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EDITORIAL

Well, you can blame Paul Spragg for almost everything in this editorial. He's one of our producers' assistants and since he sits next to me in the office, I thought I'd ask him what to write about this month. Basically, he told me that my life is quite exciting and that I'm a bit of a pillock not knowing what to write about... and to prove the point, he reeled off a few things.

1. I'm going to be a father some time in the next eight weeks. **Vortex** rating: 0/10. Not relevant and far too scary.
2. I went a Golden Wrap Party in Cardiff, to say a huge, heartfelt goodbye to David Tennant, Russell T Davies and Julie Gardner. **Vortex** rating: 3/10. Although it was lots of fun, talking about it is just showing off!
3. The *Blue Forgotten Planet* recording. **Vortex** rating: 10/10. This is a good one to talk about. The whole Charley and Sixth Doctor storyline is something very close to my heart, and I don't mind telling you that I shed a few tears when I

was writing *Blue Forgotten Planet* and when we recorded it. Also, we gave India Fisher a special gift – a spoof **Heat** magazine cover, speculating about the 'split' with the Sixth Doctor and whether or not it was just a publicity stunt. Hmm. That's for you to find out, dear reader/listener!

4. I went to a **Doctor Who** convention in Glasgow on 24th May. **Vortex** rating: 10/10. Yes, it was huge fun and David Richardson and I had a really nice time. It really is a pleasure for us to come and meet the people who support us so loyally. And I'd especially like to say a big hello to Roddy. Hello!

Well, there you are. That's my exciting life at the moment. Right, back to the *Patient Zero* sound design notes and the planning for *Sherlock Holmes*. What?!? More on that story later...

Nick Briggs – executive producer

SNEAK PREVIEWS AND WHISPERS

Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles The Pyralis Effect

What's in a name? Well, a fair bit when it comes to storytelling, as this **Companion Chronicle**, originally publicised under the title *'The Cholarian Effect'*, gets a makeover. The reason? Simply we felt that 'Cholarian' sounded a bit like 'Chloris' from the TV story *The Creature from the Pit*. The story, performed by Lalla Ward, remains the same, as the Fourth Doctor and Romana arrive on an alien spaceship. The crew have a link to the Doctor's past – and a series of events is about to be set in motion that will threaten the galaxy. The script is written by George Mann, and directed by Lisa Bowerman.

AVAILABLE IN JULY

Dark Shadows Echoes of Insanity

The first series of **Dark Shadows** dramatic readings concludes in July with *Echoes of Insanity*, starring John Karlen and Lara Parker. The script is by newcomer D Lynn Smith, an experienced screenwriter whose credits include *Murder, She Wrote* and *Touched by an Angel*.

"These readings have given us a great opportunity to get under the skin of our characters," says producer Stuart Manning. "Debbie's come up with a fascinating exploration of Barnabas's servant Willie Loomis. Set during his stay at the Windcliff asylum, Willie forms an uneasy alliance with a mysterious angel who visits his dreams, as he attempts to make sense of his time as a vampire's slave."

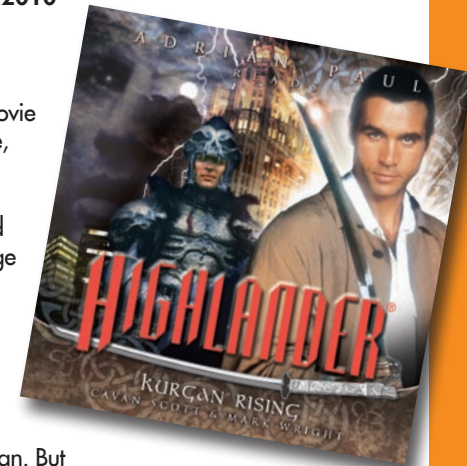
"It's all systems go on **Dark Shadows** right now," Stuart reveals. "As series two of the full-cast audio dramas approaches studio recording, myself and co-writer Eric Wallace are busy honing the scripts – over 200 pages and counting. Both of us are so excited by the four episodes, and can't wait for listeners to hear them. Expect a new, fearsome villain, a returning foe, some surprise cameos... oh, and more Windcliff!"

AVAILABLE IN JANUARY 2010

Highlander Kurgan Rising

If you loved the original movie that spawned the franchise, then you'll want to check out the season finale of **Highlander**. Self-confessed **Highlander** fans (and range script editors) Cav Scott and Mark Wright jumped at the chance to bring the original Big Bad of **Highlander** back from the dead and pit Duncan MacLeod against the Kurgan. But he isn't the only ghost from the past that Duncan has to face in this epic adventure that Cav and Mark promise has something for every **Highlander** fan. But then, the last time we saw them, they were chasing each other round Sainsbury's car park with big swords...

AVAILABLE IN DECEMBER



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BLUE FORGOTTEN PLANET

Big Finish dogsbody and pixel monkey Alex Mallinson tentatively ventures before the microphone for September's second Sixth Doctor adventure, *Blue Forgotten Planet*.

It's safe to say that I've never worked anywhere like Big Finish. I'm in my fourth year of being involved with them and although they've all known each other for years, there's a very welcoming atmosphere. It's this atmosphere that keeps me coming back. Some employers see you as simply a single-purpose tool while others outright exploit you. Big Finish, conversely, remains a place open to new ideas, and I never feel pigeon-holed. They've let me work in animation, graphics, illustration, podcasting (more an opportunity for Nick and Paul to verbally and physically assault me) and now, after several background voices and bit parts in *Dalek Empire IV* and *Benny*, they've given me my first contracted role.

It's the night before the recording, and although I've attended many in my capacity as photographer, hanger-on and lunch pirate, I'm now going to have to show I can produce the goods on mic. I'm worried because I get starstruck easily. Getting over the gibbering elation at meeting a parade of my childhood heroes was hard enough, but add to that luminaries such as Philip Jackson, Fraser James and Susannah York... well, the reason there are so few photos in the *Valhalla* booklet was because I was too stunned to switch the auto-focus on.



