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ISSUE #3 **BIG**
MAY 2009 **FINISH**

VORTEX

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

SHORT TRIPS

The inside
story

JAGO & LITEFOOT RETURN!

Andy Lane
on writing
The Mahogany
Murderers

FROM DALEK EMPIRE IV
TO STARGATE SG-1 WITH

NOEL CLARKE

****EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW****

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FOUR BRAND NEW STORIES PERFORMED BY ADRIAN PAUL

EDITORIAL

We're onto the third issue, and worries from some of our concerned listeners/readers that it might all prove too much for us seem to have been unfounded. Wait a minute, Alex Mallinson's just collapsed! Someone play *Enemy of the Daleks* to him! All the heavy metal music in that one should wake him up. That's better. He's champing at the bit to carry on laying out the magazine now. Or is he simply just foaming at the mouth? Frankly I don't care, as long as he's doing his job brilliantly and with his customary crazy enthusiasm.

Yes, it's time to sing Alex Mallinson's praises. Not only does he provide us all with limitless amusement by turning up at studio sessions, having bicycled across London at 50mph, barefoot, in order to take photographs. Not only does he risk life and limb, climbing up onto a precarious concrete crossbar to take said

photos. And not only does he volunteer for any extra acting roles (his 'laughing Gary' in *Dalek Empire IV* stole the show!)... Yes, 'not only' all those things, he's also a fantastic designer who's been responsible for much of the overall look and feel of all things Big Finish since I was in short trousers (it was a hot summer). So here's a big thank you to Alex. He's such a great, fun, talented guy that I can even forgive him for his appalling eating habits (Nando's!!! See Team Twitter). And if anyone does have a spare pair of shoes for him, please send them to the usual Big Finish address.

Now it's time for you to enjoy more of his design genius as you turn the pages of **VOOOORRRTEEEEEEXXX** (sorry).

Nick Briggs – executive producer

SNEAK PREVIEWS AND WHISPERS

Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles The Drowned World

Simon's Guerrier's *Home Truths* proved to be one of the best received releases of 2008, so no surprises to see this immediate sequel is already in the schedules. In fact, it reunites the entire creative team behind his first story: Jean Marsh is back as Sara Kingdom, partnered by Robert (Niall MacGregor). Lisa Bowerman is back in the directing chair, while sound design and music are again provided by Richard Fox and Lauren Yason. *The Drowned World* finds the First Doctor, Sara and Steven arriving on a world of water, where a human expedition is in dire peril...

AVAILABLE IN JULY

Doctor Who: The Lost Stories Leviathan

Another entry in this season of audio versions of scripts that were abandoned in the mid-80s, and it's something of a gem which finds the Doctor and Peri arriving on a world that resembles medieval Britain. Is this an historical story? Well, to reveal more would actually undermine the labyrinthine twists and turns in the narrative. *Leviathan* was written by the late Brian Finch, who contributed to many TV series in his lifetime including *The Tomorrow People*. This audio version has been adapted by his son Paul, working directly from the original draft rehearsal scripts.

AVAILABLE IN JANUARY 2010

Iris Wildthyme and the Claws of Santa

Iris Wildthyme has lost her Panda. She can't find him anywhere, and what's the point of Christmas if there's nobody to share it with? Even worse, the bar on the department store planet Cosmomart just ran out of advocat, so she can't even have a snowball...

Katy Manning returns in the *Iris Wildthyme* Christmas special, and it promises to be a madcap chase through time, space and the little bits in between as her search for Panda takes in a trip to the North Pole and a certain magic workshop. Somebody's leaving strangely familiar stuffed bears under the Christmas trees of the universe – and it isn't the fat bloke with the beard and the red suit...

Remember, Iris Wildthyme is for life, not just for Christmas!

AVAILABLE IN DECEMBER



Good and medieval – the cast of *Leviathan*

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PATIENT ZERO

It's the beginning of a momentous season for Charley Pollard and the Sixth Doctor as the first story, *Patient Zero*, arrives in the studio. Its writer and director, Nick Briggs, gives us a flavour of two days in a sound studio with Viyrans and Daleks.

There's always that extra buzz for me when we're doing a Dalek story. Always. And that's because I always forget that doing a Dalek story essentially means that I've saddled myself with twice as much work as usual.

Directing an audio play can be a fairly relaxed experience, if you've done your homework, know the play really well, and have constructed a bulletproof schedule. The schedule is all! Legendary Big Finish director Ken Bentley recently said to me he'd learnt that if your schedule is no good, you've failed. Doesn't matter about the creativity! If you can't convincingly tell people what they're doing and when, then you might as well not have got out of bed, because you'll be sentencing everyone in the studio to a day of chaos and garbled communication. And in a confined space, that's really horrible.

Of course, the creative stuff does matter an awful lot, but without the schedule forget it! And even with a great schedule, you'll never get more relaxed than 'fairly', because, to be blunt, we don't really have enough time to record these plays. But it's all we can afford. Two days are not enough to be totally relaxed. Giving myself the job of jogging back and forth from the control room to a recording booth every time there's a Dalek scene is a very silly move. But I never learn, so I'm always looking for an advantage to save a bit of time on boring stuff and spend more time on the interesting stuff.

