



# Hub

Issue 4  
April 27th 2007

**Editors:**  
Lee Harris and Alasdair Stuart

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## Feedback

**Huge** thanks for all your feedback on last week's issue. It was nice to read some positive emails regarding our first eEdition. Thanks especially to Jeff Crook, who made some excellent points about the format style of the 'zine when reading online. The version for online reading is single-column all the way through the fiction - this is to prevent readers from having to continually scroll up and down (which is what happens when reading multi-column 'zines online). If you prefer the multicolumn format, head over to our website ([www.hub-mag.co.uk](http://www.hub-mag.co.uk)) and you can download one from there (labelled as "version suitable for printing").

## What if I don't like reading while sat at my PC?

If you have a PDA or other device capable of displaying eBooks, you will soon be able to download a special eBook version of this issue from our website. In future weeks we'll also be experimenting with versions for iPod. Failing that, hit the PRINT button.

## Change of Line-up

At the end of last week's edition we mentioned that this week we will be reviewing Ken McLeod's *The Execution Channel* and beginning a series on past Doctors (as in Who). Both these pieces have been pushed back to next week, as the writer (gawd bless his soul) is a bit of a perfectionist and wanted to make sure you were getting your money's worth.

## How Frequent is Hub?

Hub is published 52 times a year! No, that wasn't a typo. *Hub* is also now free to read! (Neither was that).

Every week we will be publishing a piece of short fiction, along with at least one review (book, DVD, film, audio, or TV series) and we'll also have the occasional feature, too. We can afford to do this largely due to the generosity of the people over at Orbit, who have sponsored this electronic version of the magazine, and partly by the generosity displayed by your good selves. If you like what you read here, please consider making a donation. Donations of all sizes are welcome. £1/\$1/1Euro is good, more is (naturally) better. Orbit helps *Hub* survive, donations help us thrive. You can donate using the PayPal button on the front page of our website.



Dark Space is not really dark.

Neither is it empty.

The new space opera by Marianne de Pierres - in all good bookshops from May 2007 / [www.mariannedepierres.com](http://www.mariannedepierres.com) / [www.orbitbooks.co.uk](http://www.orbitbooks.co.uk)



# A Hint of Mystery

by Ian Whates



It was a strange feeling, knowing that the world was about to change forever, and that he was the only person who knew it.

Ross had no intention of allowing the fact to detract from his own big night, however. He still took particular care in dressing. Unusually, he found himself plagued by indecision. This was the third shirt he had tried on and, after casting a critical eye over his image in the mirror yet again, finally decided it would do. Just as well. Much longer and he would have run the risk of being late – something which had never struck him as being fashionable, just irritating. Especially in himself.

His mind's eye had pictured tonight countless times and settled on exactly the image he wanted to convey, yet the first shirt selected had not even come close. His second choice had been little better. This though... this was okay.

He stepped back and turned sideways, admiring his profile with critical approval; still flat-stomached, despite his devotion to food, and not at all unhandsome. He still felt his nose was a little too angular, but to date had resisted the temptation of succumbing to a 'nose job' to remedy the perceived

imperfection.

It was silly really; after all, were supposed to be his friends he was meeting. Yet in many ways, tonight meant as much to him as the award itself; tonight, creating the right impression mattered. The fact that the group gathering in his honour included most of the top Asian chefs in London might just have had something to do with it – such acknowledgment from his peers made success all the sweeter. Of course, he realised that one or two of the smiles would be a little forced. Rajendra, for example, would doubtless smile through gritted teeth; but knowing that he would have to smile and offer congratulations at all meant a very great deal.

This should prove an interesting evening – one spent with friends, friendly colleagues and tolerated rivals. Chefs were often subject to over-inflated egos – self-belief was as necessary an ingredient as any that went into the cooking – and with certain of the group there had always been an ill-concealed edge that precluded true friendship. Fortunately, friends held the balance. Cyrus for one, who had been the first to phone and congratulate him.

Rajendra, on the other hand, had yet to congratulate him at all.