Having their cake and eating it are, from left, Sam Clemens, Andree Bernard, Nick Briggs, Alec Newman, Dan Berry, JJ Feild, India Fisher, Michael Maloney and Colin Baker.

I need not have worried. The cast are as welcoming as ever. Colin and India are warm and mischievous leads while the guest stars, JJ Feild, Alec Newman, Sam Clemens and Andree Bernard quickly launch into ribald banter and Nick just encourages the chaos.

Michael Maloney is also here, having guest starred in August's *Patient Zero*. Today he's playing the Viyrans with the cool detachment of HAL 9000, 2001's homicidal computer. I designed the Viyrans over a year ago for their debut story based on Nick's detailed description. They've been rattling around in his head for years. Nick was keen to give them a distinct motivation for their actions rather than a simple desire for conquest, so while the Viyrans are ostensibly assisting mankind in battling a terrible virus, they have an ulterior motive. It was this role that inspired me to model them as sinister, futuristic medics.

It's not all hard sci-fi however, and I think it's Nick's willingness to get under the skin of aliens, and also to examine how normal people react to fantastical situations, that give stories like *Dalek Empire* and *Blue Forgotten Planet* their appeal. Certainly India is visibly moved by one scene and exits the booth dabbing her eyes. Then Nick emerges doing the same. It's all looking quite intense!

Suddenly it's my turn to play a Geordie squaddie under Sam Clemens's deranged Sergeant Atherton. Later on, in the pub, we swap stories about parachute jumping and it so happens that JJ, Sam, Ken (Bentleeeey!!!) and I have all done it. There in the booth I experience the same sense of trepidation as I did in the plane, asking myself if I can go through with this; then Nick says "Cue", the terror vanishes and I just enjoy the experience.

My duties don't end there though. There are photos to take, and a last minute advert to send to a sci-fi magazine. Most importantly of all, I'm dispatched on the bike to check if the pub is still open during refurbishment. I arrive back minutes later. It is, so we're ready to celebrate the season finale.

One last job to do before we wrap, so Andree, Sam, JJ and I troop into the booths and prepare to record the wildtracks. No cocktail parties thank goodness, instead we scream ourselves hoarse baying for blood, being machine gunned and setting upon hapless soldiers. It turns out that JJ, star of screens both big and small, hasn't done radio before and has a look of genuine glee after our cathartic efforts.

Our work done, we retire to the pub where Jason turns up with a gift for India, a Princess Leia 12" figure, mint in her box. After almost ten years of travel with two different Doctors, it turns out that Charley is a *Star Wars* fan.

Blue Forgotten Planet is out in September

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LISA BOWERMAN



It's a very special year for Bernice Summerfield, as the character celebrates ten seasons of audio adventures, plus makes an appearance in *Doctor Who* in July's *The Company of Friends*. Lisa Bowerman talks to David Richardson and Alex Mallinson about her life as Benny...

So who is Bernice Summerfield?

Bernice Summerfield is a 26th century archaeologist, a human colonist from Beta Caprisis. She was introduced as an assistant to the Seventh Doctor and Ace in the *New Adventures* books; she first appeared in *Love and War* by Paul Cornell and continued in many, many stories after that.

Virgin eventually lost the rights to *Doctor Who* but they kept the character on because she was actually owned by Paul Cornell. They released something like two dozen *Benny* books. Then in 1998 an unknown company called Big Finish were looking to find a character that they could produce audio dramas of that was *Doctor Who* related, to keep the fans happy as the show had finished in 1989.

I'd never heard of her in my entire life until a friend of mine, Mike Tucker, who I knew from doing *Survival*, said, 'They're going to be doing *Bernice Summerfield* and Gary Russell would like you to audition for the part.'

Have you ever read any of the *New Adventures* books, or did you take it all from the scripts?

I took it all from the scripts. To be honest, Jac Rayner's adaptation [of the six books that became audios] was so strong she just flew off the page. It was all there.

Weren't you even intrigued?

Well... I did dip into a short stories book. I read through them and they were really interesting – every author had a different take on her. Rob Shearman turned her into a man. Only he could do that! But that just shows you how adaptable she is.

You've been doing a lot of conventions with us recently. You must be thrilled by the reception the fans have given you.

I'm always staggered that people come up, even not at conventions, and say, 'You're Bernice Summerfield, aren't you?' And you go, 'How do you know that?!' Her spread is slightly further and wider than I expected her to be. Certainly at conventions I've only had nice things said.

So for anyone who hasn't heard a Benny story, where is the best place to start?

Well, it's always at the beginning, although the first series was the only one that was straight adaptations from the *New Adventures*. But they really do stand up well. *Just War* is just extraordinary. Although it almost didn't happen... we were recording in a studio in Hammersmith in those days and we'd just broken for lunch, and the guy who ran the studio came up and said, 'Hope that came out. Nothing recorded yesterday'. And we went, 'What?!'

We'd lost two and a half hours worth and we had to go back and do it again. It's quite an angsty piece so we just picked ourselves up, dusted ourselves off and started all over again. That was a very traumatic day.

Tell us about what lies ahead in season ten, which begins this month.

We start with *Glory Days*, which is a straightforward bank heist story in which Bev [Tarrant, space thief] comes back, and Brax [Irving Braxiatel, criminal mastermind] is back too. But is it Brax? That is the question that drives the story forward. Then we have one called *Absence* which is another Daniel O'Mahony script, and his are always wonderful – the dialogue is fantastic. Peter [Benny's son] and Benny are on a planet, and they are separated for most of the story.

After that is *Venus Mantrap*, which was back to fun and games – and a bit of slap and tickle. And in *Secret Origins* she goes back in time. It's a bit Lara Croft and we have Doug Bradley, who is well known for playing Pinhead in *Hellraiser*.

Did you miss the ensemble cast during season nine, as they weren't around at all?

I think it's absolutely reasonable to go off and do standalones. You need breathing space and it means listeners can come aboard with single stories as you don't have to have too much back story. That was very helpful in season nine, where she was off having adventures with her son Peter. But, of course, it was wonderful to have everyone back together!