The boring stuff: getting people in and out of their studio booths; making sure they know which scene they're doing next; going into the green room and finding that the actor you need has gone to the loo or is on the phone to his or her agent or baby-sitter or mother-in-law who's in hospital... or whatever! Oh, and jogging back and forth to the Dalek booth.

The interesting stuff: talking to the actors about their characters; coming up with a new way of doing a scene; doing another take even though the last one was perfectly fine, but the actors feel they could do better; listening to the actors' points of view; rewriting a scene to make it work better.

When I wrote *Patient Zero*, I set myself the task of experimenting with having as small a cast as I could manage while still attempting to tell an epic story. I love that feeling of vast, universal concerns funnelling down into one small environment where the epic struggle gets played out rather intimately. The advantage this inadvertently created for me was that when you have fewer actors to deal with, you spend nowhere near as much time getting them in and out of the studio, because mostly they're already there!

Patient Zero's cast was beautifully small. Apart from Colin, India and me, we had Michael Maloney and Jess Robinson. That was it! And we became a bit of a close team, not least because Jess and Michael were both really entertaining. Jess is one of those actresses who can do a vast array of voices. She used to work on *Dead Ringers*, so in between takes she's constantly making us laugh.

Michael is someone who I was thrilled to have had on board for *Grand Theft Cosmos* a couple of years back, so I was rather ridiculously excited to have him back in the studio again. He's hilarious, because he does a kind of running commentary on the work. When you tell him what scene we're recording, he usually mutters, 'Oh good, yes, ah, that's a lovely one, isn't it? Okay, here we go... good luck everyone.' Then, at the end of the take he mutters, 'Great, yes, I liked that.' It's a constant background of encouraging chatter, and it makes me hoot with laughter.

Oh, and as for the jogging back and forth to do the Daleks, I've discovered a canny solution. Before everyone else arrives, I do as many Dalek-only scenes as possible on my own. Still, serves me right for writing it that way, doesn't it?

Patient Zero is out in August



Right: Colin Baker and Michael Maloney prepare to face the Daleks

Below: Mila (Jess Robinson) looms behind Charley (India Fisher)

Opposite page: Nicholas Briggs joins Colin, India and Michael in multiple guises, as director, Daleks and Viyrans



You'll know the face from his time playing Mickey Smith, boyfriend to Rose Tyler and eventual travelling companion to the Tenth Doctor in TV *Doctor Who*. After playing the key role of Kade in *Dalek Empire IV*, Noel Clarke's voice can be heard this month on the opening release of *Stargate's* second audio series, *First Prime*. In it he plays Sebe't, the First Prime of Apophis. And as that's the role Teal'c occupied before he turned 'traitor', the pair are inevitably locked on a collision course, as Paul Spragg found out...

NOEL CLARKE



Does it make a difference having one voice to act alongside instead of many?

Yeah, sure. It was definitely nice to just have Chris's voice because I think that gives a real sense of camaraderie between these two when they were friends, and that completely ratchets up the tension so that now that they're not friends, it makes it that much more personal and that much more of a great story.

How would you describe Sebe't?

I would say he's very much like Teal'c in the fact that he is what Teal'c was. He's an honourable... well, I wouldn't say honourable, but he's a loyal member of [the Jaffa]. He would do anything for Apophis, that's what they're there to do. Obviously Teal'c's had some kind of revelation and become who he is, but explaining that to the others is immensely difficult. I think if these two stayed with Apophis they would be the two best and if those two both became like Teal'c, Apophis would have a lot of trouble on his hands. [That] makes him the only worthy opponent that Teal'c can have. He's kind of shady, he's kind of dark, but that's because he's so good at what he does.

How easy is it to find redeeming qualities in a character like Sebe't?

It depends if it's on the page really. When you have someone like that, a villain, you can always try and look for a sympathetic angle or an understanding as to why they do what they do. Even with the Joker in

The Dark Knight, he doesn't [think], 'Oh, I hate the politicians because of that', he just doesn't like the order. You kind of get, 'Why do we always have to abide by those rules?' With this character it's the same thing; why should he question it? If Apophis rules everything, then they're gonna be just fine. His life's gonna be fine, his family's gonna be just fine. If they start shaking up the boat there could be destabilisation.

How did working on *Dalek Empire* and *Stargate* differ? Well, if I'm honest with you, for me it's just a case of coming in and doing the voices, whether it be a serious thing like *Dalek Empire* or just a one-off like the *Stargate* one so I actually enjoy it all, really. It's another part of performing and I just like doing it. I can't really tell you I know too much of the differences between this, that and the other, I just come in and do what I do.

So you kind of get why the minions would do it all for Apophis. If you look at it from that angle, when he's telling Teal'c that Teal'c's a traitor and he's gonna get him, he believes that 100 per cent. It's not that he wants to hate him, but he believes that Teal'c is the traitor and not them.

How was Christopher Judge to work with?

Well, great, but it was all voice! I didn't meet him! His voice was fantastic but I was never in the room with him. I think he recorded all his stuff in Canada; it's funny because all my family live in Canada but I couldn't go at whatever time, so I was in London a few weeks later. Which was kind of weird but you just have to make sure that you listen to his part to see his intonation and to see when he ratchets up the level so you can get it right, so it doesn't sound like you're having two different conversations.

Did you get any tips on playing a Jaffa?

Well, I used to watch *Stargate SG-1* quite a bit on TV, maybe the first two seasons on *Sky*. So I was quite up on it, a fan of the show definitely. I knew how they behaved and what they were, so it was just a case of taking that really.