He sighed. There was an arrogance to Rajendra, an assumed superiority based on his having served an apprenticeship in Bombay – as if he were the only truly 'authentic' Indian chef amongst them and all others were therefore inferior by definition. It was an attitude that made Ross instantly bristle. The award of a Michelin star to Rajendra's restaurant two years ago had only exacerbated the problem. The minor detail that Ross's own restaurant had won its second star the same year was an irrelevance, since Ross chose to "bastardise traditional dishes by diluting them with irrelevant and inappropriate western influence" – an accusation Rajendra had once made to his face during a particularly frank exchange. Ross remembered the outburst word for word and knew that he was never likely to forget it.

However, he was not about to let Rajendra or anybody else spoil this evening. His restaurant had just been awarded the much-coveted third Michelin star; the first Asian restaurant in the UK ever to be so honoured, dispelling once and for all any lingering doubts about Asian cuisine. Nobody could now fail to take it as seriously as French, Italian or any other national school of cookery. That seemed worth celebrating and tonight his fellow chefs and restaurateurs were staging an informal gathering to pay him homage. The thought caused him to smile – vanity was clearly not Rajendra's private preserve.

He had worked hard for this, centred his life around attaining the ultimate accolade: three Michelin stars. He savoured the phrase, still not quite able to believe it. Would that his father were alive to see this day.

Ross had been born in Glasgow, where his father ran a celebrated restaurant of his own. Ross had been proud of his father, feeling that he had done much for the image of Indian cuisine in that part of the country, helping to elevate it above the cliché of the lads-night-out curry house and take-away.

His preparations were finally complete. He glanced around the bedroom in disbelief, as if suddenly seeing it for the first time. Open drawers, clothes strewn on the bed, a favourite silk shirt discarded on the floor – had he *really* been

responsible for making this mess? It was something he would never have tolerated in his kitchen.

At that instant he felt a familiar tug on his thoughts. Why now? Not that he really resented the intrusion – how could he, after all the success it had brought him?

He quickly sat down, ensuring he was comfortable and set about relaxing, both physically and mentally; slowing his breathing and calming the mind. It took only minutes and the other Ross was there.

*“Hi, ready for your big night?”*

“Yes, just about to leave. You?”

*“Ready as I’ll ever be. God, I’m nervous.”*

“No need.”

*“I know.”* Their conversations were always like this – an economy of words that still conveyed full meaning, since they knew each other so well.

At first Ross had dismissed the other’s presence as a figment, a dream – easy to do since the initial contacts had been made in his sleep. Only later did it become possible to make contact whilst awake. From the outset they chatted readily, like two life-long friends, a twin brother he had never known. Ross came to the conclusion that this was his alter-ego, a suppressed side of his own personality that surfaced in his dreams. It took him a while to accept the truth.

*“I’m a physicist, a cosmologist,”* which made sense – that had been Ross’s ambition in his youth, what he had worked towards at university. *“My reality is different to yours,”* which was easy enough to dismiss whilst he considered the other to be not to be real at all.

With cooking and the business of running a restaurant so central in his life, cosmology had long ago been relegated to a hobby, but it was still something he paid attention to. String theory had intrigued him; the membrane theory of multiple realities it led to excited him and appealed to the romantic side of his nature.

“As in another dimension?” had been his flippant response.

*“You could view it that way.”*

“Right, of course.” Being excited by the concept was one thing, accepting as real night-time visits by an alternate self was quite another.

Still, if that was how his alter-ego chose to manifest himself, who was he to argue? He went along with it and became fully engrossed in their conversations. They reminisced and compared notes, discovering that up to a point their recollections seemed identical. Where they veered sharply from each other was during his gap-year at university. Both had gone to Canada, but the other Ross had not gone on to Australia as he had, cancelling at the last minute and returning to the UK due to his mother’s involvement in a car accident, which subsequently proved fatal.

“Mum’s still alive,” explained Ross, who as a result had gone on to Melbourne, where he had been taken under the wing of a brilliant young chef then dabbling in fusions of eastern and western cuisine. He now realised that it was at this point that his love of cooking had finally come to take precedent over his ambitions to be a physicist.

From then on, their experiences grew increasingly diverse, as Ross came to work as a chef in London, before establishing his own restaurant and a growing reputation, whilst his counterpart contributed significantly to the understanding of cosmology and moved to the fore-front of his chosen field.