You've also made a name for yourself as a director with Big Finish, and you've done most of the *Companion Chronicles*. How did that all start?

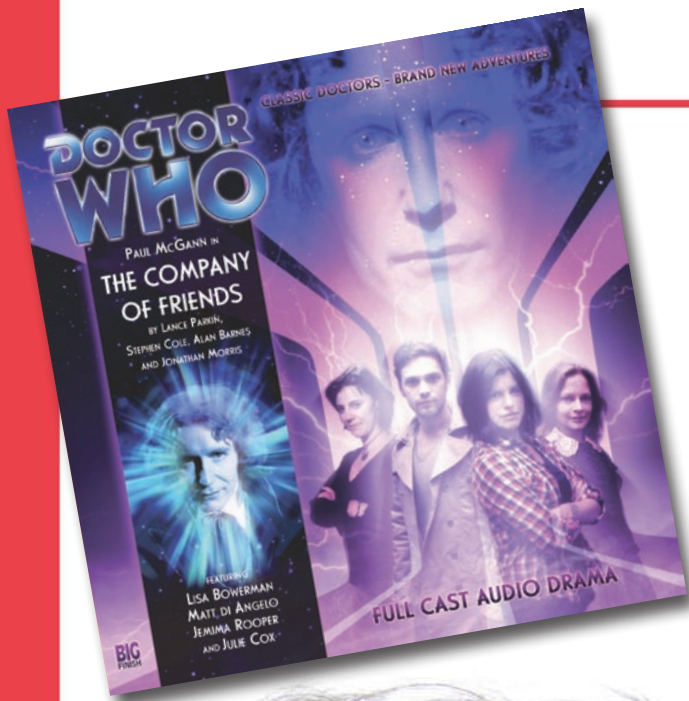
This all started about four years ago, when Nigel Fairs brought me aboard to direct *The Tomorrow People* and then subsequently the *Sapphire and Steels*. I loved those – they were strong stories and the cast was great – it was so much fun. Then my first foray into *Doctor Who* was through the *Companion Chronicles*, with *Here There Be Monsters* with Carole Ann Ford. That was a completely different dynamic as you are there on a one-to-one. I really love doing these intimate ones and you have so much more opportunity to work in detail and although it's only over the course of a day, strangely you can take your time on them.

Then of course I went on to do two of the three *Key 2 Time* stories. They were pitched as ripping yarns, and I know sometimes that divides opinion but I think they were great fun.

It's interesting... from an actor's point of view when you have been directing you start policing yourself. It's now very odd being back on the actor's side of the microphone because you have to stop yourself giving an opinion.

We'll also hear you in July's *Doctor Who* release *The Company of Friends*, as in one episode Benny teams up with the Eighth Doctor. What was that like to do?

It's always very difficult coming in because you don't know what the chemistry is going to be with any one Doctor.



INTERVIEW

When I worked with the Seventh Doctor and Ace in *The Shadow of the Scourge* I was very conscious that I didn't want to break up their dynamic because they are such a firm team. And I felt guilty because Paul Cornell wrote up Benny hugely and I thought, 'Oh my God, I'm stealing everybody's thunder!'

Equally with the Eighth Doctor, I thought, 'How is this going to work?' But the banter just hit the ground running. Paul is such a great actor, you're never going to miss a beat with him, so it seemed to go with a swing.

You asked for a few minor script tweaks on that one, didn't you? Historically, a lot of writers will write for Bernice as she was back in the old days. She has developed a lot as a character in those ten years, and there is a tendency to over-write sometimes. Occasionally I just thought it was a little too much and there were a few things that needed pulling in.

Was it hard in that you just had one shot in this half-hour episode at making it work?

You mustn't try too hard. As a taster I think it was a good idea. It was what it was – a good, jaunty tale. There wasn't too much continuity in it, but I think you just have to keep an eye on it being entertaining. It was a little vignette, it wasn't a full scale developed story. The interest that CD has generated has been huge – it's extraordinary.

Let's look back twenty years to 1989, when you played Karra the Cheetah Person in *Survival* on TV. How does that feel?

Hot! It's very strange because I've revisited it a few times, as you can imagine. I find it frustrating because I know how good it could have been. Rona Munro's script was very good, and I think it didn't match what *Doctor Who* was at that stage. I'm not saying it isn't good, because within the constraints of the period special effects were in their infancy and they had no money. Unfortunately the Cheetah people, which were meant to be very menacing, looked rather cuddly.

I made some good friends through that story, we were a very young cast and we had a really good laugh. It was a great family feel and that came from the top – JNT made sure everyone was happy, Sophie and Sylvester were very welcoming and they loved a good party and were lovely and normal to work with. We had a lovely party on the last night when they put dry ice in the sea and lit the moon red. It's a job that has never gone away.

Bernice Summerfield season ten begins this month; subscriptions are available at www.bigfinish.com. There are bargain offers on earlier **Benny** seasons in our summer sale – see page 5.

Doctor Who – The Company of Friends is released in July

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UPCOMING RELEASES

JUNE

- Doctor Who – The Angel of Scutari (122, Seventh Doctor/Ace/Hex)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – Wirrn Dawn (3.4)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Stealers from Saiph (3.12, Romana I)
- Bernice Summerfield – Glory Days (10.1)
- Stargate Atlantis – Impressions (2.2)
- Highlander – The Secret of the Sword (1.3)
- Robin Hood – The Deer Hunters (1.5)
- Robin Hood – The Siege (1.6)

AUGUST

- Doctor Who – Patient Zero (124, Sixth Doctor/Charley)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – The Cannibalists (3.6)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Glorious Revolution (4.2, Jamie)
- Bernice Summerfield – Venus Mantrap (10.3)
- Stargate Atlantis – The Kindness of Strangers (2.4)

OCTOBER

- Doctor Who – The Castle of Fear (127, Fifth Doctor/Nyssa)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – Worldwide Web (3.8)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Pylaris Effect (4.4, Romana II)
- Stargate Atlantis – Meltdown (2.6)