There have been various 'nationalities' of Jaffa; did you change your accent at all?

I think I gruffed it up a bit to be deeper than my usual voice, but it's not really English or American; it's somewhere just... Jaffa. Regal, I would say. You know you get some really, really posh Americans who are not quite English but are kind of regal? Once you speak in that manner and pronounce all your Ts and always say 'I am' all the time instead of 'I'm', I think that's kind of what it is.

Were there any words you had trouble pronouncing?

Hell yeah! I couldn't remember them now but there were a few words that I had trouble with. They would have to go, 'Stop, stop! Cut, cut!' I'm like, 'What?' and they were like, 'It's this!' and I'd go, 'Bloody hell, man! How do I pronounce that?' and they would have to say and I'd go, 'Write it phonetically so I can have a look at it'. Even

saying 'Teal'c,' something doesn't fit right with that word with me. The apostrophes, something doesn't fit right in it, it just sounds weird. But you try and get over that.

[SPOILERS IN THIS PARAGRAPH!]

Does Sebe't meet a tragic or a deserved end?

I think it's a deserved end. When he dies and he realises Teal'c was right, I think that's what he needed to find out. Because by the end, when he finally dies, he's resigned to not supporting Apophis and I guess in the end he does the right thing. I think that's what's important; it gives him some redemption.

How much preparation did you do for the play?

I think I was filming something, but I never go into anything without reading it. I'd read it maybe twice over so I was familiar with it and then I went in and just did it on the day; we did it quite quickly actually. I would never go into something cold, you just don't know what surprises it can throw up. So it was definitely prepared for.



INTERVIEW

How are you coping with the attention that came with your BAFTA win for *Adulthood*?

It's fine; it's over. Two days after, it was over, and we stopped [going] 'Wahey!' It's on the shelf, it's a bit of glass and marble and a metal plate that says your name; I don't really buy into too much of the attention stuff, you know? I just have to try and get back to doing what I do which got me there in the first place, and that's just work hard. So it's not really something I dwell upon.

Do you find there's more pressure to deliver in your future projects?

I guess there's a pressure on 'What's the film he directs next gonna be like' and all this stuff, but you can't let it pressure you into rushing something or doing something quickly, it has to be the right thing. People are gonna like or dislike what you do regardless of what you do, so it doesn't really bother me.

In *Doctor Who*, your character's fate was predominantly connected with Rose's. Has it been nice to be able to make your own mark in other areas?

Yeah, definitely. All those guys have got their own stuff going on. I've got my own stuff going on as well, so doing *Dalek Empire* and *Stargate* and my films, I might not be on the public radar as much as some of those guys who get photographed everywhere they go, but I'm quite happy doing what I do. People can photograph me all they want but at the same time I'm doing what I do and I'm winning BAFTAs, so I don't need the affirmation of being the number one in the show. That's never bothered me. I was never bothered about being the guy, when we'd go to the National Television Awards, standing at the back and they're at the front.

Would you be interested in coming back for more Big Finish productions?

Yeah, sure! I'd do whatever I'm asked really. I love working on stuff. It's just a different discipline, a different skill. I've done *Doctor Who*, now I've got *Stargate*, so if it was right and it came up then sure, sure, I'd definitely do it.

And if Chris Judge turned up this time?

I would ask him why he didn't turn up the first time!

What do you have coming up?

I've got three films coming out. *Doghouse*, a horror comedy with Danny Dyer and Stephen Graham. A film called *Heartless* with Jim Sturgess, then I have *Centurion*, which is the new Neil Marshall movie, coming out and a few other things just sort of bubbling. But I can't really talk about those.

Will you be directing again?

I will be. Not right now. I'm just away sorting out a few projects. There's a couple that I'm producing, a few that I could be directing, and quite a few that I'm writing and a few other things that I'll be just acting in. So it's just timing really and fitting it all together.

Do you find it difficult writing, acting and directing?

It's difficult when you're doing all three at once! Writing I probably find the hardest, singularly. It's the most solitary and it can be quite 'Ugh!' Directing and acting I just love. I love all three, but I find writing the hardest part. I wouldn't say I find writing difficult, because the difficulty is part of what makes it a challenge.

Noel, thanks for chatting to us.

Stargate SG-1: First Prime is out this month

Left: The cast of *Dalek Empire IV*, from left: Colin Spauell, Esther Ruth Elliott, Sarah Mowat, Sean Connolly, Nicholas Briggs, David Yip, Noel Clarke, Ginita Jimenez and Oliver Mellor



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THE GATE IS STILL OPEN
THE MISSIONS CONTINUE



STARGATE
SG-1

STARGATE
ATLANTIS

FIRST PRIME	PATHOGEN	LINES OF COMMUNICATION	IMPRESSIONS	THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS	MELTDOWN
MAY	JULY	SEPTEMBER	JUNE	AUGUST	OCTOBER

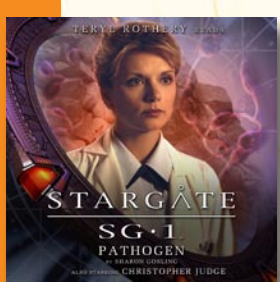
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MAY

- Doctor Who – Enemy of the Daleks (121, Seventh Doctor/Ace/Hex)
- Doctor Who: The New Eighth Doctor Adventures – The Beast of Orlok (3.3)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Mahogany Murderers (3.11, Jago and Litefoot)
- Iris Wildthyme – The Panda Invasion (2.4)
- Stargate SG-1 – First Prime (2.1)
- Highlander – Love and Hate (1.2)
- Robin Hood – Friendly Fire (1.3)
- Robin Hood – The Dambusters (1.4)

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)

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 – 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 – The War of Words (4.6, Benny)

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 II)
- 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 Cannibals (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 Cholarian 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 (4.7, First Doctor)

This month, Nick rummages through the Big Finish inbox to answer some of your more pressing questions.