Ross marvelled at the ingenuity of his sub-conscious, which had taken the fragments of unrealised ambition and constructed such a detailed and plausible life story.

Then had come the moment when all that changed. *“I think I can give you something.”*

“What, from your reality, to take into mine?”

“Yes.”

“That’s possible?”

*“It should be now, in theory. I’m refining this all the time. Something small though. Physical transfer is going to require a lot of energy.”*

There followed a lengthy discussion as to what the object should be – something unique to the reality of Ross-the-physicist and unknown in the world of Ross-the-chef.

They stumbled on it almost by accident, when discussing one of Ross’s signature dishes.

*“What is black cumin?”* the physicist had asked.

Ross was startled – the other had enjoyed the same upbringing he had, how could he not have come across black cumin? “Kala jira, kashmiri jira, cumin noir, comino negro, kalazira...” he tried every name in every language he could think of, but all were met with the same shake of the head. “Tiny dark brown granules, it’s actually a long, thin fruit; only about 3mm long...” again the shaken head. In desperation, “It’s an apiaceae.”

*“Ah, the parsley family.”*

“Yes. You’re familiar with the apiaceae?”



*“Certainly. We have coriander, fennel, anis, caraway...”*

“What about cumin, dill?” Again the shaken head.

The physicist had remained an amateur chef and it seemed unlikely this was simply a chasm in his knowledge. As the discussions continued, it emerged that the discrepancies ran both ways.

“Tarim? What is tarim?”

It appeared there were spices and herbs in both realities which had no obvious counterpart in the other. Either his imagination was working overtime, or...

*“I will bring you tarim.”* So it was settled.

When they next met, the other produced a small cellophane packet containing a number of purplish strands.

His dream-self took and examined the proffered sachet. “This is tarim?” The other nodded. “What is it?”

*“The stigma from a plant.”*

“Like saffron.”

*“A little, but it’s from a member of the aster family rather than a crocus; like safflor, the bastard saffron.”*

Ross was only half listening, mesmerised by what he held. He awoke still clutching the packet of tiny purple strands and any thoughts that Ross-the-cosmologist was a construct of his sub-conscious were banished forever.

The other had given only a general idea of how tarim was used, which left him plenty of room to experiment and find out for himself. Like saffron it was highly fragrant, but when he placed a fleck on his tongue it had a sweetish, almost fruity taste, where as saffron tended towards bitterness. A few strands soaked in a little hot water produced a violet, inky solution. Ross set to work, incorporating it in this dish and that. Its inclusion in a sharbat produced a unique experience, totally unexpected from such a familiar drink. All too soon his meagre supply of the precious spice was exhausted.

“Can you get me more, much more?” he asked that night.

*“Of course,”* the other laughed. *“In the meantime, I brought you this.”* He passed over a packet containing another spice new to Ross.

“Does this process work both ways?”

*“It should do, yes.”*

“What about the energy needed?”

*“I can supply that from this end, as long as the budget lasts.”*

“Good. I brought you this,” he held out a sprig of wispy green fronds. “Fresh dill, one of the apiaceae you don’t seem to have. Great with fish and in pickles.”

Ross experimented continuously with the new ingredients, adjusting established recipes and creating new dishes, the type that made Rajendra so hot under the collar. He was *not* a traditional chef and made no apology for the fact. True, that was his grounding, one he was proud of, and he fully recognised the rich variety available within traditional Asian cooking and knew that many very good chefs found fulfilment in that area.

Nothing wrong with that, but it was not for him. He found his own fulfilment in creating new and original combinations, invariably with strong Asian basis or elements, but borrowing freely from any of the different styles of cookery that the world had to offer. The advent of the other Ross, with his seemingly endless supply of these unfamiliar herbs and spices, enabled him to be more inventive than ever.

He knew he owed a great deal to his counterpart, that the unique ingredients helped his cooking to stand out and had undoubtedly contributed to his success, but it had still taken skill and flair to take advantage of the opportunity. After all, his restaurant had been awarded its second star before the two Rosses had even met. Still, their friendship had undeniably given him an edge and he wondered whether he would ever have achieved that all-important third star without it.

