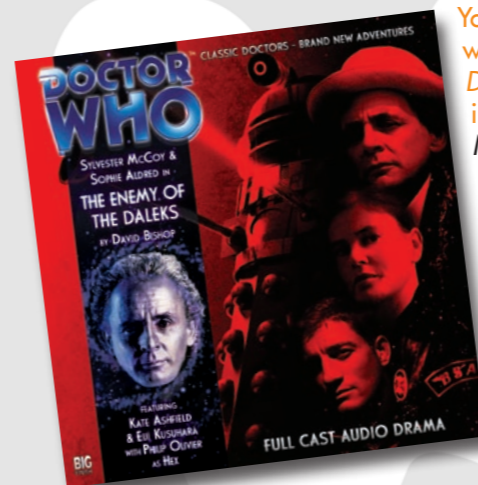
The title **Crime Chronicles** was almost the last thing decided upon for these new releases. The four scripts had already been written and – I think – recorded by the time I suggested what to call them. I was one of several writers John Ainsworth approached for this project. All of us had previous for this sort of thing, having each written for the **2000 AD** audios that Big Finish released between 2002 and 2004. John wanted a range of stories for this new quartet, each different from the others. For me it was a chance to tell a different kind of story from my other **Dredd** audios...

How does this series differ from the previous **Judge Dredd** audios Big Finish has produced?

The old range were full cast audio dramas, complete with music and sound effects. These new releases are closer to the **Companion Chronicles**, with one voice narrating each story and a guest voice adding an extra dimension to the drama. Plus there's the wonderful Big Finish music and post-production, which really bring the stories to life. I've deliberately written something that would never have worked in the old range, making a storytelling virtue out of this new format. Work commitments elsewhere meant I couldn't attend the recording, so I'm itching to hear the results.

What do you think of Toby Longworth's Dredd? How has he refined his performance over the years?

Toby Longworth's become the definite vocal incarnation of Dredd as far as I'm concerned. Whenever I'm writing Dredd – either for audio, in a novel or as a comic strip – I hear Toby's voice in my head, saying the dialogue as I type it. Fortunately, I don't have to pay Toby for what happens in my head.



You've also recently written **Enemy of the Daleks**. What were your inspirations?

My inspirations were an odd mixture of silk worms, the Michael Caine film **Zulu** and a Japanese lullaby. Somehow those fused together to create a widescreen action movie that still works on audio – very odd.

Having written a dozen different audios for Big Finish – everything from **Dredd** to **Doctor Who Unbound**, **Sapphire and Steel** to **Sarah Jane Smith** – it was a joy to finally get a crack at the main **Who** range. Bit like getting a guest pass to the mothership. Plus it gave me the chance to write for Sophie and Sylv, the TARDIS team that got me back into **Who** during the late 1980s. Having said that, I soon discovered a deep and abiding love for Hex as a character, because he's such an ordinary bloke coping with extraordinary situations. Doesn't hurt having Philip Olivier acting up a storm in the role either.

What do you think of the finished product? Does it sound like it did in your head, complete with heavy metal music? What would you change?

The finished *Enemy of the Daleks* sounded nothing like I imagined – I certainly hadn't foreseen Steve Foxon's heavy metal score. I'd been expecting a variation upon the Sakura, Sakura lullaby that plays a key part in the plot. But Steve and director Ken Bentley went in an entirely different direction – and I loved the results. Those grinding guitars add a real sense of urgency and menace to the threat levels that keep escalating throughout the story. Can't say there's much I'd change, as *Enemy of the Daleks* is probably the most successful script I've written for Big Finish to date.

Do you have a favourite character to write for on audio?

I always wish Nigel Fairs had asked me back to write another **Sapphire and Steel** audio. *All Fall Down* was a very traditional story, especially compared to the more radical efforts by people like Joe Lidster, but I was writing in a vacuum without any guidance about

how far the format could be stretched. I'd have loved the chance to go for it – but that didn't happen.

Finally, many fans are still upset with how you left Sarah Jane Smith. Did you have a plan for what would happen next, and did you do it to torment any future writers for the series? What do you think of her TV adventures?