Hi there, I love your download service as it is much easier and much cheaper than the physical CDs in the US.

However, I do have some suggestions that would make life somewhat easier. When the adventures are downloaded, there are no titles for any of the tracks, this makes it very hard to determine at the very least where episodes start and stop, and where any CD extras are. Ideally my personal preference would be to have a single track per episode (which I was able to do by combining tracks when ripping the physical CDs), with additional tracks for CD extras, but at the least I would love to at least see these things labelled correctly.

Also, I think you are underpricing your downloads in the US. I think the average US customer won't notice a difference between a \$12.99 price and a \$13.99 or even \$14.99 price (for example iTunes typically charges \$14.99 or higher for a 2-album set). I would certainly pay the extra myself, anyway.

Thanks, Dave Miller

Dave, thanks for these points. There are almost as many views on how we should name tracks or what duration they should be as there are Big Finish releases. We have discovered that this is a very personal thing, and people have all kinds of different preferences. And if we decided on a naming structure, it would no doubt upset many people. So our policy is to leave it to the listeners to decide. As you point out, you can combine tracks and, of course, you can name them yourself if you want to. Glad you feel our prices are competitive. I think this is the first time we've had someone write in and ask us to raise the price! We'll keep them as they are for now.

Hi, are there any plans to one day give Big Finish audios a listen for free because I can't keep up with the prices. Or are there any free? Many thanks, Callum

Callum, you are the opposite end of the scale to Dave (above) who wants us to increase prices. We are starting to release the Doctor Who Magazine free CD stories as free downloads, but this is a long term project and there are no plans to rush-release them. There will also be free Doctor Who talking books for subscribers, and the occasional free one (such as *One Small Step*, now available) for non-subscribers too.

Hey Big Finish... I'm a huge fan of Big Finish's Doctor Who catalogue. By day, I'm interviewing politicians and death row inmates, by night I'm escaping from it all with some quality radio theatre.

Thing is, I'm actually borrowing the recordings from a friend. I'd buy them directly from you but, in this economy, even for a full-time paid writer, YOU'RE TOO FRAKKIN' EXPENSIVE!

I hate to be critical, but your prices for online downloads are at least 50-75% too high. I'd really like to give you money, but right now there's more value to borrowing a friend's copy or going to a library for free.

I can't be the only devoted, obsessive but broke fan out there. If you lowered your prices, I bet a bunch of us would come out of the woodwork. Surely, you can set up some sort of deal for the economic recession-depression that works out profitably for everyone. Who knows... maybe you can enlist folks like me as some sort of guerilla marketing crew... I'd certainly record an endorsement.

Dave Maass

A good example here of the opposite points of view we receive. Dave Miller thinks we should put the price up. Our prices are carefully worked out to cover our budgets and make future production possible. It's a vicious circle, if more people bought them, we would be able to lower the prices. So, ironically, by not buying our products you are part of the reason why they're perhaps more expensive than you think they should be. But that said, I do understand that being a full-time collector of audios can be a bit of a drain on personal finances. Although, I would add that I think that our prices are pretty competitive.

Dear BF, I recently bought The Tripods series one & two DVD set and was wondering if Big Finish were considering doing an audio of the final book *The Pool of Fire* which didn't get made.

Jim Baker who played Henry Parker is still very much involved with Tripod fan clubs (He was tirelessly trying to get the full series released on DVD) and Robyn Hater who played Fritz is still an actor.

It would be great to finally have this excellent series completed after 20+ years.

Yours Sincerely, Paul Fairclough

This is something that has been discussed many times at Big Finish meetings. Thanks for raising it again, as indeed I will at our next big production meeting.

Dear Big Finish, I am thrilled with the first two issues of *Vortexxxxxxxx* magazine especially in issue #1 where you talk about the planning for Iris Wildthyme series two. But I have a suggestion for a possible feature you could add to the magazine. In *DWM* they do Time Team where they go through each story issue by issue. How about *Vortexxxxxx* doing the same with the audios. Nick, Barney, David, Alan and Jason could discuss in detail about how each audio was made; I think this could be fantastic reading. As part of your Doctor Who licence you can't use or reference anything from the new series but how come they can reference things from the Big Finish audios? The Etra Prime incident from *The Apocalypse Element* is mentioned in the 2006 Doctor Who Annual as a reason for the Time War beginning.

In a recent *DWM* when talking about the Fifth Doctor and Nyssa stories at the end of the year it mentions that they will be all set in an English village. Would that be Stockbridge from the *DWM* comic strips?

Would you ever consider casting other old companions as other incarnations of Iris Wildthyme?