DECEMBER

- Doctor Who – The Ancients (129, Fifth Doctor/Nyssa)
- 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)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Mission to Magnus (1.2)
- Iris Wildthyme – The Claws of Santa (Christmas Special)

FEBRUARY

- Doctor Who – TBA (131)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – The Hollows of Time (1.4)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (4.8, Second Doctor)

JULY

- Doctor Who – The Company of Friends (123, Eighth Doctor/Benny/Fitz/Izzy/Mary Shelley)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – The Scapegoat (3.5)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Drowned World (4.1, Sara Kingdom)
- Bernice Summerfield – Absence (10.2)
- Stargate SG-1 – Pathogen (2.3)
- Highlander – Kurgan Rising (1.4)
- Dark Shadows – Echoes of Insanity (1.8)

SEPTEMBER

- Doctor Who – Paper Cuts (125, Sixth Doctor/Charley)
- Doctor Who – Blue Forgotten Planet (126, Sixth Doctor/Charley)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – The Eight Truths (3.7)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Prisoner of Peladon (4.3, King Peladon)
- Bernice Summerfield – Secret Origins (10.4)
- Stargate SG-1 – Lines of Communication (2.5)

NOVEMBER

- Doctor Who – The Eternal Summer (128, Fifth Doctor/Nyssa)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – The Nightmare Fair (1.1)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – Ringpullworld (4.5, Turlough)
- Cyberman 2 (Box set)

JANUARY

- Doctor Who – TBA (130)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – Leviathan (1.3)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (4.6, TBA)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (4.7, First Doctor)

MARCH

- Doctor Who – TBA (132)
- Doctor Who: The Lost Stories – TBA (1.5)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – TBA (4.9, Third Doctor)

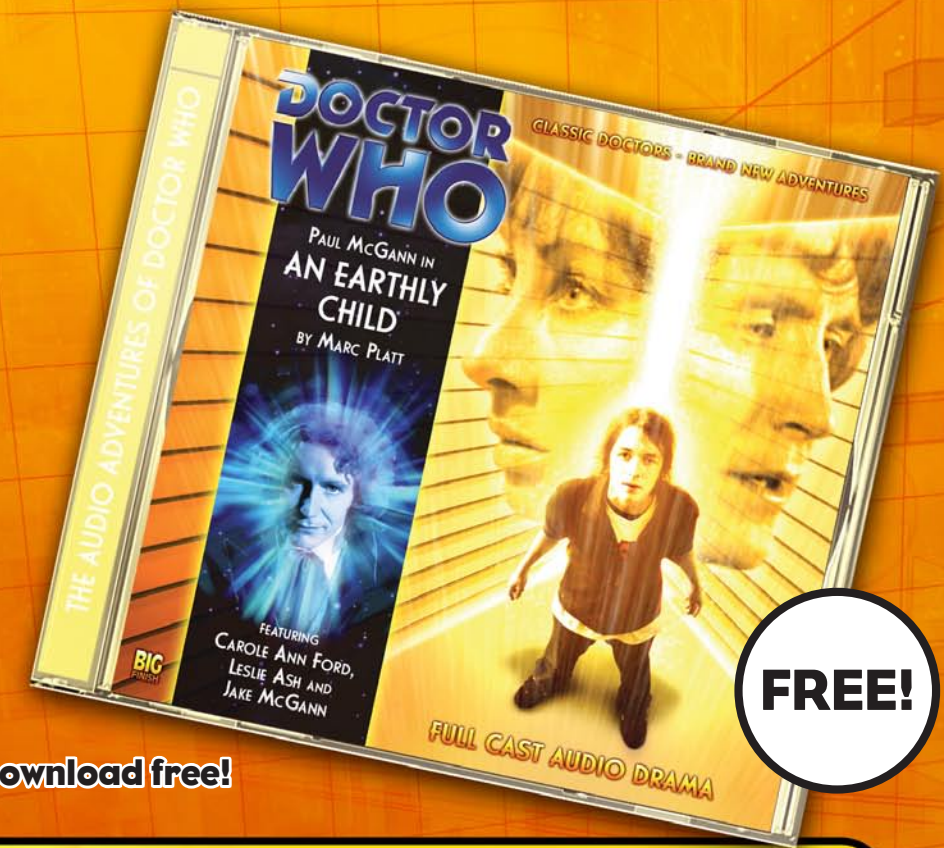
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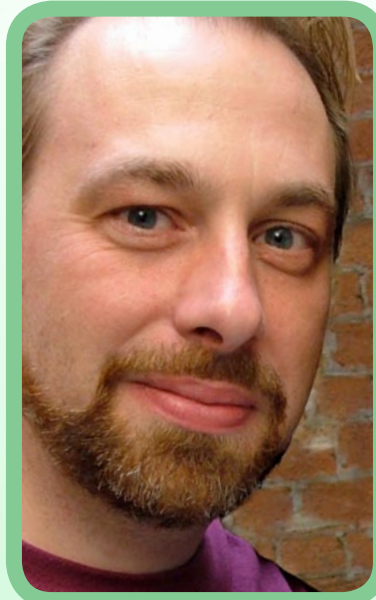
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GALLIFREY

Alan Barnes has written some of Big Finish's most popular plays, including *Storm Warning*, *The Girl Who Never Was* and *Brotherhood of the Daleks*. In addition to script editing the **Doctor Who** range he was instrumental in the creation of spin-off series **Gallifrey**, which was produced by Gary Russell. Alan wrote three scripts in total, and the series is now available from June 1 at the special reduced price of £5.00 per CD.



For the uninitiated, how would you describe Gallifrey?
It's a science fiction thriller series in the mould of **24**, **Spooks** or **The West Wing** – with Time Lords. The very interesting starting point was when Gary and I wrote [the **Doctor Who** story] *Zagreus* and we paired Leela and Romana up together, with both their K9s. And it worked really well because the two characters are such polar opposites that they bounced off each other in really interesting ways, and the actresses were dynamite together. Gary asked me to write the pilot for **Gallifrey** and away we went.