Of course, Michelin stars were not just about the food, but about every aspect of the restaurant itself. Ross had made a lot of false starts before achieving the ambiance he sought for his own establishment: calming, relaxing - something that spoke of Asia without in any way making non-Asians feel excluded, but rather invited each and every visitor to dally a while and be made welcome. The service had to be just right – attentive without being intrusive, ever-helpful whilst only offering as much direction as a given patron required... and it all had to appear effortless. Apart from anything else, Michelin had fully justified the pride he felt in both his establishment and his team.

*“I won’t keep you, just wanted to say have a good time.”* The comment dragged his thoughts back to the here and now.

“You too.” That same evening Ross-the-physicist was to be guest of honour at an important function of his own, a potentially world-changing event. The dill and other herbs passed to him by Ross-the-chef had been accepted by his peers as alien to their reality and had provided the scientific community of his world with proof more tangible than mathematics that other realities existed and could be reached. As yet, this break-through had been kept from the world at large, but a public announcement was planned for that evening.

*“The different planes don’t just sit there, always equidistant,”* the other Ross had once explained. *“They inter-relate at slight*

*tangents and can approach each other at one point and veer gradually away at another. I've shown that in some instances they can even touch and coincide – something which had been suspected before but never proven."*

"So that's what's going on here? Our respective plains of existence, which run more-or-less parallel to each other, have touched."

"Yes."

Ross had in his mind the image of a mille-feuilles. Leaves of puff pastry stacked in parallel lines but which bubbled and dipped to touch and then part. The truth was probably nothing like that – he had a feeling the different dimensions were far more regular, more structured than that – but it was a visualisation that worked for him.

"*There will be others,*" his counterpart warned in parting. A masterful understatement; neither reality was ever going to be quite the same again following the announcement. A more official and regulated program of inter-dimensional contact seemed inevitable.

"I know. It's been fun."

*"It still will be. Just no longer unique to us."*

"Luck."

*"You too."*

Ross stood, left the house and hurried to his car. Now he really was going to be late.

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The evening went well. Rajendra seemed to go out of his way to be charming and flattering, as if determined to ensure that nobody could accuse him of being churlish, whilst no-one else said anything to detract from the occasion, at least not in Ross's hearing.

As the meal drew to a close, Ross took the opportunity to sit with Kuldup, an aging but still greatly revered Indian chef whom he had always been fond of.

"So tell me again," Kuldup said, "your recipe for Patrani Machchi. I thought I knew all there was to know about the cooking of fish, especially that dish, but you have added something special to it and I cannot for the life of me work out what it is."

Ross chuckled; this had become almost a ritual game between the two of them, with Kuldup inquiring what it was that set his preparation of this most traditional of Parsi dishes apart. He knew his side of the ritual well, "I would never dream of presuming that I had anything of worth to impart to such a distinguished master of the culinary arts as yourself, Kuldup."

"Don't think to evade me with flattery. I may have one or two secrets still to disclose that would surprise even you, but in this instance I bow to your greater knowledge. Now tell me."

"Very well. As you yourself once taught me, the secret of turning a good recipe into a great dish is attention to detail." Despite whatever aspersions Rajendra might like to cast, in certain instances Ross had gone to great lengths to ensure authenticity. So his restaurant habitually offered two alternative forms of Patrani Machchi. For one he utilised lemon sole and for the other, which was a little more expensive, he used pomfret, a fish specially flown in from the sub-continent. He found that certain of his patrons were happy to pay the extra.

"It is important that the oven is at just the right temperature and that the banana leaves are properly wrapped around the fish." He was teasing Kuldup, part of the game, since it had been the older chef who first taught Ross how to make the dish. "I always steam the fish first, rather than fry it..." He had gone through the preparation of Patrani Machchi so often that he felt able to recite it in his sleep. Whilst continuing to talk, his mind wandered. Ross had always believed that his life could have followed two different paths – physicist or chef. Long ago he had made the decision that determined which one, but he had always wondered how the other path would have turned out.

"As you know, the most important elements, after the freshness and quality of the fish, are the ingredients of the paste." He suddenly realised how privileged he was. Perhaps uniquely amongst all the people who had lived throughout the world to date, he had been granted the opportunity to see where both possible lives might have led. He was glad to see that Ross-the-physicist seemed equally as happy and fulfilled as Ross-the-chef. Also, he was glad to find that he had no regrets about choices made.

