

fantom publishing magazine



**INSIDE THE WHO TALK STUDIO ● KENNETH WILLIAMS ● CRACKERJACK
KEN FARRINGTON ● JOHN LEVENE ● GEOFFREY BEEVERS**

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Catherine Schell

When God Was

*Out To
Lunch*

Beginning a new life in France
an autobiography

When God Was Out To Lunch is the much-anticipated second autobiographical title from Catherine Schell available from Fantom Publishing.

Following on from the critically acclaimed *A Constant Alien*, *When God Was Out To Lunch* picks up the story as Catherine and her husband Bill make a life changing decision to move to France.

How were they to know when they bought the little ruin in deepest France with the sweet name "Valentin" painted across its crumbling façade, that this purchase would be their salvation?

She was a well-known actress, he a respected television and theatre director, both leaving behind all that they knew to begin a great, unscripted adventure together in a new country.

Immigrating to rural France, they opened a very theatrical, British guest house, where all human life was welcomed. With a colourful cast of characters, the story of their life in France is in part bizarre, hilarious, shocking and sometimes tragic, but always fascinating.

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STOP MESSING ABOUT!



The Kenneth Williams Companion is the first, and only, definitive book on the career of Kenneth Williams. The book details all his stage, radio, TV, recordings and film work as a chronology. The book sits alongside the biographies and diaries, previously published, to catalogue and celebrate the genius.

Kenneth is my hero and I have been a lifelong fan, collecting everything Kenneth since 1988 – from stills and programmes to action figures and plates. I like to think of myself as a working fountain of knowledge on Kenneth Williams! This has been the passion behind this 700 page volume which brings together an in-depth and comprehensive guide to all his credits with fascinating facts, and memories from his contemporaries, many of whom haven't spoken before. This reference book is everything you ever needed to know about the career of one of Britain's greatest comedy actors, from a career spanning 40 years.

The origins of the concept of this book dates back to about 1998. As a fan, I tried to compile together comprehensive lists of Kenneth's film, radio and television career to help me keep a record of what I had seen or heard and what I was missing. These lists developed and grew over time until the moment of realisation that there actually was no book or portal which documented his career in detail, so I began work on writing a book! I was greatly supported and encouraged to put the book together by Kenneth's good chum, Michael Whittaker, who has been a great support alongside Michael Anderson, Kenneth's former agent.

The book has forewords by actresses Nanette Newman and Lorraine Chase and a wealth of Kenneth's friends and colleagues have assisted with my research and these include, amongst many, Stanley Baxter, Christopher Biggins, Barry Cryer, Galton & Simpson, Sarah Greene, Juliet Mills, Mavis Nicholson, Nicholas Parsons, Dame June Whitfield and Dame Barbara Windsor. I have

Looking back at the career of Carry On Legend Kenneth Williams in a brand new compendium by Adam Endacott

also been in contact and corresponded with a number of producers, co-stars and those behind the scenes who all bring fresh material on Kenneth. I unearthed hidden gems from the archives including images from television productions that had been wiped or recorded live, unseen since their first broadcast over 50 years ago. Radio interviews and programmes have been discovered along with many other mediums including Kenneth's recording career – he did it all!

“Readers will discover that he wasn't just in the Carry On films and a turn on the chat show circuit – in fact he had an immense body of work across all the mediums.”

Years before hitting the West End stage, he featured in numerous stage productions from restoration comedy to modern day dramas. A certain Maggie Smith made her revue debut with Kenneth in Share My Lettuce, which led to a lifelong friendship and even today you can see

or quiz shows of the day, taking part in debates or panel discussions, training films and voice overs for advertisements amongst the films, radio series' and chat show appearances. The book is designed so that you can dip in and out of it at anytime or you can read it from cover to cover.

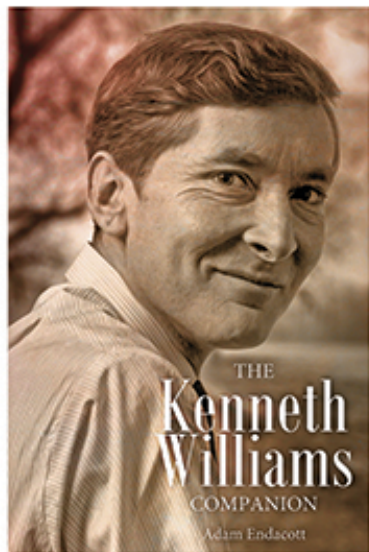


My research has taken me across the country ranging from the BBC Written Archives in Caversham to hours of viewing at the BFI Library. I have watched and listened to all material that survives from Kenneth's career (which is a lot, as you can imagine). I travelled across the country to visit libraries and discovered missing theatre programmes which covered Kenneth's repertory years ranging from Newquay to Scarborough.

the influence that he has had on her acting and performances. I hope readers will discover that he wasn't just in the Carry On films and a turn on the chat show circuit – in fact he had an immense body of work across all the mediums, even though he would write in his diary that he didn't have much work! The breadth and range of his work was quite staggering from appearing in popular game

The book was launched on 15 April 2018, exactly thirty years to the day he died, at Elstree Studios with around 250 guests to celebrate the life and career of Kenneth. Nanette and Lorraine took to the stage in Q & A Panels alongside actress Valerie Leon, broadcaster and writer Nigel Rees and Jeremy Swan, producer and director of Jackanory, amongst other presentations. The event was hosted by Morris Bright MBE, Chairman of the Studios. It was a very memorable afternoon and I was honoured to have so many people who had supported the book amongst my guests. We had

“My research has taken me across the country ranging from the BBC Written Archives in Caversham to hours of viewing at the BFI Library.”



