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EDITORIAL

As you may know by now, we've got a special **Companion Chronicles** Day coming up. I won't bore you with all the pricing details (£5 each or £16 for the whole of series one – oops, I just did!), but I wanted to take a moment to explain the situation with downloads – or lack of them – for this first series of **Companion Chronicles**. You see, when we made that series, it was back in the days before downloads. Can you believe that? Can you believe those days actually existed?

When I became executive producer of Big Finish, one of my main, stated (to my colleagues) aims was to get a download service up and running. It was an uphill struggle, and it took quite a time to get it working properly, but eventually we did it, with the massive support of webmaster Paul Wilson. But it wasn't just a technical struggle to get it all working. It was a contractual nightmare, because all our contracts had been drawn up in the time before downloads. As it happened, many of our contracts luckily allowed for all future technological developments in releases, but some of them – rather randomly (life's like that) – didn't. So the lovely Frances Welsh, our contracts and finance manager, spent a long, long, long time, contacting all those who

needed to sign off on the download release of plays they had produced or written or composed music for. Almost everybody was happy to sign those contracts, as they realized it would quite possibly mean that their plays would sell more and that ultimately, they might earn some more royalties. But not everyone saw it that way and we must respect the decisions of those who decided to exercise their right not to sign. I don't think it would be fair to name names, but suffice it to say that two of the key contributors (not performers) for the first series of **Companion Chronicles** have not only declined to sign the new contracts, but will no longer respond to any communication on the subject. And, it would seem, no power on Earth or beyond can compel them to change their minds.

So, that is the reason why you will not be able to buy download versions of the first series of the **Companion Chronicles**. However, you can buy the CDs (did I mention the vastly reduced price?) on Companion Chronicles Day and easily import them onto your computer and put them on your mp3 player. Apologies for the tiny bit of extra faff this will cause... but, as I say, it's rather out of our hands.

Nick Briggs

SNEAK PREVIEWS AND WHISPERS

Doctor Who: The Wrath of the Iceni

One of the important things about learning is making mistakes. And in a Fourth Doctor series that follows the education of Leela, it's inevitable that the savage would make a mistake. And, in *The Wrath of the Iceni*, it's a big and terrible one...

John Dorney's script is a pure historical, without a whiff of an alien invasion or indeed an outright villain – rather it's a measured drama set during the Roman occupation of Britain that takes the Doctor and Leela into territory that we've never seen (or heard!) before.

Ella Kenion (**The Green Green Grass**, **Doctor Who: Let's Kill Hitler**) guest stars as

Boudica, while Nia Roberts (**Doctor Who: The Hungry Earth/Cold Blood**) is Bragnar. (Out March 2012)

Jago and Litefoot – Series 4

Things are settling down nicely for Jago and Litefoot, so much so that they've booked themselves a holiday and are enjoying a seaside vacation in Brighton. Then Jago falls in love. And Oscar Wilde comes on the scene. And there's a train to nowhere, and two mighty villains out to cause havoc. And watching from the sidelines is the enigmatic Professor Dark... Will Jago still find time for a pint? (Out March 2012)

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HOLMES

ON THE

RANGE

NICHOLAS BRIGGS REVEALS HOW HE APPROACHED THE SECOND SERIES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES ADVENTURES, AND PLAYING SUCH AN ICONIC CHARACTER

Hello Nick. How did you select which stories to make for the second series of **Sherlock Holmes**? Was it important to do some 'traditional' Conan Doyle stories this time?

It certainly was important for me to do some original Conan Doyle in this series. We'd had sort of 'edited highlights' of Conan Doyle in the two one-man-show plays we did last time, starring Roger Llewellyn, in which writer David Stuart Davies very cleverly wove in all the highlights of many classic **Holmes** stories; but I definitely felt it was time to do some ultra-faithful adaptations. With the brilliant **Sherlock** series and the Robert Downey Jr films essentially being reimaginings, I really felt that it was high time there were some dramatic adaptations which stuck to the original stories. But I also wanted to offer something new. In the case of *The Tangled Skein*, it's not entirely new, because David Stuart Davies's book of this has been around for quite some time – but it's new to audio. I also wanted to experiment with something totally new, but which felt as if Conan Doyle had written it, which is why we have George Mann's beautifully crafted *The Reification of Hans Gerber*. In many ways, we're still feeling our way through this range, and I wanted to see which kind of thing our audience prefers. We shall find out in the coming months as the sales figures come through.

In the first series, you played *Holmes in Holmes and the Ripper*; this time round you're starring in all four plays. Was that always your intent? I'd wanted Big Finish to do **Holmes** for many years, and it has come up in our production

meetings from time to time. But the problem for us with starting any series is to get the people in place to write it, direct it, produce it, etc. When I saw David's two plays, with Roger being so brilliant in them, I thought to myself, 'These will adapt really easily for audio'! It was a way of starting our **Holmes** line, as it were. And I'd just done *Holmes and the Ripper* at the Theatre Royal Nottingham and had got really good reviews for my performance. So again, there was a play, this time by the lovely Brian Clemens, already there and waiting to be made. So it was a love of the material and convenience as well. It was an easy way to find out if we could locate an audience for it out there. And once we discovered that people would buy them, I twisted Jason's [Jason Haigh-Ellery, executive producer] arm to let me have a new series, on the condition I kept the budget to a minimum. We discovered fairly quickly that our **Holmes** audios were pirated online even more prolifically than our **Doctor Whos**, so they were clearly popular, we just have to find ways of getting more people to actually buy them. One way is through our special online investigator, who is systematically removing all the illegal download links as soon as they pop up. The other way is to do iconic stories, like *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Final Problem*, which people will notice and want to buy.