From a big fan Jack

Thanks, Jack. Glad you like *Vortexxxxxxx*. That 'Time Team' style idea might be good for a podcast. What do you think? I think the answer to your question about who can reference who is that the BBC own Doctor Who and we're licensed by them. Do you see where the power lies? We will be announcing our script competition when we've sorted out all the details. No news on that as yet. Sorry to keep you all waiting. No plans to recast Ms Wildthyme. Stockbridge? Hmm, interesting...

I just ordered the re-release version of the Eighth Doctor adventures (only just available in the US) and I just thought I would write to tell you that I really enjoyed this format. I listened to Jason at the recent Doctor Who convention in Los Angeles (February) and I thought that I would give the audio books a try-out. They are very well done.

My question is: Do you have plans to release any more stories packaged like the Eighth Doctor adventures? I thought that it was good value to get four stories at a discount. If you do then I would certainly look out for them.

Regards, Steve

Glad you liked it, Steve. And we do have plans...

...And that's all we have room for, but keep the letters coming, we read them all!

ANDY LANE



Andy Lane, photographed in far more appealing surroundings than Victorian Limehouse. Photo © Helen Stirling

This month sees the release of the eagerly awaited **Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – The Mahogany Murderers**. Written by Andy Lane, the story reunites Professor George Litefoot (Trevor Baxter) with Henry Gordon Jago (Christopher Benjamin), 32 years after they appeared together on TV in the classic *The Talons of Weng-Chiang*.

Andy Lane talks to **Vortex** about this new foray back to gas-lit London...

Your first assignment for Big Finish was *Here There Be Monsters* for **The Companion Chronicles**. How did you get the job?

Going back a number of years – like, a whole load of years – I was present at the first Big Finish meeting where writers were invited in to give their reactions and pitch ideas. I think it was at Gary Gillatt's flat in

South London. I was busy doing other stuff at the time, and I wanted to clear out of **Doctor Who** for a while and let other people have a go, but I kept watching the BF CDs being released and getting nostalgic for the days when I did write **Doctor Who**. So, after a while, I started dropping the odd hint to Gary Russell, David Richardson, Alan Barnes, Jason Haigh-Ellery and anyone else who might listen (including complete strangers on trains) that I might, just might, be willing to be lured back to do some **Doctor Who** stuff. And then the BBC, in their wisdom, commissioned me to write a **Torchwood** novel, which I think reminded people that I was alive and that I could still write fiction. And shortly after that, I was asked if I might wish to write a **Companion Chronicle**.

You've written a lot of novels in the past. Is writing for audio a very different discipline?

It is. In a novel you have to worry about what people say, what they think, what they see, what they hear, what they smell and what they touch. In an audio drama you just have to worry about what they say and what they hear. Those are the only two ways into their heads. Of course, you want to illuminate what they think, see, smell and feel, but the only way you have to do this is the words that the actor says and the sounds in the background. In that sense it's a lot easier, but there's also fewer levers on the dashboard that you can fiddle with to get an effect. In a novel you can have a character by themselves for most of the time and still tell a story via their train of thought. It's very difficult to have a character by themselves in an audio drama unless they are talking to themselves constantly, and that gets very melodramatic and false very quickly.

Before writing a **Companion Chronicle**, how deeply do you immerse yourself in the era?

Sadly, I know enough about the various eras that I have to do very little research. It's all still up there, in my head.

What was your reaction to being asked to write a Jago and Litefoot story?

Sheer, unadulterated pleasure. I love those two characters, and the two actors who portray them so perfectly, and I also love the Victorian world that they live in, so having a chance to play around in that particular sandbox was just mind-bogglingly fun. I would have done it for free, although I obviously didn't tell the BF management that...

Were you daunted by the fact you'd be writing a follow-up to *The Talons of Weng-Chiang*, one of the most popular **Doctor Who** stories ever?

Not really, for the simple reason that most of the elements that made *Talons* such a success – the Victorian backdrop, the grotesque melding of history and strange science, the actors, the characters – were all still there. All I had to do was just use them in an honest way and not drop the ball. The only real tricky thing was making sure that I didn't just copy *Talons*, but actually added some new stuff to the mix and extended the Jago/Litefoot relationship. What would have been daunting would have been writing a follow-up to *Timelash* or *The Underwater Menace* and making that entertaining, just because there are few successful elements to reuse.

Christopher Benjamin and Trevor Baxter both praised your script highly. Did you find that the characters of Jago and Litefoot just came alive on the page?

Christopher Benjamin and Trevor Baxter could read the phone book and make it entertaining. They bring such colour and vivacity to the characters that it would take a particularly bad writer to write a script that they couldn't bring to life.

Did you have fun playing with the format of the **Chronicles** with this, in that you essentially have two narrators instead of one?

The odd thing is that I've only ever written one **Chronicle**, so I hadn't got used to the format. The **Chronicles** are, effectively, one person telling a story to the audience with someone else interrupting every now and then. The Jago and Litefoot piece is two characters telling a story to each other, with someone else interrupting every now and then. If, please God, I ever get to do another Jago and Litefoot script (and I'm drooling at the thought) then I would move away from that style and find a different one. Perhaps they would both be telling a story to someone else – a police sergeant, perhaps – and constantly correcting each other.

You're adapting PJ Hammond's *Paradise 5* for **The Lost Stories**. What has that been like?