Kenneth cupcakes and Julian and Sandy were recreated on stage in a special performance by Colin Elmer. A short snapshot of the day can be seen on YouTube with highlights from the launch.

Following the success of the book, I was recruited as the 'expert' for the upcoming The Undiscovered Kenneth Williams documentary to be broadcast on the Sky Arts channel at Christmas. The programme will include footage that hasn't been seen since it was first broadcast.

I am now on the search for missing footage or recordings or if anybody has anything that is Kenneth related then it would be great to hear from you... You never know, it may mean a revised edition in years to come!



WHAT A CARRY ON!



Elstree Studios, 15th April 2018



THE CARRY ON CONNECTION

2018 saw Carry On franchise turn 60
DISCOVER MORE WITH FANTOM

CARRY ON ACTORS

The Complete Who's Who of the Film Series

By Andrew Ross

The release of Carry On Sergeant in 1958 saw the beginning of one of the most successful film series in cinema history. The ensuing thirty Carry On films and numerous television specials spanned two decades and featured some of the finest comedy actors ever to appear on our screens. Watched by generations of comedy fans the Carry On series and its unforgettable cast members have become a global phenomenon.

Carry On Actors brings together every actor from the beloved series for the very first time in one book.

With comprehensive biographies of all of the main stars of the series, including comedy greats such as Kenneth Williams, Sid James, Joan Sims and Barbara Windsor, along with over 500 individual entries featuring little-known facts about the supporting actors who featured in the films, Carry On Actors is the ultimate guide for fans of the series.

Featuring a truly astonishing array of well-known names this is the essential reference for Carry On fans and British comedy enthusiasts alike.



TOO HAPPY A FACE

The Authorised Biography of Joan Sims

By Andrew Ross

Immortalised through her roles in twenty-four of the iconic Carry On films, Joan Sims remains one of Britain's best-known comedy legends. For five decades – through more than seventy film appearances and work on stage, television and radio – she captured the hearts of audiences around the world. Yet behind the laughter was heartache and personal torment as the incredibly private actress battled depression, insecurity, loneliness and alcoholism.

With a cast of characters, ranging from Sidney James and Kenneth Williams to Laurence Olivier and Katharine Hepburn, Joan's story, from a solitary and lonely childhood in 1930s Essex, to her status as a national treasure in the 1990s, is one of professional success over personal heartache achieved through immense determination.



SWINGS AND ROUNDABOUTS

The Autobiography of Angela Douglas

In his best-selling autobiography *More or Less*, published in 1978, Kenneth More, one of Britain's best-loved actors, said, "When Angela and I met and fell in love, everyone and everything was against us. I felt about her as I had never felt about any other woman. I needed her not only physically, but mentally and morally. My only reason for living was to marry her."

Angela was blonde, blue-eyed and twenty one. As this bubbly, naïve and insecure young actress found herself increasingly in demand in a profession she adored, she met and fell deeply in love with the man who was to remain for the next twenty years her "one essential existence".

In this moving, frank and deeply felt autobiography, Angela tells of her life from her convent-based education, of the joy of finding her feet as an actress and of her helpless love for this "very married man".

Having successfully produced audiobooks and dramas for a while, Doctor Who commentaries was something we at Fantom had discussed as a possibility, but never really found the opportunity to work on. In particular, we felt that The Enemy of the World and The Web of Fear were in need of commentary tracks, having been released on DVD completely devoid of any extras.

In 2015, when a drama project fell through at the eleventh hour, we were left with a studio booked in London, but nothing to record. And so we returned to the commentary idea. Toby Hadoko, who had done such a sterling job on the BBC releases kindly agreed to join us, and then the first telephone call was to Deborah Watling. Debbie, the adorable trooper that she was, agreed straight away because it was us asking, even though she wasn't entirely sure what we were talking about. And so things started to roll, and roll quite quickly!

It soon became apparent that not everyone we wanted would be available for the recording date; Mary Peach and Milton Johns were keen to take part, but not free, so we decided we would divide things up and pick up with them at a later date.

"As a result of the positive reaction to Enemy and Web, we were able to expand our vision of where to go."

One of our principals in making the range has been to try and mix different names as far as possible on different episodes; making the same three people sit through all six episodes of "anything" can be quite an ordeal. Swapping voices in and out helps, hopefully, to keep things fresh!