How much do these stories allow you to build the character of Holmes?

These are all great stories for Holmes's character. *The Final Problem* gave me the opportunity to investigate playing Holmes under pressure. The story starts with him already under threat from Moriarty. His knuckles are 'barked' and he confesses that he's scared. I really loved the whole 'cigarette acting' thing that was required. Ah, took me back to my unhealthy days. I wanted to play with the whole contradiction between the



Alan Cox and Nicholas Briggs: Heading for a Falls

Holmes who has nerves of steel and the Holmes who feels he's finally met his match. He's kind of thrilled by the existence of Moriarty, but there's a real sense that he feels death is just a few footfalls away.

How do you approach playing such an iconic character?

I approach Holmes in the same way I approach any part. I find out who I think the character is. What he wants. The way he goes about getting it. What he thinks of the world, etc. Holmes is astonishingly single-minded. I think Steve Moffat is spot-on with the modern interpretation, almost making him autistic. There is that aspect to Holmes in the original stories, it's just not expressed that way. But he comes alive only when he's functioning in his chosen environment. Outside of that, he's lost. Watson, the storyteller, talks about it all the time. And in some ways, I'm a bit like that myself. If I'm not writing a story, rehearsing a play, doing some sound design or music, I'm a bit empty and, in the worst cases, morose and miserable. Not much fun to be around. So I recognize that slightly unhealthy, Holmesian single-mindedness in myself. But with Holmes, when he's engaged in his comfort zone

of wrestling with mysteries, he virtually shuts off all other concerns – which can make him sound arrogant and short-tempered. I hope I avoid that in my life... I strive to avoid that. So it's wonderful not to have to bother to avoid being unpleasant when playing Holmes. Goodness knows how Watson puts up with him, but the poor guy is devoted to Holmes. It's a brilliant relationship to be in. Unhealthy, ultimately, but great to play.

You have an instant rapport with Richard Earl; what are the secrets of your double act as Holmes and Watson?

I think I may well be the only Holmes actor who has ever chosen his Watson. I chose Richard because I think he's rather like Watson. I don't really know Richard all that well outside of acting with and directing him. But what I do know of him, I like very much. It was difficult to start with, because I think he felt a real weight of responsibility at playing Watson. He slightly panicked, I think, and over-thought it. I was rather Holmes-ish and thoughtless with him, and more or less just told him to get on with it. What I wanted to say was, 'Just be yourself! You are Watson!' Once he knew that I loved what he was doing, he was totally brilliant. This minor trauma

all happened between the first and last take of our first scene together in *Holmes and the Ripper* and then we were off! And we haven't looked back. I think Richard is such a splendid actor. There's something curiously old-fashioned about him. He's just Watson through and through for me. Oh... and he sounds nothing like me, which was an important consideration, naturally! And he seems to have some sort of respect for me – although when I'm in Holmes mode, I'm curiously immune to other people's opinions – so we have a kind of mutual respect, 'we're in this together, come hell or high water' mentality when we go into the studio.

Holmes has been back in the public eye a lot recently since the success of **Sherlock**. How has that impacted on the CD range, and what are the differences and similarities between them?

We hope the impact will be that people will want to drink up all things Holmes and buy our new series in larger numbers. The huge difference between our series and **Sherlock** is, of course, that we're trying to make it as much like the originals as possible. Steve and Mark Gatiss have set out to reinvent it – to distil exactly what the stories were about, then express them in a way that translates perfectly to a modern sensibility, style and narrative. They've done it perfectly. And to be honest, some of what they've

done has influenced my interpretation of the character, because it's highlighted and clarified certain traits of the man, lifted them above all the normal historical style and setting which has often led people to misinterpret what Holmes is. I'm indebted to them for that. I've absorbed their singular distillation of the character, then plunged him back into his original setting.

If you did a third series, would you consider solely doing adaptations or do you prefer a mixture of old and new? Would you consider original adventures?

The jury is out. It depends on listener reaction. So, if you're reading this, please do let us know what you think. I would happily do either. But one way or another, I want Alan Barnes involved in the writing. He's such a Holmes expert, and it was a bit of tragedy for me that he was just too darn busy to do this series. But I'm certainly happy with the mix we currently have. Let's see what people think. But I'm certainly keeping my fingers crossed for a third series. I love playing Holmes and I think we've come up with a remarkably good series of adventures here. They rattle along at break-neck pace. They're infused with that energy of Holmes at his best.