First off, I should probably say sorry for leaving Sarah out in space, floating in a tin can. At the time I wrote that last script (which Elisabeth Sladen heartily endorsed, by the way), **The Sarah Jane Adventures** weren't even a twinkle in Russell T Davies' eyes. I was hoping for a third series of audios – but once Sarah got her own TV show, those hopes were moot. So, sorry about that.

Did I have a plan for what would happen? Not as such. Josh was definitely and absolutely dead, that much was certain. I figured the first episode of series three might open with Sarah regaining consciousness on Earth, with no memory of how she got safely back. The rest of the episode could follow her quest to solve the mystery of her rescue. Had the Doctor intervened? Perhaps an alien abduction? Or something else, something even stranger? Like I said, things never got any further than that once **The Sarah Jane Adventures** was commissioned. I love the show, it's head and shoulders above its competitors and deserves far more accolades than it gets. Stories on **The Sarah Jane Adventures** have got real heart and depth. Anybody who isn't watching is missing out, in my humble opinion.

David, thank you very much!

Judge Dredd: Crime Chronicles - Stranger Than Truth is out this month



I realised the other day that last month marked ten years since the release of your first **Doctor Who** play, and I felt that (although I'm a bit late!) I couldn't let that occasion go by without contacting you to say a big THANK YOU for a decade of wonderful **Doctor Who**.

Little did I realise back in July 1999 when I bought *The Sirens of Time* from you that ten years later I would still be subscribed to these wonderful plays and have shelves groaning under the weight of enormous amounts of CDs. Let alone the spin-off ranges I have been tempted into over the years. (There are so many I now live in the shed and like to look at them through the front room window.)

Your quality productions kept us all going when there was no new **Who** on TV and continue to take us into incredible new worlds now it's back. In fact there have been so many amazing moments in the audio dramas that sometimes I have difficulty remembering if some were on screen or shiny disc. You have created so many memorable new characters over the ten years too that I now number Charley, Lucie, Evelyn etc up there with the best of the TV characters.

So thank you once again for all the excitement and shock twists, the times you've made me laugh out loud or shed a tear. I hope that in another ten years time when CDs and downloads are probably a thing of the past that you are still entertaining us with the adventures of past doctors like David Tennant and Matt Smith. I for one will still be listening.

Stephen Pomfret

Nick: Stephen, we are humbled by your praise. Big Finish has had a long and successful run so far, and I just want to pay tribute to all the great contributors to the range we've had over the years. They are too numerous to mention, but I think it is only right to single out two, especially because you mention characters created by them: Gary Russell, who was producer of the **Doctor Who** range for a gargantuan seven years, oversaw the creation of Charley and Evelyn, and Alan Barnes, who created Charley and Lucie. Cue massive applause for those guys in particular.

I haven't heard any Big Finish plays for a few years: after buying every **Doctor Who** play between 1999 and 2005, the sequence with Paul McGann travelling through another universe turned me away from the series a little, and coupled with some needlessly stressful experience designing your early **Sapphire & Steel** series, I gave up, thinking there was nothing more to be done with **Doctor Who**.

Recently, a few friends suggested I listen to some of the **Companion Chronicles** CDs, and because I enjoy the William Hartnell telly stories, I thought I'd have a shot at *The Transit of Venus*, with William Russell.

I'd just like to congratulate you on producing a great play that perfectly captured the spirit of the series; did something new; and most of all was stylish and important and necessary. **Doctor Who** is much better when it's stumbling around the past and the future telling stories than it is when it's about galaxy-wide battles and lonely gods. This play captured **Doctor Who**, proper **Doctor Who**, perfectly, and it's the best thing I've heard possibly since you started. Well done. Really, well done. A lovely piece. I loved it.

I'm going to try some of the others now...
Thanks,
Andrew Orton

Nick: Cheers, Andrew. I'm particularly gratified that you feel the story captured the spirit of its era. This was my intention when I set up the **Companion Chronicles**. It was a way of giving us a little audio window into a world of **Doctor Who** that seemed closed to us.