The important thing is that it's just a different sort of story. I think it would have been less interesting to just do the adventures of another Time Lord banging around the universe in another TARDIS. We do that

kind of story already. What makes **Gallifrey** special is that it's telling a very different sort of story.

A minority of Doctor Who fans have argued that the Time Lords were humanised too much in the TV series. Was this something you were careful to avoid in Gallifrey?

The thing about the Time Lords is that they are used to having an Olympian place in the universe. Certainly I saw it very much as being a loose parable for America in a world which is becoming more and more dominated by various different power blocs and their natural dominance slipping away. Placed in that position what does a president do? It was very interesting to take a sympathetic character like Romana, one of the most interesting, sparky and intelligent **Doctor Who** companions ever – and put her in a position where she has to make very hard choices. I felt each **Gallifrey** story ought to revolve around impossible choices and that's a consistent thing that runs through most of them – Romana is always being presented with terrible dilemmas that come with power.

That first story, *Weapon of Choice*, introduced a group of terrorists called Free Time. Was this also an attempt to address the real-life political situation in our world?

That was chosen as a phrase because we were talking an awful lot about whether the Time Lords would have a monopoly on time travel, or should they contract their power out into the universe. Why should chronology be dictated by the Time Lords' rule? It was almost like opening the Time Vortex to market forces – should they do that? Are they the best people to exercise that power? We tried to do all that in hopefully not too heavy-handed a way. I think perhaps my first one is a little obvious in terms of the comparisons it's making.

Was it a big challenge to set up the show template in just one hour with *Weapon of Choice*?

There was a lot to get through in the first one in particular. It sets up the mini-arc that runs through the first series. Each series is self contained and hopefully all the individual stories are kind of self contained. And they build up into one big 14-part whole, but you could listen to one season at a time and follow it.

The story that is bubbling under the first series is what happened to Andred. We were determined not to duck that. Andred has disappeared on a mission and the nature of that is explored throughout the first series.

You also wrote the season one finale, *A Blind Eye*, which featured a very interesting guest role for India Fisher...

It's kind of *The Lady Vanishes* with Time Agents. India plays Charlotte's sister Cecelia 'Sissy' Pollard, who some may have observed rather closely resembles Unity Mitford, who was the Hitler groupie who hung around with the Fuhrer in pre-1939 Berlin and shot herself in the head – unsuccessfully, amazingly. I was aware to an extent that with Charley we had shown this terribly nice posh girl and I wanted this opportunity to show there weren't many like her, and India rose to the challenge.



And you ended the whole series with *Panacea*...

It's an ending and beginning in a way... In some ways everything kind of ends with the penultimate episode – or does it? *Panacea* had to bring back a small element that had perhaps been forgotten, and the characters of Pandora and the Inquisitor. They've overlooked something and basically it's going to destroy the whole planet! As the title suggests there is a cure for everything, but of course it opens up an even worse set of possibilities.

Have you ever given any thought as to how the story may have continued?

I don't want to blow the end of the series, but... yes, I had some thoughts about where it might go next. But it ends in such a way that you'll have to work it out for yourselves!

Gallifrey is now available at a discounted price at www.bigfinish.com



MARY TAMM



Mary Tamm played the first incarnation of Romana on TV in 1977/78 through the six stories of the *Key to Time* season. Although she worked for Big Finish on the *Gallifrey* series, this month's *Companion Chronicle The Stealers from Saiph* marks her first proper return to the role of the Time Lady. Mary talks exclusively to *Vortex*...

How did you find returning to Romana for this CD?

It was odd to read a script with Romana as the female lead again – rather like going back in time, appropriately enough. However, once I started reading it out loud to myself, the character fell into place, and, especially as I also had to flesh out the other characters, it all seemed to come together really well.

Did you have to look back on any DVDs to remember the character, or is she now ingrained?

I had recently done the commentaries on the *Key to Time* DVDs, so I had already revisited Romana, and yes, it did all come back, as if she were still in me somewhere.

What did you think of the script for *The Stealers from Saiph*?

The script was excellent – very tight, and with terrific characters and storyline. I particularly liked the reference to the stars, which we all look at every night – well, some of us do! – and which we know so little about. This gave the story a depth which I appreciated.

The story takes Romana to the roaring twenties. Is there any other period of Earth history that you think would suit the character?

I thought the elegance of the period suited Romana very well. My own particular favourite historical era is the Middle Ages, with its particular combination of mysticism and secularity, so I would love to see Romana stuck in this time and see if she could unravel any mysteries.

You get to play a lot of other characters besides Romana in the story. Was that a challenge you enjoyed?

Yes, very much so! You have to think on your feet as each character pops up, and the voice has to change, but as I said earlier, reading the script out loud several times before the recording was a good rehearsal for this.

You must have felt a bit lonely in your sound booth all alone?

Not really, as you can see and hear the production crew at all times. Going back to my point above though, it is a bit lonely rehearsing on your own!

What are your memories of recording the *Gallifrey* series for Big Finish?

That was fun to do – it was great to meet up with everybody again. As a contrast to recording on your own, it is more like a play in the sense that you are surprised and delighted with hearing how the other actors are interpreting the reading, and in that sense it is more competitive and therefore nerve-racking. It is definitely more of a relaxing experience to read a complete story on your own, playing all the different characters yourself.

Was it fun working alongside Lalla Ward, Louise Jameson and John Leeson again?

Oh yes, definitely. We do meet up over the years quite regularly at conventions and signings, so it was not a complete surprise to see them, but working together again was something else entirely – such a pleasure.

Do you think Romana should have had her own spin-off TV series?

Of course! Someone out there needs to write one!

Are you a fan of radio plays at home?

I tend to have Classic FM on all day, and am too lazy to change the dial! However, if I ever find myself ill in bed, I do listen to plays and stories via the TV. I do enjoy that.

What sort of TV and films do you like?