Sherlock Holmes - The Final Problem / The Empty House is out this month



Richard Earl and Nicholas Briggs share a fun working relationship

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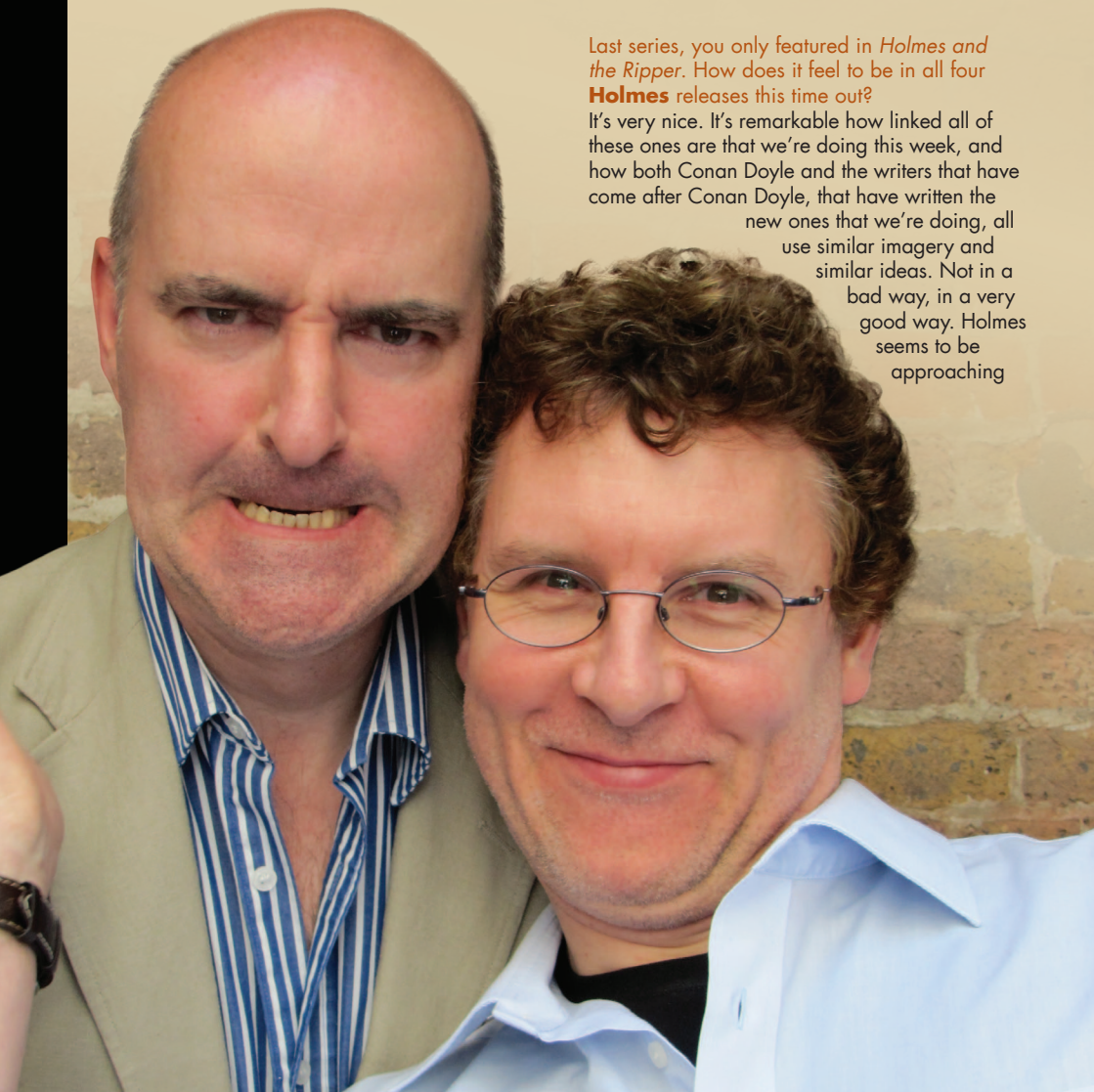
WATSON

THE OTHER SIDE

RICHARD EARL DISCUSSES WITH PAUL SPRAGG WHAT IT'S LIKE PLAYING WATSON,
HALF OF ONE OF THE MOST ENDURING PARTNERSHIPS IN DETECTIVE FICTION

Last series, you only featured in *Holmes and the Ripper*. How does it feel to be in all four **Holmes** releases this time out?

It's very nice. It's remarkable how linked all of these ones are that we're doing this week, and how both Conan Doyle and the writers that have come after Conan Doyle, that have written the new ones that we're doing, all use similar imagery and similar ideas. Not in a bad way, in a very good way. Holmes seems to be approaching





Beth Chalmers, John Banks, Barnaby Edwards, Giles Watling, Richard Earl and Nicholas Briggs

dilapidated houses quite a lot and he's either fooling people or being fooled by people using dummies, silhouettes, in upstairs windows. And, of course, around everything is the fog.

It's remarkable how the other writers have captured all of the essence of a typical **Holmes** story. And also being in so many quite intensively, you're reminded that whereas other detectives have cases – and I know there's **The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes** – Sherlock Holmes has adventures. And I wonder if that's perhaps why the Holmes and Watson stories are so enduring. It's not just the intellectual skin of it, for those people who want to try to puzzle it out and see if they've worked it out the way Holmes did, but also it's the fact that Holmes and Watson put their lives on the line time and time again. Holmes is forever putting himself on the line, and Watson's life on the line when it can't be avoided, although in the one we're doing at the moment, *The Tangled Skein*, he's very careful to keep Watson out of trouble until finally he can't avoid it any more.

It's interesting how the new writers compare with Conan Doyle, how Watson changes a bit. Sometimes he's a bit more bluff or a bit more military, a bit more medical. At other times he's very much the narrator and the steady friend. So all of this week and last week, it's been capturing all the different aspects of the characters, which is difficult to do, I suppose, now, because we're used to the modern **Sherlock**, now with its own BAFTA...

That could be you next year...

It probably won't be! And we're used to the Robert Downey Jr sort of stories as well [from the recent Guy Ritchie film], so it's difficult to find a middle way. You don't want to be too stereotypical but I think there's probably still room for a sort of traditional version of Holmes and

Watson. What people who might not know the stories will expect, from all the cultural baggage that comes with them.