Why don't you have PayPal as a payment option, then I would be able to buy CDs.

Thank you.
Graeme

Nick: That is something we are looking into, although there would be cost implications for us, which is what has held us back from doing this in the past.

Congratulations to all on your most recent release, *Patient Zero*. I continue to be highly impressed with all aspects of your productions, and am eagerly awaiting *Paper Cuts* and *Blue Forgotten Planet*. I understand both will be released in September. Can you please provide more exact dates?

I have already taken advantage of the special subscription offer for Colin's **Lost Stories** series, which should tide me over nicely through next June. As Colin is my Doctor of choice, this subscription offer was ideal.

Thank you for the great programmes! Best wishes to you all.
Cindy Garland

Nick: Glad you're looking forward to the **Lost Stories**. The official release date for every release is the final day of the month. However, we often manage to release early most months.

I'm really enjoying the **Companion Chronicles** range, not least because it allows

for the audio return of the earlier Doctors' companions, most, if not all, of whom are ripe for greater exploration. Would it be possible/practical to do stories pairing up two of the range's headline actors for one story, either with an even split as seen in *The Prisoner's Dilemma*, or with one of the two companions as the second voice? I'm especially angling towards a reunion of Peter Purves and Jean Marsh as Steven and Sara here.

And in regards to the **Stargate** line, how likely is it that Richard Dean Anderson or Amanda Tapping would be available to do stories for the range at some point? And the possibility of members of the **Stargate** cast appearing in audios for other ranges? Michael Shanks could play a good counterpoint to the Eighth Doctor, I feel.

Martin S Smith

Nick: The idea of more than one companion appearing is something that will be picked up in the future. As for the **Stargate** question, I leave that to new producer Paul Spragg to answer.

Paul: While I'd love to get both of those actors involved in audio adventures, Amanda is busy much of the year making **Sanctuary** and I suspect RDA is happy in his retirement. Never say never, though! As for Michael Shanks appearing in **Doctor Who**, the biggest hurdle would be syncing up our schedule with his, so it's highly unlikely. Then again, you never know...

I loved *Patient Zero*, it was top notch. Can I recommend the Cyberman trilogy to new listeners: *The Reaping*, *The Gathering* and *The Harvest*. I've heard them all about five times and I wasn't bored at all. But the real reason I am writing is to tell you that I find **Vortex's** orange type on white makes my eyes go funny! Is it just me or do other readers find this too? Anyway, keep up the brilliant work and please discount **Benny Summerfield** series six to ten because I am hooked after the brilliant summer sale of series one to five.

Kind regards,
Mr Chinn

Nick: It makes my eyes go a bit funny too. But that's because I'm 47 and need better glasses! Actually, I'd better do something about that. Right, off to the opticians...

Alex: I am a zealous devotee of orange, but on pages like this with narrow type I can see how it might raise eyebrows. So for all of you with funny eyes, here's the new, blue letters page.

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**Barnaby Edwards on...
Flash Gordon (1980)**

In the midst of re-watching those glorious Buster Crabbe serials – an endeavour to be recommended to all – it came home to me just how perfect a piece of filmmaking the 1980 **Flash Gordon** movie truly is. It's an homage in the truest sense – a celebration of its predecessor, not a cheap parody of it. Expunge **Star Wars**, eschew **Star Trek**: the greatest science fiction film of the last forty years is **Flash Gordon**. And I shall dispatch war rocket Ajax if you disagree.

**Paul Wilson on...
his inner child**

It seems to me that this has been the Month of Conventions – there are no fewer than four conventions this month, including the social event of the year: Regenerations! Kicking the month off, Nick Briggs and I went up to Derby for the Whooverville convention, which was uniquely held in a steam train yard in the middle of nowhere. It was a rather small and intimate affair and I think that encouraged people to feel comfortable enough to strike up conversations with their idols. I was sitting behind the Big Finish table with Nick's partner Steph and little Baby Briggs and saw a young boy nervously approach Colin Baker to get his copy of *Patient Zero* signed. I watched as the fear melted away and turned into pure happiness when Colin spent a few minutes with him and warmly complimented him on his choice of stories. I turned to Mr Briggs's better half and said, 'I remember being that boy,' and she smiled at me, knowing that I still am and always will be that little boy.