Strangely entertaining. I was reluctant at first, on the basis that I like writing my own stuff and didn't think I would like adapting someone else's work, but I'd never really done it before (with the exception of one novelisation in my past) so I thought I'd give it a try. What I hadn't realised was that PJ Hammond had only written one 25 minute script, and enough plot to fill another 25 minute script, so there was scope for me to write around his stuff – writing the first and fourth episodes, effectively. And that was fun.

Is PJ Hammond someone you've admired over the years?

I remember watching the original transmission of **Sapphire and Steel**, and thinking how cool and original it was, and I've kind of watched PJ Hammond's career ever since with interest. His episodes of **Midsomer Murders** are undoubtedly the best ones they have done.

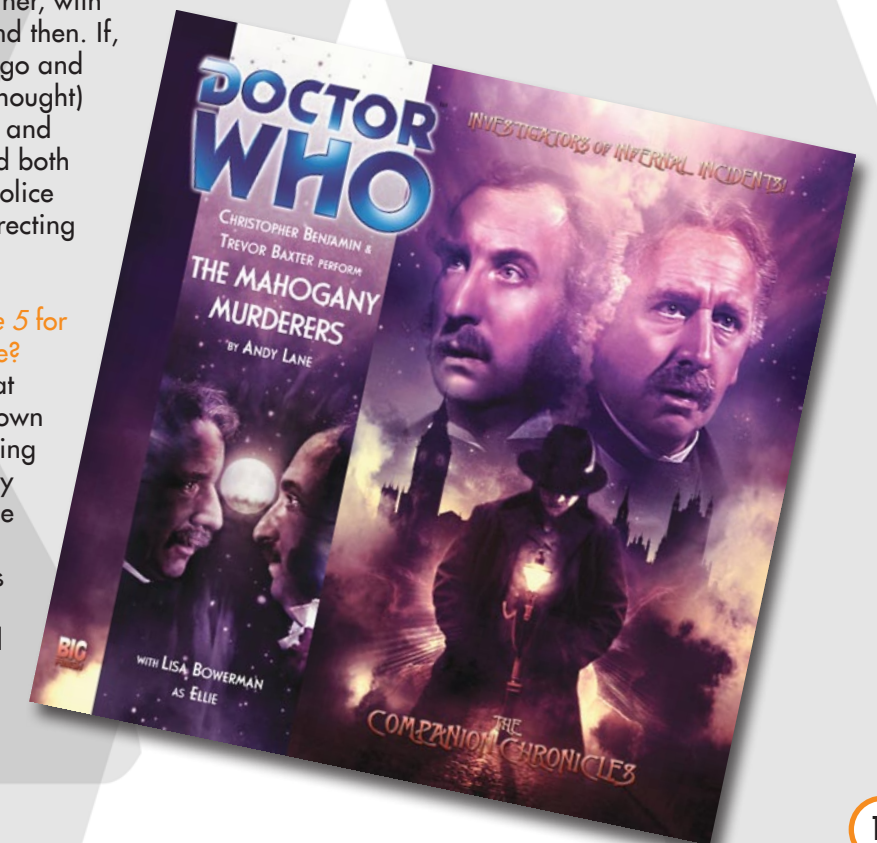
Any plans to contribute to the **Doctor Who** main range?

At the same time I was commissioned for *Paradise 5* I was asked to write an original Seventh Doctor script for the main range. That's now completed and submitted, and I'm really looking forward to seeing how it comes together.

What else are you up to?

Bizarrely, and pleasingly, I've been asked by the estate of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to write a series of Young Adult books about Sherlock Holmes at school. We auctioned the rights to the books, and Macmillan have picked them up. The plan is to explain how he gains all the abilities he later demonstrates – the deductive abilities, the violin playing, the boxing, the solitude, the wariness of love and women – against the backdrop of a realistically historical early Victorian world and some stunningly good plots with fascinating villains. It's what I was born to do, and I'm having the time of my life. The first book should be out in late Summer 2010, and will probably be entitled *The Colossal Schemes of Baron Maupertuis*. Watch out for it!

The Mahogany Murderers is out now



ONE FINAL TRIP

BY XANNA EVE CHOWN



WHAT MAKES SHORT TRIPS SO SPECIAL?

Matthew Griffiths has been a fan of the series from the start. He has written for seven anthologies and proofread three of the books.

What was the first *Short Trips* story you read? I read *The Switching*, from the very first of

Big Finish's books of *Short Trips*, when Simon Guerrier sent it to me to see what I thought. It was such a neat idea, the Master 'escaping' from prison by swapping bodies with the Third Doctor – a lovely little aside that the TV series would never have done that still felt very true to it. So once *Zodiac* came out, I really wanted to see what else was in there.

What do you think makes *Short Trips* so successful?

To read the best of them is to add a little new something to *Doctor Who*, whether it's an insight into a particular character, a striking image or just the joy of a particular era perfectly captured in a single vignette. There's the mixture of authors and voices it allows, because you've got writers from the TV series alongside first-timers. And they all pull something different out of the theme, so that while you've got a guiding principle to a collection, each story can be a fresh take on it. It's not even restricted to short stories. You've got games, poems, recipes and – my own particular favourite – a Platonic dialogue in among them.

How did you get your first story into a collection?