It's a bit like, because of where we are and who we're working for, **Doctor Who**. I think most people, just as they have a Doctor Who depending on when they grew up – for me that was Tom Baker – they also have a Holmes and Watson, and for me it was Jeremy Brett and Edward Hardwicke – who sadly passed away only earlier this week. When I was a kid, whenever you were ill in bed, [**Holmes** books] were the kind of things that you'd read, and you forget, when you haven't read them for a while, just how page-turning they are and how simple they are. I don't know if Conan Doyle did it for this reason, I imagine not – but it's remarkable how many of them have a length that suits a train journey, particularly a commuting train journey. It's nice to read a few of those and then read some of the longer stories, like **The Valley of Fear**, **Hound of the Baskervilles**.

Have you based your Watson on earlier interpretations or created your own?

Neither really. I was approached to do Watson by Nick, and it wasn't really until the first day of *Holmes and the Ripper* that once the people in the control room, and Nick, could see how Nick was doing Sherlock Holmes, I think it was important to do a Watson that fitted in with that. I think Nick is excellent; he's done very well in that it's a Holmes you expect and you don't expect at the same time. Does that make sense? He's not going to upset any traditionalists, and at the same time he's not slavishly trying to do it like every other actor who's ever done it in a deerstalker with a pipe and 'The game is afoot, Watson!'

Yet he did buy a deerstalker for the role...

And very handsome he looks too. It's the only thing we couldn't CGI on the photo! I think my Watson is based really on what complements Holmes most. I think it would have been pointless to say 'I've got some brand new ideas for Watson...'

You mean make him a bit more Geordie, perhaps?

Exactly. Although Roger Llewellyn, when I've seen him do his one-man Sherlock Holmes, I think he gave Watson a slight Scottish twang. I could be wrong. I think he did, to differentiate. But yeah, Watson is what he is. He was in the army, he's a medical man, he's everyman as far as the reader is concerned. He's like the reader, always one step behind Holmes intellectually and physically.

He's the companion asking, 'What's happening, Doctor?'

Absolutely. And I think it was John Fowles, who wrote **The French Lieutenant's Woman**, he was a big fan of Sherlock Holmes and I think he said that even though Sherlock Holmes is a brilliant invention, other people came up with detectives that are just as remarkable in their own way. He said what was brilliant about Conan Doyle was actually inventing Watson. To try to chronicle it in that way, to involve a guy who's telling you about it, he was there at the time and he's like you and me, is brilliant.

Could Holmes and Watson be the template for the many 'buddy' detective relationships that have followed?

Yeah. Since them, I think there have been a lot. There's Poirot and Hastings. Morse and Lewis. Lewis is very much us, he speaks for us when he says, 'I don't understand this' or 'I'm not as keen on opera as you are' or whatever. So I think Conan Doyle certainly hit on something.

I know some people think he was a bit of a hack, but he's a great storyteller and no, okay, it's not Shakespeare, but they're wonderful stories. I know he got fed up with Holmes and Watson taking over his life, bless him, he tried to kill them off, but I think he really, really, really knew what he was doing when he did the Holmes and Watson thing. Things like *Baskervilles*, you can't tell it without two of them. Even though Holmes quite often uses Watson without keeping him fully informed as exactly why he's using him and the way he's using him.

I can't think of any other relationship that endures through literature in that kind of way. It's almost Don Quixote and Sancho Panza... But even though Holmes is brilliant, if you were to name one famous fictional detective, I'd like to think a lot of people would probably say Sherlock Holmes. The phrase Holmes and Watson, equally, rolls off the tongue.

Just behind *Danger Mouse* and *Penfold*.

Exactly. Just behind.

Sherlock Holmes - The Final Problem / The Empty House is out this month



The essential ingredients: Moriarty, Holmes and Watson

Just a brief note to say how much I am enjoying the First Doctor **Lost Story Farewell, Great Macedon**. William Russell and Carole Ann Ford are as matchless as ever, but John Dorney's portrayal of Alexander the Great is an absolute revelation. A performance that reminds me of Mark Eden's charismatic playing of Marco Polo in that wonderful historical from 1964. A superb presentation.

Adrian Tipson

Nick: Thanks, Adrian. That John Dorney's a rather talented fellow, isn't he?

Very disappointed to learn that Justin Richards is still writing for you, especially for the new **Fourth Doctor** stories. When your audio adventures are good, they are very, very good -- and when they are bad, they inevitably have his name on them.

After the torment of *Whispers of Terror* and *Red Dawn*, I vowed that I would never pay money for anything scripted by him, easily the most untalented writer in your employ. Sorry, but I won't even make an exception for Tom Baker.

Douglas Thornsoj

Nick: Well Douglas, everyone's entitled to their view, I guess. I don't agree with you, of course. And I've just heard the first edit of *The Renaissance Man* and it's really rather magical. But don't let me sway you in any way!

I would like to know, are there any **Doctor Who** audios that feature a story onboard a spaceship or station with something spooky bumping off the crew one by one? Can't seem to find one yet.

Also, I would love to hear an audio about some sort of government conspiracy; you know, part of the staff are half-alien half-human, something where the Doctor doesn't know who he can trust.

Carl Roberts

Nick: Well, I can help you with the spooky spaceship story... it's one of mine: *Sword of Orion*, featuring the Eighth Doctor and the Cybermen. Anyone have any ideas about a government conspiracy story? What you're asking for is basically **Alien** and **Quatermass II**, isn't it?

I've just started listening to Paul Temple on the radio and I'm enjoying them very much. Would you wonderful guys make your own version? I know Gareth Thomas would say yes to playing Sir George.

Simon Taylor

Nick: I'm very familiar with the theatrical works of Francis Durbridge, having performed in all his plays except *The Small Hours*. I've often thought we might adapt those for audio. But it's a question of whether or not the series would be financially viable. Not sure how big the market would be for thrillers. I've been toying with doing some Brian Clemens thrillers. What do you reckon about that? Brian loves the idea.