I like a really good thriller, be it on TV or film – I am catching up with re-runs of *Marple* with Geraldine McEwan, who was married to the principal at RADA during my time there, and who I know. I love *Lost* and *Desperate Housewives*. I also never miss *The X Factor* and *The Apprentice*. Documentaries, too – especially about animals – are high on my list as they never fail to absorb me.

Film-wise I like a movie that is well-acted and crafted. I thought *Slumdog Millionaire* was brilliant in these respects. I was lucky enough to be invited to the BAFTAs this year and met the cast and production team as I was on their table – such a thrill! Especially as all the big American movie stars kept coming up to congratulate me, obviously thinking I was a producer or something!

I recently watched *The Bucket List*, starring two of my favourite actors – Morgan Freeman and Jack Nicholson – both giving great performances. Apart from the above, I do love a good laugh, so comedy is high on my list too. Two of my favourite comedy actors are Ben Stiller and Owen Wilson.

The Stealers from Saiph is out this month. *Gallifrey* is available from the mail order department at an exclusive reduced price of £5.00 per release.



We allow Nick out of the studio long enough to answer some of your letters.

Just a few questions...

1. What is the chronological release order of the **Doctor Who** range? Where do *Shada* or the *DWM* giveaways fit into the normal range? Are there any plans to fit a BF timeline of sorts on the website? I realise this is a trivial request, but surely I am not the only one with these questions. It is the geek in me trying to get out, but I normally calm him down with one of the new downloads.

2. Are there any plans for more full-cast **Dark Shadows** stories? I fully enjoyed the first batch, but the dramatic readings, however good, still lack the impact of the full-cast productions. I hope you can continue the range with the **DS** cast regardless.

Thanks for your time, and as always, thanks for a great product.

Bruce Weaver

Dark Shadows producer Stuart Manning tells us there are plans for more full cast stories. We're waiting to hear from him about when he feels they should go into production. Each of the **Doctor Who** releases should be considered on an individual basis in terms of where they might fit in the continuity. This is usually indicated by the production code. In the case of stories that weren't issued with a production code (because they were regarded as special 'one off' adventures), we prefer to leave it to our listeners to decide where they fit. Perhaps you might have some suggestions, Bruce. We'd love to hear your ideas.

Hello all you Big Finish people.

I just wanted to say how much I love your **Stargate SG-1** & **Atlantis** audios. With both series having ended, it is a joy to have new adventures for the characters from the best audio guys around.

I was going to ask if you would be doing an audio with Kavan Smith and another with David Nykl... but it seems you already have that in hand.

I do hope in the future you can have some featuring David Hewlett, Beau Bridges, Ben Browder, Rachel Luttrell and Jason Momoa. Probably pipe dreams but I bet they'd be quite popular. Whoever you bring to the range and whatever stories you will tell, I will always be eagerly awaiting all new releases in these ranges.

Keep up the excellent work.
Christopher Fewell

Thanks, Christopher. Our **Stargate** producer Sharon Gosling, who works so very hard on these titles, will be very grateful to hear your praise, and her encyclopaedic knowledge of the series always guides her in her choice of guest actors.

I was wondering when your next script competition was going to be. I want to be a writer for the **Doctor Who** TV series one day but there is no way that they will read my script, so I thought that if I win this competition then I may be able to be an actual **Doctor Who** writer for you and then I can use that as evidence of my **Doctor Who** writing experience. So have you got a script competition planned?

Kind regards,
Patrick Slee

Well, Patrick, I can't guarantee that entering our script competition will be a way into the TV series. They aim mostly to work with experienced TV writers who have an impressive track record. As for our script competition itself, there's a lot for us to work out before we announce it, and we're all a bit tied up with planning, writing, script editing and directing the releases for the rest of the year, as well as the fourth series of new Eighth Doctor adventures. But we will be announcing the competition next year.

Just wanted to congratulate you on a fabulous second issue of the mag. I thoroughly enjoyed reading the PDF on the train using my Sony Reader ebook. While the page formatting of the mag doesn't really fit the small screen, I was still able to read all the articles and interviews comfortably using the large font size, and could view all the photos too. Saved me printing it out. Great work.

All the best,
Gareth Suddes

Glad your reader did the trick!
Cheers, Gareth.

I just wanted to say... please give Jago and Litefoot their own series! Hopefully sales of *The Mahogany Murderers* will encourage a small mini-season, as I honestly think it would be a winner on the sales front.

Keep up the great work, by the way – you probably hear that a lot, but what you put out beats the BBC's current attempt at **Doctor Who** hands down.

Paul

Many thanks for your words of encouragement, Paul. A Jago and Litefoot series is certainly something we'd be interested in doing, but we can't make a commitment on that yet. As you rightly say, it depends on sales, and, of course, cast availability. I wouldn't go along with your apparent dismissal of **Doctor Who** from the BBC, though. One of the brilliant things about **Doctor Who** is that it exists in many forms and caters for different tastes.

Hi, I just wanted to say a big thank you for the new **Vortex** magazine! It's a brilliant monthly add-on to present Big Finish services and I always look forward to each issue. I co-run a **Doctor Who** fansite and let our visitors know when new issues are available.

Thanks again.
Phil Anthony

Glad you like it, Phil. It's one of those things we find ourselves wondering why we didn't do it ages ago. It's certainly something Jason Haigh-Ellery has been banging on about for years. When we finally did it and people liked it, there was a justified look of 'I told you so' all over his face! Thanks for mentioning us on your website!

Loving *Scapegoat*, but it does seem to have split the votes, it might turn out to be a marmite episode.

Bryan Simcott

Personally, Bryan, I love marmite! I know what you mean about *Scapegoat*. It is a kind of acquired taste. Pat Mills has such an amazingly odd imagination. I think it's important to do strange stories like this. My aim is to produce a variety of different **Doctor Who** stories for different tastes. And *Scapegoat* certainly fits well in the current run of Eighth Doctor stories... a World War II horror story between two very sci-fi hardware adventures. Works for me.