I saw that John Binns was lined up to edit a couple of the books and I got in touch with him to ask if I could pitch – I'd had some fan fiction published in the past, but the cachet of having the real logo on the front of something I'd contributed to was irresistible. John was generous enough to let me send an idea each for *Steel Skies* and *Life Science*. Even more generously, he decided to run with both of them. It was only when I came to actually write them that the excitement died down a bit...

How many of the collections have you read?

Must be about 15, and I've two on the go at the moment. It's difficult to keep up with all of them, I confess, but I've had the chance to proofread a few of the collections, which has certainly helped! This was a particular privilege when it came to *How the Doctor Changed My Life*; reading that didn't feel like work at all. Now the series has finished, I'll try to catch up with the ones I haven't read. I also want to see what the editors' favourite stories are in *Re:Collections* and whether their views match mine...

"When I joined Big Finish, none of us had any idea how successful the *Short Trips* range would be – or how long it would run for," says Ian Farrington, who oversaw the series from the first anthology, *Zodiac*, to the twenty-third, *Defining Patterns*. "For it to reach 28 books is amazing, a real testament to the wealth of talented people who want to write *Doctor Who*."



Big Finish obtained the licence to create original *Doctor Who* short story compilations in 2002. Following on from the BBC anthologies *Short Trips*, *More Short Trips* and *Short Trips and Sidesteps*, the series provided a place for established writers and new names to let their imaginations run wild and create new adventures for classic Doctor/companion teams. The first licence was for two years, and eight books were commissioned. Originally, they were all going to be edited by John Binns or Jacqueline Rayner, but as the licence was extended again and again, a variety of editors were used, overseen by the range editor.

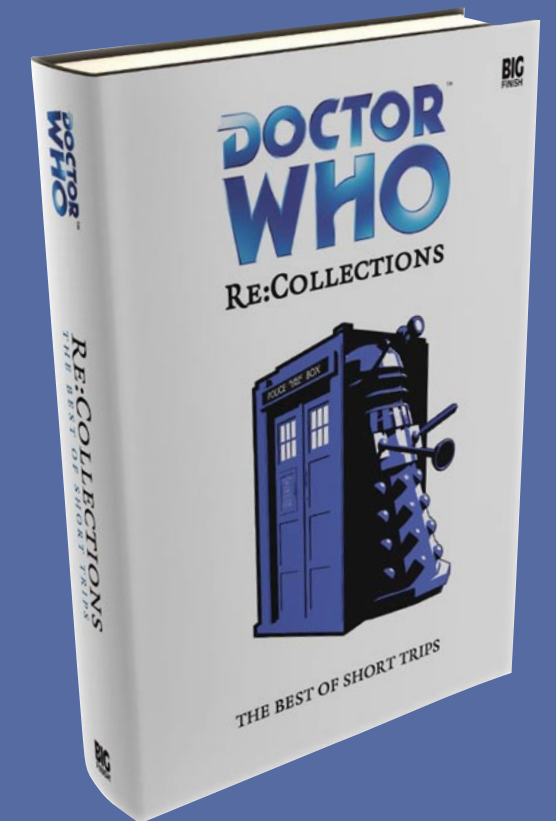
Each book has a central theme, which could be anything from the 21 stories set in a single city in *Destination: Prague*, to *Transmissions*, where each writer focuses on a different means of communication. There are also four Christmas collections, where the Doctor finds his festive spirit. Writer Paul Cornell is particularly fond of these books. "I think [the Christmas anthologies] filled a hole in the market, and recognised that, for a lot of us, *Doctor Who* and Christmas mean similar things: an experience of finding light in the dark." In December 2004, Cornell edited *Short Trips: A Christmas Treasury*, which, in addition to the short stories, included a recipe for Beep the Meep's Grundian Egg Nog by

Paul Condon, and rules for how to play the Game of Rassilon at home with your family on Christmas day by Lawrence Miles.

Using different editors for each collection led to a wide variety of approaches to each book, which helped keep the series fresh. In *The Quality of Leadership*, Keith RA DeCandido invited *Star Trek* writers such as Diane Duane and Peter David to contribute their unique perspective on the world of *Doctor Who*. Meanwhile, *How the Doctor Changed My Life* was a collection that featured the 25 best stories from the Big Finish short-story competition in 2007. This was each writer's first professionally published piece of fiction, although many have gone on to write more.

Re:Collections is the final *Short Trips* anthology. It's a 'Best Of' edition, with 28 stories hand-picked by the 15 editors who have contributed to the series. Each has written an introduction to their chosen story, which takes a look at how each collection developed and why each particular story was chosen. Jacqueline Rayner says of her choice from *The Muses*, "I had to pick the story that has made me cry more than any other *Doctor Who* short story ever," while Nicholas Briggs, who edited *Dalek Empire*, chose his story based on the fact that the author "cleverly chose to write about one of my characters, Kalendorf." Joseph Lidster picks his favourite story from *Snapsots* because "It's a story that I think sums up exactly why *Doctor Who* is clearly the best thing ever made."

Working as range editor on the final six anthologies has been a pleasure and a privilege – as well as often a race against tight deadlines – and I truly believe that the series will be missed not only by the readers, but also by everyone who has been involved in the making of *Short Trips* over the years.



RE:COLLECTIONS

This final collection brings together 28 stories, one from each anthology. Each story has an introduction from its editor, amongst whom are Paul Cornell, Nicholas Briggs, Gary Russell and Jacqueline Rayner. With stories by Simon Guerrier, Eddie Robson, Jonathan Morris, Joseph Lidster and Paul Magrs, this is the definitive *Short Trips* short story collection.