Could you tell me if Big Finish are planning to do any more triple CD stories like *Zagreus* and *The Next Life*. I am a subscriber to the Main Range as well as **Companion Chronicles** and **Lost Stories, Jago & Litefoot** and the upcoming Tom Baker range.

It would be great to have another epic tale for the Doctor and a whole host of familiar faces and foes. Master please...

I am a constant listener to your podcasts. Fantastic listening!

Keep doing the great job you are.

Kevin Brown

Nick: Hi Kevin! Glad to hear you follow the podcasts. If it's an epic story covering 3 CDs you want, you need look no further than our forthcoming **Fourth Doctor Box Set**. It comprises two **Lost Stories** from 1977, *The Foe from the Future* and *The Valley of Death*, and the former is a six-parter by Robert Banks Stewart (who wrote *The Seeds of Doom*). It's certainly the longest **Doctor Who** we've done for some years and not to be missed!

I have just finished listening to **Gallifrey IV** and thought it was fantastic. Are there any plans for a **Gallifrey V**? Or a 4.5 even?

On the subject of sequels to spin-offs I would like to also mention that **Jago & Litefoot** gets better and better. I would have ordered **J&L** series five by now, but I haven't had an opportunity to steal from my wife's purse yet.

John Branigan

PS: Only joking about my wife's purse... she keeps her cash card somewhere else. Nick: Well, I hope you are joking! Yes, there will be another series of **Gallifrey**, as announced by Gary Russell at a recent convention. He wasn't supposed to announce it, but he did. Good for him.

I apologize for not giving you enough credit when I recently pleaded for **Bernie Summerfield** to be made available for download purchase. No sooner did I see the notice on the website that the new box sets are available for downloads than I put my money where my mouth is and bought the first box set. Thank you. And bravo for including the DVD content in the download. I did not expect that. More to follow whenever I have the time to enjoy the set. In the meantime, my best regards to you all.

Michael House

Nick: It was excruciating for us that so many people were asking for **Benny** downloads when all the time we knew all parties were working hard to make this a reality. Finally, the deal is agreed and signed, and **Benny** can be downloaded. Over the coming months, more and more of her vintage adventures will become available.



Lisa Bowerman in
Bernice Summerfield: Epoch

LOST PROPERTIES

David Richardson introduces the third series of **The Lost Stories**, including his best find to date...

Hello David! So, how did you decide which stories should be a part of this run?

I have to credit **Doctor Who** historian Richard Bignell for his invaluable help in bringing lost storylines to my attention. Over the years he's been on a personal mission to track down all these missing treasures, and he's brought many of them my way. Though other people have helped too – it was Rob Shearman who told me about the existing material on *The Children of Seth*, as he'd just done a DVD interview with writer Christopher Bailey. John Dorney had suggested *The Guardians of Prophecy* after he remembered the storyline being printed in *Doctor Who Magazine*. Gary Hopkins was suggested to me by Marc Platt, who knew of the existence of *Power Play*. It was fate bringing a lot of great material my way.

What's been your best find to date?

Well, I think *The Children of Seth* was an amazing find, because both *Kinda* and *Snakedance* are so highly regarded. It was a very exciting day when Marc Platt, John Dorney and I got into a car and drove to Brighton to meet with Christopher Bailey. Over lunch we went over the existing material, found fixes for the problems that weren't solved in the 1980s, and worked out a way to bring it to audio. I went home feeling elated.

Do you alter Doctor/companion teams for stories?

I take guidance from the original writers. For example, script material we had for *The Children of Seth* was for the Sixth Doctor and Peri, but Christopher had originally devised it for the Fifth Doctor, Tegan and Nyssa and he felt it worked better that way, because he knew those characters. I think he's right – I don't think the Sixth Doctor and Peri had even been cast when he wrote *Seth*, so there's no sense of identity to those characters in his script.



Janet Fielding, Jacqueline Pearce and Sarah Sutton

What stage does a **Lost Story have to be at for you to consider it for production?**

Well, the goalposts have changed for me. Originally it was going to be just lost scripts, but then we discovered some fantastic storylines that were crying out to be made. *The Elite*, for example, is a brilliant **Doctor Who** story – and it was madness not to make it just because the dialogue hadn't been written. A good story is a good story.

There hasn't yet been a Third Doctor **Lost Story; would you consider doing any of those?**

There will be, in series four. We'll do it like *Farewell*, *Great Macedon*.

What can you reveal about January's Tom Baker **Lost Stories box set?**

I'm so, so proud of that release. *The Foe from the Future* and *The Valley of Death* fit beautifully into the Fourth Doctor era, and I think the scripts were fantastic. We recorded them over five days at the start of September and that was one of the happiest weeks of my working life. If you like *The Seeds of Doom*, you'll love *The Foe from the Future*. If you like *City of Death*, you'll love *The Valley of Death*. Tom and Louise gave us beautifully authentic TV performances, and I feel like we've recreated my favourite thing from when I was fourteen years old.

John Dorney takes us through the process of turning *The Elite* into a fully-fledged script

Barbara Clegg's outline for *The Elite* is two-and-a-half pages of typed text. A scanned version of the document arrived in my email inbox a year and a half ago with the instruction to turn it into a four-part story for the Fifth Doctor, Nyssa and Tegan. A deceptively simple storyline packed with lovely ideas, inventive twists and concepts, it was an irresistible prospect... and yet it also presented all sorts of problems for the adaptor/dramatist. Little gaps in logic, moments of absent detail, a sole generic companion and a narrow development... how do you turn this into a two-hour script? A brief simultaneously too slight and too detailed.