I was wondering if you might ever get Kate O'Mara to reprise her role as The Rani in the Big Finish **Doctor Who** Audios? How about the return of Geoffrey Beevers as The Master?

Thanks,
Mike Maiworm

Mike, we don't have any plans for either of these at the moment.

See you all next month!

 Toby Hrycek-Robinson on... **The Jazz Baroness**
BBC Four

Documentary about the British Baroness Nica de Koenigswarter, who on hearing a single Thelonious Monk record instantaneously gave up everything (including a happy marriage, five children and her Rothschild family inheritance) to follow him for the rest of his life. Affectionately made by her great-niece Hannah Rothschild, it offered little explanation for Nica's fixation with Monk, who once toured the world for nearly a year happily co-existing with his musicians but without uttering a single word.

 Alan Barnes on... **The Northlanders**
(DC Comics/Vertigo)

Northlanders is a series of linked Viking sagas by Brian Wood and various artists, beginning with the extremely bloody *Sven the Returned* – now available as a graphic novel – about an exiled prince returning to his roots in the Orkneys, where he attempts to regain his inheritance from his wicked uncle. If you're big on Vikings but not so big on eye-popping violence, I'd also like to take the opportunity to recommend the adventures of Hiccup Horrendous Haddock III, as related by Cressida Cowell in a series of fantastically funny novels beginning with *How To Train Your Dragon*... which I've been reading, perhaps a bit too keenly, to my two six-year-olds of late...

 Paul Spragg on... **Night at the Museum 2**

There are few things more enjoyable than a top quality family film, and the sequel to Ben Stiller's 'exhibits come to life' movie from 2006 is just as joyous as the original. Stiller takes his hits well, the underrated Hank Azaria plays comedy villainy on just the right side of camp and when everything in the Smithsonian comes to life at night, it literally is everything. A film you need to watch a couple of times to spot all the little bits of CGI mayhem happening in the background (especially when paintings and statues awaken), it's stunningly realised and a hugely enjoyable flight of fancy.

 Alex Mallinson on... **Let the Right One In**

Seeing this in the cinema restored my faith in filmed fantasy in the same way *Pan's Labyrinth* did over two years ago. It's a film which helps heal the terrible wounds inflicted by Disney and even Rowling on the fairy tale. I love the smoky, humid fantasies of South and Central America and despite its chilly, isolated setting (a suburban Stockholm housing estate), this story of burgeoning adolescence sits comfortably alongside them. This is no angsty vampire tale for the emo, thankfully, but a thoughtful, innocent love story.

 Barnaby Edwards on... **Star Trek**

I always had a soft spot for the old series of **Star Trek**, having grown up with it, but I've found myself increasingly bewildered and confused over the years by the likes of **The Next Generation**, **Deep Space Nine**, **Voyager** and **Enterprise**. The characters seem to have stopped having new adventures and instead spend most of their time tying up continuity discrepancies. Then along comes the new movie and in one fell swoop reminds me of all that was great about the original series. JJ Abrams has done for **Star Trek** what Russell T Davies did for **Doctor Who**: pressed the big red 'reboot' button and revitalized a forty-year-old franchise. Set your phasers to stun!

 Jason Haigh-Ellery on... **The Riches** (2008)

As an American character actor, I'd start to get a bit hacked off. It's very fashionable to have Brits playing American leads these days – first **House** goes to Hugh Laurie, then **Life** goes to Damian Lewis and Eddie Izzard gets **The Riches**. Thing is, in each case, they're all very good at what they do. Izzard plays a Roman Traveller who (for very complicated reasons) has to run away with his family from his former life, and in doing so is involved in a car crash in the middle of nowhere that kills the eponymous Riches, who are moving to a new life in a very rich suburb to work for a large company and live the high life. As professional grifters, Izzard's Malloys decide to see if they can steal 'the American Dream'. Great set-up and great drama.

 Nick Briggs on... **The Sandbaggers**
(1978-1980)

This is a really old-fashioned slice of British TV spy drama. Mostly studio-bound and with fake foreign locations (until the third and final series, when they obviously got the budget for package deals to Malta and the like – which often doubled for the USSR), it sounds like it should be the most boring thing on earth. Long scenes of dialogue, and a narrative structure that mostly does its best to avoid action and excitement... but it's really great and utterly absorbing. The stories are meticulously constructed and simply riveting. It's **James Bond** but from the point of view of the pen pushers in an underfunded intelligence service. No special effects, no music, hardly any action, just great scripts by Ian Mackintosh (a former naval officer and intelligence insider, who apparently died in mysterious circumstances!) and brilliant acting from Roy Marsden in the lead, with great support from Ray Lonnen, Alan MacNaughton and Richard Vernon. And there's a great theme tune by *Get Carter's* Roy Budd. Get the DVD box set now!

 David Richardson on... **Tragedy Day**

When I'm not spending my time producing at Big Finish, organizing stuff and reading scripts and listening to edits, I like to read... **Doctor Who** books! Yes, there's no escape. A while back I bought a job lot of **The New Adventures**, because I'd never read them and felt I should. And I've gradually been working my way through in order. I'm currently on *Tragedy Day* by Gareth Roberts, a typically witty and clever parody of TV telethons.

 Paul Wilson on... **Gone With the Wind**

I decided to take the plunge and watch the 1939 Victor Fleming Epic, **Gone with the Wind**. I was blown away by this film; it's the story of an arrogant man and a manipulative woman in the American Civil War. If you've never seen it, then I suggest you do; it's not just for those of us laid low with kidney infections.

JAMIE ROBERTSON



Since delivering this month's Paul McGann story *Wirrn Dawn*, Big Finish sound designer and musician Jamie Robertson remains a busy man, currently working on a number of projects...

How did you get into Big Finish?

Being a fan since the Eighties, I always thought about writing the music for *Doctor Who*. I studied and performed music throughout my school life and my first performance was on a Casio keyboard in a school play. I did the SFX at just the age of six! In 2005 I did a radio play called *Veto Nix*; it was an amateur radio play but received airplay online.