Re:Collections will be out in May priced £19.99. From May 1 2009, all previous *Short Trips* will be on sale for the specially reduced price of £7.50 from bigfinish.com. Catch them while stocks last!



STEVE FOXON



Experienced musician and sound designer, Steve Foxon, submits to interrogation for **Vortex**.

How did you first come to work for Big Finish?

Back in 2003, I put together a disc of music and my brother Richard, who knew the chaps at BF, insisted I give it to him and he sent it off. From that I auditioned with a short piece from **Dalek Empire** and I was in. Not long after I was working with John Ainsworth on the **Judge Dredd** audios, and then luck shone on me (or I pestered Gary enough!) at the start of 2004 and I got my first **Who** – *Arrangements for War*.

Can you tell us about some of the most interesting – and maybe challenging – productions that you've worked on? Ooh, that's a toughie! Every single play has had its challenges. I normally sit eyes wide and cursing when reading the scripts, thinking, 'How the heck am I going to do that?!' To single some out though, the latest one, *Enemy of the Daleks*, has been one of the toughest challenges with regard to the music (that Ken Bentley can work you hard!). I always find battle/fight sequences frustrating, and often have to go and calm down in another room! For example, the Daleks vs Mechanoids [from 2004's *The Juggernauts*] was tough to pull off – how do you make flame-throwers sound interesting and exciting?

The most challenging sequence would definitely be at the start of *Nocturne*, which is probably the longest I ever spent on one sequence. It had the 'noise', people, alien synths, incidental music, light bulbs exploding and more! *Solo*, the most recent **Judge Dredd** story, was also a tough one to edit the dialogue on, considering all parts were played by the genius that is Toby Longworth. Oh, and please – NO MORE GIANT INSECTS!

On the flip side, **I, Davros** has to be the most interesting and is certainly my favourite – particularly the Dudley Simpson-esque music, which was a joy to write! **Sarah Jane Smith** series two was also good, as it's always nice to get back to the real world for sound effects.

How do you go about creating effects for a story?

I'm lazy and I cheat! I would love to have the time to create a lot more of my own effects, but having a full-time job as well doesn't allow me the luxury. So an awful lot is from sound effects libraries that I have bought over the years – nearly 40GB now! I'll record less than five per cent myself around the house, or at work if I need to. Mainly boring things like shutting doors, making drinks, turning pages of a magazine, etc. Occasionally it will be something I can't find elsewhere that will then need altering, such as gardening shears for mandibles!

A lot of the more sci-fi effects will need designing to suit as well, which will involve manipulating sounds by time stretching, pitch shifting, adding effects and so on. They're fun to do.

Have you got any favourite effects, or maybe sequences, that you have created for Big Finish?

Nothing specific to effects or sequences, but some favourite things would be the music in *Arrangements for War* (in fact, a lot of the sound design too), the atmosphere for the deserted streets in *Dreamtime*, putting cool Latin phrases in *Frozen Time*, getting the Mechanoids to sound like the originals, seeing Toby at work in the studio when recording *Solo* and, as mentioned already, writing the music for **I, Davros**.

You've done the sound design and music for this month's release *Enemy of the Daleks*. What sort of brief were you given for the story by Ken Bentley?

Not an awful lot to start with, as with most directors there's the odd minor point. So I was free to go with things in my own way to start, and then the main notes would come following the FX edit attempt. There are minor things like timing, tweaking of levels, changing small sounds here and there, etc. Then there were the explosions for Ken that needed to be much bigger, with rooms shaking and things crashing to the floor and sparks flying and so on, including 'the mother of all explosions' – so please see Ken if your speakers implode! He also wanted everyone to walk faster. Oh, and then there was the note about thrash metal...

There's a very different type of music in this, isn't there?

Oh yes! Although please let me clarify that, despite the above request, we haven't got thrash metal. What we do have is verging on heavy metal though, which involved me cranking up the distortion and thrashing my guitar with a big grin on my face! I was hesitant to start with as it's just not **Doctor Who**, is it? Or is it? But this is a very intense story with Daleks and gunfights left, right and centre, and as I worked on it, the music just fitted, and I went with the flow. Although it was apparently 'too nice' to start with.

I am ultimately very happy with it, and I believe Ken is even more so, but as I answer this question I am nervously waiting. If you like it, it was all my idea. If you don't, then blame the famous Ken Bentley!

How long have you been working on *Enemy of the Daleks*, from start to finish?

I actually read the script back in December 2008, but completed the dialogue edit at the end of January. It's then a bit difficult to tell, as I finished on April 19, but during that time I had to break off for a few weeks to work on *Heart of Rage* (**Warhammer 40k**). So, excluding that, about eight weeks I would say. With the day job I get to do a couple of hours in an evening and then the days (and sometimes nights) at the weekend. Generally it takes me six to eight weeks.

You also worked on *Brotherhood of the Daleks*. Are you becoming something of a Dalek expert at Big Finish?

I adore the Daleks and love working with them, and yes, for some reason I get a big chunk of them – I have no idea why. I also did *Terror Firma* and *The Juggernauts*, so that makes four in all. I'll never get bored of them, so keep 'em coming!

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