Every **Lost Story** is a different challenge. As the script editor of the range's third series, I know this more than most. Up until now the series has been largely based on pre-existing scripts, or (in direct contrast) premises without a mass of plot attached. With the third series we move more into the territory of the synopsis and the pitch. Stories submitted by established series authors that, for one reason or another, were not pursued. And there is, as you'd expect, a wide variety in the sort and style of material we've been sifting through.

No two stories have the same starting point. Sometimes you get a dozen pages of outline. Sometimes you get fragments of script and a half-finished synopsis. And sometimes you get four photocopied pages from an old issue of *Doctor Who Magazine*. Each time you have to mould and shape the stories into workable full-length scripts.

So how do you go about that? You have to tell the stories the original writer intended, otherwise what's the point? But at the same time, you have to be aware that the materials you're working



from are early days, undeveloped outlines that would have changed and grown throughout the writing process had they been made when intended. You have to identify and iron out the flaws, yet still retain as much plot and detail from the original as you can. Keep the authenticity, yet ensure the story works in its own right.

I think the solution to all this is that you've got to be aware that it is ultimately your vision of that storyline, and not the original author's. You can't be afraid of putting your own identity on the concept, as you're the one that's telling it. What is the story about for you? What do you think it's saying? You can't get inside the original author's head, so you have to own it yourself if it's to have any life of its own. You maintain the scenes and the spirit, yet can expand and develop it. For *The Elite*, I read the outline over and over again, trying to figure out what the story said to me. And eventually I realised that that was, I think, quite a simple notion. That you shouldn't be afraid of monsters, as they're not the scariest things out there.

I could begin.



Joe Coen, Peter Davison, Janet Fielding, John Banks, Sarah Sutton, Derek Carlyle, Ryan Sampson, John Dorney and Ellie Burrow

Kelly Ellis from Fool Circle Productions reveals the secrets of his and Steve McNichol's sound design and music...

You're fairly recent additions to the Big Finish music team; how did you land the gig? Was it a tough audition process?

It all started as a bit of an audio challenge in the studio one day. Steve and myself have both been inspired and influenced by the Radiophonic Workshop and were interested to see if we could make a version of the **Doctor Who** theme using only our collection of old analogue synths – no samplers, no computers. I was aware of Big Finish **Doctor Who** dramas, and had been listening to them on and off since *Sirens of Time* (audio dramas are a great break from working with music all day in the recording studio), and I thought the folk at Big Finish might actually like to hear it and perhaps appreciate what we had created. We received a reply asking if we would like to audition. We were given a Dalek-based audition piece, which we found great fun to do. We were given the thumbs up and went straight into working on the **Cyberman 2** mini-series. It was definitely in at the deep end at the start as we hadn't worked on any audio quite like this before, just three-and-a-half minute commercial music type tracks. So it was a very steep learning curve that we faced but we had confidence in our technical and creative skills, and we were really happy with how **Cyberman 2** was received. That was the start, and we moved on to two series of **Jago & Litfoot** and series one of **Graceless**. All preparing us well for **Doctor Who**.

Is there a degree of excitement when the master tapes first arrive for a story?

It's great for me being a fan (and self-confessed geek) to read through a fresh, new script with a brand new adventure for any of the classic Doctors. It doesn't feel like work at all. But then the professional side kicks in when reading the script and the challenge of the sound design creeps in. Thinking, 'Oh my God, how are we gonna do that!' Getting the master tapes is also exciting, knowing we have the performances in our grubby mitts, but then introduces the reality of actually having to concentrate on getting started on the dialogue edits.

What's the first thing you consider when composing music?

Our first and most important consideration is what overall mood and emotional tone threads throughout the story as well as things such as what period in time and space the episode is set in. Then we build up a working palette of various sounds and instruments to work with. From this we will write and create the underscoring and musical tags and segue ways, making sure to enhance and support the mood of the scenes without distracting from the dialogue.

We both love the unique and otherworldly music that came out of the radiophonic workshop, and that's definitely one of the reasons that made **Doctor Who** so scary and hide-behind-your-sofa viewing. So we always try to keep a feel and echo of that through the music we write. It is **Doctor Who**, after all.

How difficult is it to create music to match the period a **Lost Story** is set in? Do you use certain older instruments?

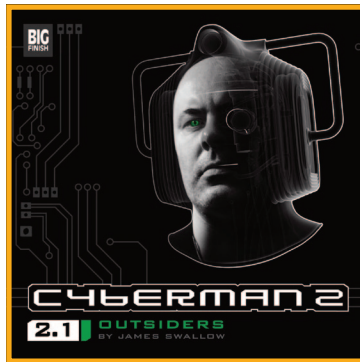
For *The Elite* we watched a lot of the original episodes from the Peter Davison era, especially *Arc of Infinity*, that being the story that directly precedes *The Elite*. We did research to find out exactly what equipment and synthesisers the Radiophonic Workshop was actually using during that era, as well as

finding useful interviews with Peter Howell and others who worked on the music back in the early eighties. We were then able to replicate using actual and virtual versions of the equipment used. It was actually inspiring to only have a handful of instruments and sounds to use for the story, as we had to squeeze the best from them, as they would have back in the early eighties at the Radiophonic Workshop.

What were the specific challenges of sound designing and scoring *The Elite*? Was anything almost impossible to create?

We wanted to get the sound of the high priest's damaged throne to sound as epic, heavy and dangerous as we could. So time was spent experimenting with combinations of different sounds to give it weight and menace.