It was from this I wondered if there was anything to do with *Doctor Who* as a radio play, as it's an area I liked doing. Audio can be more of a challenge than visuals, and I like a challenge! I just typed in the 'Net and found Big Finish, and sent them a copy of *Veto Nix* episode one. Within a few weeks Nick got back in touch with me and invited me down to meet him for some tea and hobnobs!! I was given the job of *Dalek Empire IV*. From that moment, I was hooked on the plays. I love them all.

You've worked on *Wirrn Dawn*. How did you go about making the *Wirrn* sound?

I studied some of the footage from *The Ark in Space* to get a feel of the original monsters and felt the new style needed to be true to the originals but also up to date. The good thing is, no bubble wrap was used in the sound creation! After watching the sounds, I was thinking, 'Where on earth am I gonna get this sound from?', that 'chitter, chitter' sound. I was looking and looking, and scratching and rubbing different things, from a zip jacket to pennies scratching on a table.

It wasn't until I was recording some other sounds I came across it, right in front of my face. The battery compartment on my boom microphone makes a scratching sound if you rub it up and down. So I rub it faster and bingo! It's the sound!

The wet, watery sound behind the speech of the *Wirrn* and their movement, this was actually – and forgive me for being crude – a urinal in the theatre I work at occasionally, which makes an odd gurgling sound. So I went back one night and recorded it, unfortunately at the same time dropping the mic into the tray. I loved that mic!

What was Nick's brief for the production?
Starship Troopers! Lots of action, epic and big battles with epic SFX and music.

You've also been working on *Highlander* – tell us about writing the new theme for audio.

The new theme is something I considered a few years ago but never did anything with, but I loved it and when the project was presented to me I had visions of the original *Highlander* film with horses on the Scottish hills etc...

The initial part with the slap bass and guitars was done to symbolise that 'ching ching' of two swords clashing, which also fits nicely with Adrian's vocals doing the iconic intro. It also had to be epic. I wanted to keep it up to date, so did this with some drumbeats at the start, the ripping horns for the epic parts, but of course the Scottish part is by the use of the main melody of bagpipes.

There were two themes done; the first was okay but too Nineties. This one is more up to date.

You're currently working on one of the *Lost Stories*, *The Nightmare Fair*. How's that going?

Well, at this time of talking to you, I've just finished the SFX edit of part one. It's been a challenge. As I live by the coast on the east of England, I have several theme parks near to me, but the problem was getting a perfect recording of the rides with no current day music. We had a fair turn up two weeks ago, which I went to and recorded, but same problem, too much dance and rock/pop music from today. But I managed to get around that using some recordings and sourcing others.

Is it fun trying to match the feel of *Doctor Who* on TV in the Eighties?

The brief was classic retro Eighties, and boy, I'm having fun! I went to my mum's and found my very first keyboard, a Casio SA-1, which I've used some of the sounds from and manipulated them. It's a great keyboard to have because it was made in the Eighties, so was perfect for the time.

LEVIATHAN



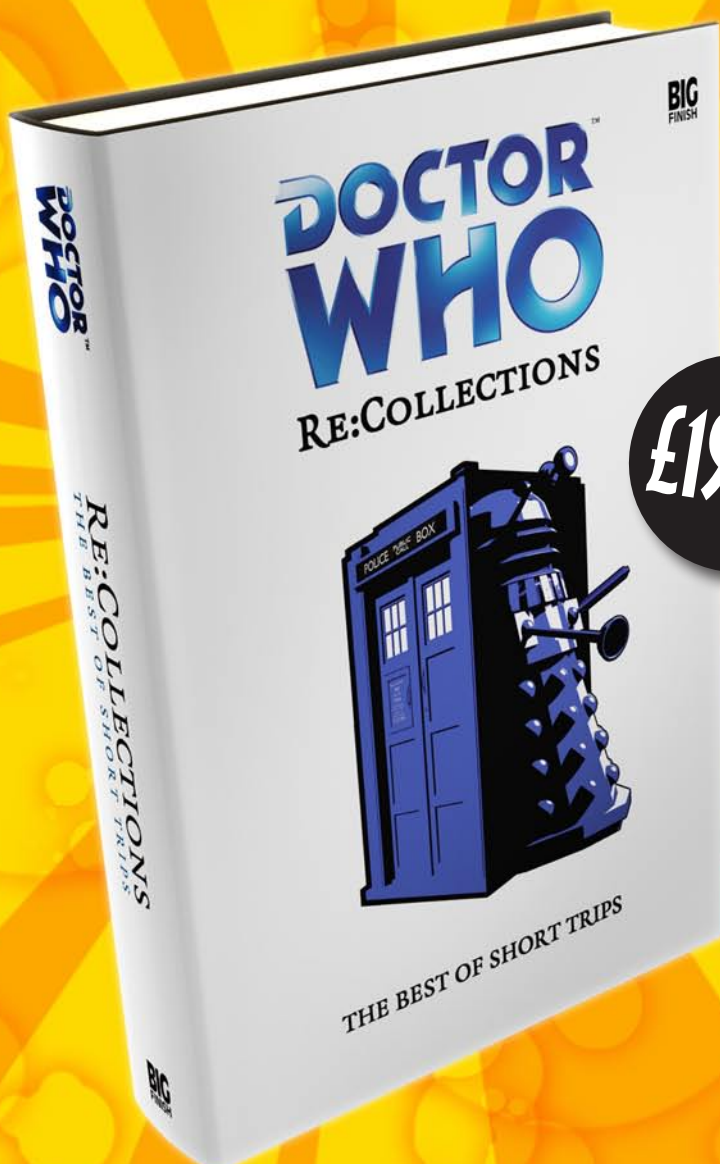
Top: All aboard *Leviathan* – Howard Gossington, Derek Carlyle, Nicola Bryant, Colin Baker, Jamie Parker, John Banks and Beth Chalmers

Above: Toby Hrycek-Robinson, Ken Bentley, David Richardson and Nick Briggs enjoy a rare moment of calm in the control room

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