**David Richardson on...
True Blood**

I'm just back from holiday so could wax lyrical about all the fabulous books I read, but instead I'm going to talk about HBO's vampire series **True Blood**. Produced by the brilliant Alan Ball (the man who created **Six Feet Under**, my favourite TV series ever), it's the engrossing tale of an American small town at a time when vampires have become mainstreamed thanks to the creation of a synthetic blood that allows them to avoid feasting on humans. Dark, different and not to be missed.

**Jason Haigh-Ellery on...
Top Gear**

It's painful – it really is painful that I have become addicted to **Top Gear**. I hate Clarkson with passion, Hammond is annoying and Captain Slow is just twee... and yet, put them together in three clapped-out old cars and ask them to transform them into amphibious vehicles then drive/sail across the British Channel and I have to watch it at least 10 times on iPlayer. Really annoying, really superb. Damn.

**Alan Barnes on...
the Batbooks**

For those who don't know: Bruce Wayne is dead (probably), and the **Batman** comics family is undergoing its biggest shake-up... well, ever. There are now so many Batbooks it's costing me a small fortune to keep up. My top three, however, are: **Batman & Robin** by Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely, with newly-anointed Batman Dick Grayson teamed up with Damien, Bruce's son with the daughter of Ra's Al Ghul; **Batwoman** in a surprisingly nasty new incarnation of **Detective Comics**, with gloriously dirty-gorgeous art by JH Williams III; and **Gotham City Sirens**, a Catwoman/Poison Ivy/Harley Quinn team-up written by Paul Dini, whose noir-but-now vision of Gotham has made him, to my mind, the most consistently interesting of the current **Batman** writers.

**Paul Spragg on...
Blackest Night**

Like Alan, I love a good comic, and I'm massively excited by current DC Universe-traumatizing crossover **Blackest Night**, in which dead heroes and villains return from the grave to eat the hearts of comics' greatest heroes. With three major deaths already and things looking bleak, it's another work of genius from the unstoppable Geoff Johns, with art by the incomparable Ivan Reis, and asks the question 'How would you cope with loved ones returning to torment you in the most vicious and grotesque of ways?' Stories don't get much darker.

**Nick Briggs on...
Benedict Alexander Briggs.**

Born 08.05, 28th June 2009, St Thomas's Hospital, London
I know it's corny, and I know from my own experience that anyone reading this who does not have a child will feel like they've just been hit by a wave of sugary nonsense, but the best entertainment I have at the moment is my son. It's almost impossible to describe the joy you feel when your child looks you squarely in the eyes and smiles at you for the first time. Every day, when I get home from work, that is entertainment enough for me. Highly recommended.

**Alex Mallinson on...
America's Next Top Model**

Jason isn't the only one who can wax lyrical about trashy TV. I was coerced into watching cycle 11 of this apparently run-of-the-mill reality TV show. What unfolded however, although reasonably predictable, differed from the smarmy schadenfreude of **Big Brother** and its monstrous offspring. As creator and host, Tyra Banks brings her intimate experience of the model industry to bear on the young, gauche but often vulnerable (and who wasn't at the ludicrous age of 18?) contestants, and eliminations are always justified and accompanied by constructive criticism and an affectionate send-off. I ended up with a genuine appreciation for the difficulties facing young entrants into an industry I had (hypocritically, bearing in mind my current vocation) dismissed as vapid. By turns excruciating and quite touching, **ANTM** is surprisingly watchable.

**Toby Hrycek-Robinson on...
Doig! The Musical**
(Tabbard Theatre, Chiswick).

With no singing or dancing and very little music, this is a farce based on the life of original cynic Diogenes, who purportedly died holding his breath. The play's hero gives everything away except for the recycling bag he wears. Thought-provoking, funny, and they give the entire box office takings to one audience member every Monday – I went on Wednesday!

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