Sometimes, despite the vast library of sounds that we have, a scene requires something specific that we just don't have and then it's out with the





microphones. For *The Elite*, I recorded rustling of a chocolate bar and breaking off chunks. Very exciting! Also, for authenticity with some of the various footsteps, we recorded squeaky footsteps to replicate the Fifth Doctor's cricket trainers and some clippy high heels for Tegan and Nyssa's impractical companion footwear.

Overall, nothing too challenging on *The Elite* – at least I didn't have to jump into a swimming pool this time as I had to for **Graceless** and **Cyberman 2!**

For the music, *The Elite* has a very stiff, oppressive and militaristic feel, so we tried to

accent that with bold brassy synths and electric snare drum motifs. We also created an eerie, threatening background drone with the modular synth for the cathedral inner sanctum scenes. We also included a type sine wave synth-type tone through the story that was prevalent in the early eighties episodes and for me was very much Peter Davison's signature sound.

Do you have a favourite era of Doctor Who to work in?

I don't think either of us has a particular favourite era to work on, as they all have their pros and cons and challenges. So far we have worked on Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Doctor episodes and are currently working on an Eighth. (And hopefully a Fourth soon to complete the set). But working on *The Elite* with the Fifth Doctor has been very nostalgic for me as I grew up during the Tom Baker/Peter Davison crossover era. (One of my most vivid childhood memories is of watching the Doctor with the teeth, curls and scarf dangling off some sort of pylon tower thing and suddenly plummeting to his doom. And then magically turning into that nice vet bloke.)

Steve was brought up in Bermuda, (which didn't get BBC 1), and so it wasn't until he moved to the UK in the mid 1970s that he got his first and foremost experience of **Doctor Who** watching Tom Baker. He vividly remembers



being terrified and hiding behind his sofa whilst watching *The Seeds of Doom*. He also admits to loving K9. But then moved on to **Blake's 7**.

What tips would you give to other aspiring audio technicians?

The work with Big Finish is certainly unique and can be a technical and creative challenge. There is a lot of work involved, much multi-tasking of skills and the learning curve can be steep, but hearing the completed results is very satisfying and makes the hard work worthwhile. With the technical side, start by getting as much experience with all angles of recording as possible. It's very important to know your recording software and equipment backwards and inside out, and you need to be confident with the precision of your editing abilities. Be organised, as you will be dealing with a lot of audio files. Also be bold and get out of your studio with a microphone and start collecting sounds and foley. Recording new sounds and foley can make a huge difference. Create techniques

and systems that suit you best. We are still always finding more effective ways in which to work quicker, better and with more flexibility.

With the musical side, try to be original and true to your own creative beliefs and intuition. Sometimes a story can be scored with an orchestra in a Hollywood movie filmic way, sometimes synths are better, sometimes it's other acoustic instruments, and sometimes you have to be bold enough to use silence. Music is, after all, about spaces and dynamics. And most importantly, music needs to enhance and guide, not drown out the dialogue.

Listen to loads of music, from all genres. Watch many movies and examine when best music enhances the scenes (and of course pay attention to the sound design).

Finally, patience and clear communication with all the people involved makes it much easier.

Doctor Who: The Lost Stories begins this month with the release of The Elite



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Doctor Who - The Silver Turk (153, Eighth Doctor and Mary Shelley)

Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles:

The Many Deaths of Jo Grant (6.04, Third Doctor)

Doctor Who - The Lost Stories: *The Elite* (3.1, Fifth Doctor, Tegan and Nyssa)

Sherlock Holmes: *The Final Problem/The Empty House* (2.1)

NOVEMBER 2011

Doctor Who: *The Witch from the Well* (154, Eighth Doctor and Mary Shelley)

Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles: *The First Wave* (6.05, First Doctor)

Doctor Who - The Lost Stories: *Hexagora* (3.2, Fifth Doctor, Tegan and Nyssa)

The Big Finish Companion: Volume 1 by Richard Dinnick (hardback)

Sherlock Holmes: *The Reification of Hans Gerber* (2.2)

Shane Rimmer: From Thunderbirds to Pterodactyls (Shane Rimmer autobiography)

DECEMBER 2011

Doctor Who: *Army of Death* (155, Eighth Doctor and Mary Shelley)

Doctor Who: *The Five Companions* - Subscriber Special (Fifth Doctor, Nyssa, Ian, Steven, Sara and Polly)

Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles: *Beyond the Ultimate Adventure* (6.06, Sixth Doctor)

Doctor Who - The Lost Stories: *The Children of Seth* (3.3, Fifth Doctor, Tegan and Nyssa)

Sherlock Holmes: *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (2.3)

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JANUARY 2012

Doctor Who: *The Curse of Davros* (156, Sixth Doctor and Flip)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *Destination: Nerva* (1.1, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

Doctor Who - The Lost Stories: *The Fourth Doctor Box Set (Foe from the Future/Valley of Death)*, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles: *The Anachronauts* (6.07, First Doctor)

Sherlock Holmes: *The Tangled Skein* (2.4)

FEBRUARY 2012

Doctor Who: *The Fourth Wall* (157, Sixth Doctor and Flip)

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The Renaissance Man (1.2, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

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Bernice Summerfield Box Set 2: Road Trip

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MARCH 2012

Doctor Who: *Wirrn Isle* (158, Sixth Doctor and Flip)

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Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles: *The Wanderer* (6.10, First Doctor)

Iris Wildthyme: Series 3 Box Set (Three full cast adventures)

MAY 2012

Doctor Who: TBA (160, Fifth Doctor, Tegan, Turlough and Nyssa)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *Trail of the White Worm* (1.5, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles: TBA (6.11, Second Doctor)