"Yes, but what do you add to the paste? You put something special in it, you must do," Kuldup insisted.

"Not really," Ross demurred. "Lemon juice, crushed coriander leaves and cumin seeds, green chillies, a hint of fresh coconut, a heavy hint of garlic and..." he left the sentence hanging, glancing to see the twinkle in his own eye reflected in the older man's. Both spoke together, "...a hint of mystery!"

They laughed, the ritual completed. Kuldup clapped him on the back, "One day... one day you must tell me exactly what this *hint of mystery* is."

Ross wondered how far matters had progressed on the other world. Had the announcement had been made yet? Was his counterpart facing the stroboscopic barrage of paparazzi flashbulbs even now?

"You never know," he smiled fondly at his former mentor, "one day I just might... and that day could arrive a lot sooner than you think."

# REVIEWS

ANCESTOR reviewed by Alasdair Stuart

ONE-SIDED BARGAINS reviewed by Lee Harris

BATMAN:KNIGHTFALL / NEBULOUS / SAPPHIRE AND STEEL 2.5:PERFECT DAY

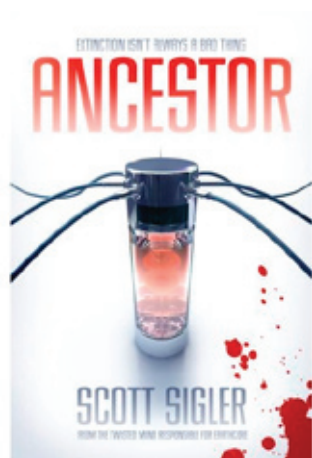
reviewed by Lee Harris

ANCESTOR

by Scott Sigler

Published by Dragon Moon Press

RRP: \$19.99 (No UK price available)



Scott Sigler is, arguably, the man responsible for kickstarting an entirely new type of publishing. His first novel, *Earthcore*, was podcast on Sigler's homepage and by the end of its run had accrued over ten thousand listeners. A publishing deal soon followed and at time of writing, Sigler has just concluded his fourth podcast novel with a fifth, *Nocturnal*, scheduled to begin later this

year. The print version of *Earthcore* was a massive hit on Amazon and Sigler has recently concluded *Bloody Monday*, where he released pdf files containing the print version of his second novel, *Ancestor* to various podcast sites and co-ordinated a massive publicity campaign in an attempt to get the book to go straight in at number 1 on the Amazon sales chart. Sigler has legions of fiercely loyal fans, has come within a hair's breadth of getting *Ancestor* adapted as a SciFi Channel original film and along with authors such as JC Hutchins and anthology sites such as *EscapePod* and *Variant Frequencies* sits at the forefront of the increasingly successful podcasting movement.

Based on the print version of *Ancestor*, it's easy to see why his work has proved so successful. Sigler has a fierce, gleefully unpleasant imagination, a deep seated love of science pushed to extremes and a master director's eye for how to craft increasingly intricate, increasingly brutal action sequences. He's a heavy metal Michael Crichton, a fiercely energetic author dragging the best elements of pulp fiction kicking and screaming into the 21st century.

*Ancestor* deals with the bleeding edge of bio-science and the ongoing attempt to create animals whose organs are compatible with humans. When the process is perfected, no one will ever die for want of

an organ transplant again. Until it is, the nightmare scenario of accidentally creating a disease capable of jumping species and against which humanity has no immunity haunts everyone in the field. Sigler takes this as his basic idea and extrapolates it to show that the CIA monitor all the companies capable of causing such an accident. When one does, and the facility is incinerated to stop it spreading, the order goes out; shut them all down.

That order reaches Baffen Island and the isolated research facility that Genada have set up. There, Claus Rhumkorrf and his team are trying to reverse genetically engineer the first mammal. The theory is that this creature would be a 'rosetta stone', a common ancestor that would provide the final piece of the puzzle needed to make animal organs compatible with human ones. But as the CIA sleeper agent on island forcibly shuts them down and the project reaches a breakthrough, the Genada team find themselves facing internal threats, a corporate conspiracy and the one thing no one ever expected. That the Ancestor would be far, far more than a docile herbivore...