Doctor Who - The Lost Stories: *The Guardians of Prophecy* (3.4, Sixth Doctor and Peri)

Blake's 7: Book 1 by TBA

JUNE 2012

Doctor Who: TBA (161, Fifth Doctor, Tegan, Turlough and Nyssa)

Doctor Who - The Fourth Doctor Adventures: TBA (1.6, Fourth Doctor and Leela)

Doctor Who - The Companion Chronicles: TBA (6.12, Doctor TBA)

Doctor Who - The Lost Stories: *Power Play*

(3.5, Sixth Doctor and Peri)

JULY 2012

Doctor Who: TBA (162, Fifth Doctor, Tegan, Turlough and Nyssa)

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Coming Out of Her Shelley

The Eighth Doctor is back in the Doctor Who Main Range - and he's brought a friend! Julie Cox discusses stepping out of history as Mary Shelley with Paul Spragg



Ms Shelley's first Cyberman

You're fairly new to Big Finish; how are you finding the experience?

I feel like I'm part of the scenery already, it's lovely! In a really good way! Almost two-and-a-half years ago we did the first [story], which was a one-off at the time, with Mary Shelley, and brilliantly they've written three more. I think it just seems to work well, the dynamic between the Doctor and Mary Shelley.

What do you remember about recording your previous appearance in *The Company of Friends*?

I had given birth about ten weeks before, I think; everything's a bit of a blur, which is perfect for doing something like this, really. I listened to it because when they called me and said, 'Do you want to do more?' I was like, 'I vaguely remember...' I love Mary Shelley anyway, I love the whole Byronic scene and all the writings and things that appeared at the time, but I listened to the CD that we did, thinking, 'I'll just listen to a bit of it and remember what kind of voice I was doing', and me and my other half listened to the whole thing. It was fantastic, we really got into the story, it was great!

I love doing audio, radio, all that stuff, because quite often when you're filming you're slightly disappointed by the fact that things aren't there. You read the script and you think, 'Well, this is

going to be great!’ and you get to a studio or room and it’s not, it’s a green wall with a little cross on it or something. Here, you’re in the booth and you’ve all these fantastic actors around and their voices; it’s almost more to work with, you know? It’s great; you really do have to imagine it all in your head.

You don’t get sound effects though, which we add afterwards.

Wouldn’t it be great if we still had to do our own, though? I have worked in studios where they still have all that foley stuff around and someone has to go in afterwards and put footsteps on, and doors. There was one that had about fifteen different front doors just for the sound effect of the right door, what kind of period door it was. I love all that stuff! **The Exorcist**, one of my favourite films, the guy who did all the sounds for that, he was apparently the best in the business. The sound of the neck turning is his wallet from his back pocket. He twisted the leather. They’re very important, getting these things right...

How did you approach playing a real-life character?

I had played Lady Byron, Lord Byron’s other half, in a BBC drama about him, and the scripts written by Nick Dear did cover a lot of the period when they go to Lake Geneva. I did a lot of research then, and there’s a lot of material about her. And that started my interest in Mary Shelley and reading her books and Percy Shelley – and all of them, really. So I knew quite a lot about that already, but what this has done is made me want to go back and read **Frankenstein** again, because I haven’t read it for a long time. I really do. I want to. I will. Because there are so many incarnations of it in so many other ways, people forget that it did actually start with a very dark and brilliantly written novel; it’s very different to the Hammer Horror stuff.

I think the thing about sci-fi, a lot of people dismiss it, not giving it value. Science fiction to me is about, at the end of the day, what it means to be human, and **Frankenstein** has that. How far do you go, what is good and evil, what’s right





Carolyn Pickles, David 'good-looking' Harewood, Julie Cox and Mitch Benn

and wrong? All sci-fi is where we are, not just about spaceships and martians and all that kind of stuff – and I love them! I love all that stuff.

What was your approach to playing Mary?

She's nineteen. Half of me is trying to be true to the age and the period, and the other half is trying to say, 'Actually, this is **Doctor Who** and it's not her world, so how is she going to know how she's going to behave in this world?' But she does have the relationship with the Doctor which, because of the time difference between each story, is, in the first one, a little bit more of the excitement of this world and this travelling, and then the second one is being a bit bolder and a bit more adventurous and trusting the Doctor, and by the third one they're almost on an equal level. You get to see the journey of her. She's quite a confident modern woman. And I have a great handbag that has quite a lot of things in it! The other thing is, we spend quite a lot of time apart in the last two on their different missions. So I think that's great as well, to let her go and be herself and not just be running around trying to keep up with him.

Last time you just came in for a one-day role, now you're a companion. Does it feel better?

Much better. I love it. It's very exciting doing this kind of work because every day is completely different. The great thing is that I didn't expect or anticipate that each story, the company we

have performing each day is a completely different vibe. Hanging out in the green room, our conversations and the banter, of all the work I've done on audio and radio this has definitely been the most enjoyable because there's something quite special about what goes on here, and everyone leaves wanting to do more and more. From what Barnaby [Edwards, director] was saying, they haven't had a bad day since they started all this; also, it helps having people who know what they're doing. Obviously Paul [McGann] can turn on his **Doctor Who** voice and so we go with him. His confidence kind of seeps down and helps everybody, I think.

How have your guest stars been?

Noisy! There's nothing like hearing different sound effects coming from witches and Cybermen, and it's great. Everyone's been brilliant!

Did you have any favourite guest actors?

Having David Harewood, that was a winner.

Oh yes? In what way? Your eyes are saying more than your mouth is...

He's so good! I've always admired him. He is good-looking, obviously, that's not what I'm talking about...

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