It's a fascinating experience reading the novel having listened to the podcast as Sigler has taken great pains to expand and revise the text. The corporate element comes across far better on the printed page and several of the minor characters are given far more room to breath. Most notable are Jian, one of Rhumkorrrf's researchers whose mental instability threatens everyone's lives and the relationship between PJ Colding and Sara Purinam, Genada's security chief and chief pilot respectively. Sigler has a good ear for banter and the interaction between the two is playful, often very funny and goes a long way to making you care about the characters. Which, given his fondness for killing off the most unexpected of his castmembers only heightens the jeopardy.

The real star of this version however, are the Ancestors themselves. Sitting somewhere between a bear and a dog, they're savagely violent, endlessly hungry and disturbingly intelligent and their rampage across the island leads to some jaw dropping action sequences especially in the closing sections of the novel. They're one of the most memorable, and iconic, monsters science fiction has produced in years and the mind boggles as to why the SciFi Channel passed on the opportunity to adapt the book.

Make no mistake, anyone looking for deep, cerebral meditations on bio ethics and the corporatocracy we live in is going to be very disappointed in *Ancestor*. However, anyone looking for an energetic, endlessly inventive and cheerfully gore soaked read is going to be very happy. Genada may have failed but Sigler, in his quest to create a relentlessly entertaining and inventive story, has succeeded admirably. Pick this up, then do yourself a favour and subscribe to his next book. You won't regret it.



## ONE-SIDED BARGAINS

Written by Mike Carey, Illustrated by Mike Perkins, Paul J Holden and Michael Gaydos  
Published by image  
RRP: \$5.99 / No UK RRP



*One-Sided Bargains* is a collection of three short tales - two are illustrated in comic form, the third is a prose tale.

The two illustrated stories are reprints - both first published by Caliber Comics. Neither tale is illustrated in colour (hence the bargain cover price), and the artwork is not up to the standard of the storytelling in either instance. The first tale - *Dr Faustus* - suffers least from the artist's style. Mike Perkins' rendering of Carey's retelling of the Faust saga uses light and shade to good effect, but the panels are sometimes too busy, sometimes too flat. The characters are generally well realised, however, and the artwork rarely interrupts the story's flow. The story tells of the life of Faustus from the point of view of his young manservant, and is never less than interesting.

*Suicide Kings* is the second tale in this compilation, and could have been a minor modern classic, if not for the poor artwork. Paul J Holden's inks are among the poorest I have seen in a professional publication, and could easily be mistaken for the doodles of a student, bored during his final mathematics exams. The story itself, though short, is more compelling than *Faustus*. Focussing around a not-so-friendly game of poker, a man's soul is at stake against an unknown counter-bet. Re-reading the tale a second time, I

tried concentrating on just the text, as the inferior artwork all-too-often pulled me out of the story.

No such qualms about the third story. *Auszug* is a short cautionary tale, which highlights the many dangers of being a professional literary critic. It feels "tagged on" to the other tales, as it is not written in comic form, and doesn't really fit into the "One-Sided Bargain" theme of the compilation. It's a darkly amusing tale and a good way to finish the book - and almost enough to make you forget Holden's scrawls.

One-Sided Bargains is worth the cover price for a peek inside Carey's mind - as long as you can look past the artwork. After all - it's barely more than the cost of a standard Marvel or DC monthly. Now that's a bargain!

## BATMAN: KNIGHTFALL

Published by BBC Audiobooks  
Produced by Dirk Maggs  
Starring: Bob Sessions, Michael Gough, Peter Marinker, Kerry Shale  
RRP: £15.99



The late Bob Sessions (Batman) and Michael Gough (Alfred) stop this 3 hour audio adventure (first broadcast on BBC radio in 1994) from being a romp, and inject a degree of gravitas otherwise missing from the rest of the cast, who seem to believe that effective radio performance = comedy voice.

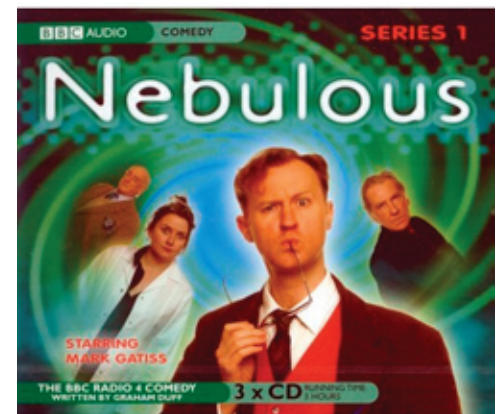
Although the plot remains relatively faithful to the source material, there is far too much clunky exposition for it to be regarded as a great piece of audio drama. Batman's all-too-frequent flashbacks to that night in Crime Alley are too melodramatic,

and remind the listener of the clown flashbacks in *Nebulous* (see below).

Nevertheless, this is a pleasant way to spend a three hour car journey, and is recommended if you can forgive its many minor faults.

## NEBULOUS

Published by BBC Audiobooks  
Directed by Nick Briggs  
Written by Graham Duff  
Cast includes Mark Gatiss, Graham Duff, Paul Putner, Rosie Cavaliero, and David Warner  
RRP: £15.99



The year is 2099, and the planet has survived a catastrophic ecological event - The Withering. Society has run amok, but luckily for the citizens of Britain Professor Nebulous is on hand to save us all from weekly disaster.

Nebulous is the head of KENT (Key Environmental Nonjudgemental Taskforce) - a government agency so underfunded they have to take in laundry to make ends meet.

Brilliantly written by Graham Duff, the show is perhaps the funniest radio series since Ford Prefect gave up hitchhiking. Perhaps funnier. I listened to it on my iPod over the course of several lunch breaks, and laughed so loud and so often that my colleagues seriously considered calling in the men in the white coats.

Although the writing is (almost) flawless, equal credit must be given to the cast and director. The timing in this show is impeccable. Words that would seem merely amusing on

the page become hilarious thanks to near-perfect performances from the actors. It's almost impossible to illustrate the hilarity of the programme by quoting from it - its success is so tied in to the performances.

The only time the show falters is during the professor's weekly flashback to his clown-filled childhood. Mildly amusing as a one-off gag, it suffers through repetition.

That minor niggle aside, if you haven't heard *Nebulous*, do so. It might be wise to invest in some clean, dry underwear first, though.

## SAPPHIRE AND STEEL 2.5: PERFECT DAY

Published by Big Finish

Written by Steve Lyons

Directed by Lisa Bowerman

Starring David Warner as Steel, and Susannah Harker as Sapphire, with Mark Gatiss as Gold.

RRP: £14.99

[www.bigfinish.com](http://www.bigfinish.com)



As a lifelong fan of *Sapphire and Steel* I have a confession to make - I've avoided the Big Finish audio adaptations like the plague. David McCallum and Joanna Lumley were just so perfect in the roles that I didn't want to taint my memories of the show with other actors. I also worried about leaving the writing duties in hands other than PJ Hammond's.

Big Finish forced me out of this lull. The swines sent a review copy of episode 2.5 (Season 2, episode 5).

I was hooked within minutes. Warner and Harker are Sapphire and Steel, and the quality of the writing is equally up to standard.

*Perfect Day* is set upon a luxury yacht drifting mid-ocean. It is the day of James' and Jennifer's wedding, and they are to be married by The Captain (Philip McGough). Jennifer's mother has managed to trap a splinter of time, and the wedding guests relive the wedding day every day, as they have done so for the past eight years.

Sapphire and Steel arrive because the ripples caused by the anomaly in time are spreading, and ripples only ever get bigger...

If you're a fan of the original *Sapphire and Steel* you will love this. If you've never watched/heard an episode, I recommend you do so. *Perfect Day* seems a good jumping-on point, as there is no prior continuity to worry about. The only problem is that you may - like me - worry about how you are going to afford to buy all the previous adventures. You're going to want to.

**Feel free to email this copy of Hub to your friends, family and colleagues, and recommend they sign up - it's FREE.**

## Next week Issue 5, May the 4th (be with you)

Fiction:

*Lenny and the Travel Ninja* by Alasdair Stuart

Feature

*A Beginner's Guide to All The Doctors: Part 1.* by Scott Harrison

Reviews: *The Execution Channel* by Ken MacLeod, *Dark Space* by Marianne de Pierres

**All this, and possibly more!**

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