The biggest question was whether people would respond enthusiastically to the range, and I'm thrilled to say that they did! As a result of the positive reaction to Enemy and Web, we were able to expand our vision of where to go. Principally we wanted to cover every episode for which there was no commentary already, and to revisit some for which there was a bigger scope to bring in some of the guest cast, or a wider range of technical personnel.

The next pair of releases encompassed this vision entirely; The Daemons brought together a selection of people with whom we had worked



LOOK WHO'S TALKING

LOOK WHO'S TALKING...

Paul W.T. Ballard producer of the commentary range tells us the story so far...



with previously at events, who were all too happy to join us to look at the story again, and Day of Armageddon covered the "orphaned" Hartnell episodes from serials such as The Daleks' Master Plan and Galaxy 4. Peter Purves and Donald Tosh made their first contributions to the range with this title, but we were foiled by a confused Addison Lee driver in our attempts to reunite them. Undeterred, we were able to remedy this at a later date!

Since then we have continued to cover all manner of stories and individual episodes, with a wealth of talent from both sides of the camera giving us their remembrances; including Carole Ann Ford, William Russell, Frazer Hines, Wendy Padbury and Mark Strickson, to name just a handful.

Amongst the highlights have been showing Maureen O'Brien her first episode, for the first time, and hearing her talk in depth about the effect being cast in the show had on her family.

"Sophie Aldred and Rona Munro were introduced for the first time ever, and instantly got on like a house on fire, providing a brilliant commentary for Survival."

We gathered the UNIT family of Katy Manning, John Levene and Richard Franklin together, when nobody else had done it before, to watch their episodes, and realise the warmth and love they have for the show. Sophie Aldred and Rona Munro were introduced for the first time ever, and instantly got on like a house on fire, providing a brilliant commentary for Survival. We have also had the pleasure of Colin Baker in studio for a recording, including a new track for Revelation of the Daleks, which was the only story he didn't do for the BBC range.

We also dipped our toe in the water of providing a commentary for an episode for which there were no moving pictures at all; Marco Polo. The success of this spurred us on to do further similar missing episodes, including a full four episode commentary for The Massacre, where we were finally able to reunite Peter Purves and

Donald Tosh. The duo's track for the Christmas episode The Feast of Steven remains a favourite!

Going forward we have a whole host of exciting titles in preparation, and even more planned. Amongst them are releases covering the first Dalek serial (which rounds off all classic episodes in need of a commentary getting one) as well as a set covering the various Ice Warrior serials... from the very first episode of 1967's The Ice Warriors through to 2017's The Empress of Mars!

The Empress of Mars will mark the first release of a new series Who Talk, and hopefully listeners will enjoy these as much as they have the classic ones, as we have some exciting plans for follow-ups! For a series which had such serendipitous beginnings, I am thrilled with what we have achieved so far, and know for sure that there is a lot more come... happy listening!



WHO TALK TOP FIVE

It's really difficult to pick a favourite; we are fortunate to have worked on over twenty releases all of which are from different eras of the show and have a vast array of different personalities - each release is unique! Here are my top five suggestions for people to test out the range:

THE ENEMY OF THE WORLD

Our first release, and such a great selection of names, including a rather unique contribution from Carmen Munroe!

With Deborah Watling, Mary Peach, Carmen Munroe, Milton Johns, Bill Lyons and Sylvia James.

ADVENTURES IN TIME

One of our "selection box" releases, and I have a particular fondness for the historical stories.

Adventures In Time contains commentaries for The Aztecs, The Romans, The Crusade and a bonus interview on Marco Polo. Features Maureen O'Brien, William Russell, Julian Glover, Petra Markham, George Little, Ian Cullen, Clive Doig, Brian Hodgson and Kay Patrick.

THE MASSACRE

A commentary for a story which doesn't exist, which means it works just as well without the visuals!

This release features Peter Purves, David Weston, Christopher Tranchell and writer and script editor Donald Tosh. Includes a bonus episode of The Feast of Steven!

SURVIVAL

There was a real energy and a lot of fun recording this, and it really shines through on this release.

This release features Sophie Aldred, Lisa Bowerman, David John, Will Barton, Sakuntala Ramaneer, Rona Munro, Joan Stribling and Andrew Cartmel.

RE.U.N.I.T.E.D

The latest one, and it comes alive with the Manning/Levene/Franklin chemistry.

In celebration of this era of the programme, members of the cast and crew reunite to share their memories on a selection of classic episodes, including instalments of The Ambassadors of Death, The Mind of Evil, The Time Monster and Terror of the Zygons.

For a full list of releases, further information and clips visit our website www.whotalk.co.uk

● KEN FARRINGTON ●

Ken Farrington's autobiography is called *Hush My Mouth* for a very good reason. The former star of soap and stage – who was the only member of *Coronation Street's* original cast not to come from the north – has penned a memoir which describes his industry from his perspective as a self-confessed jobbing actor. Egos are punctured, upstagers revealed and missed chances mourned in an exhaustive account which is as happy to turn on its author as it is fellow cast members. "A friend of mine has written a review saying it's 'scarily honest,'" says Ken.

"Reliving certain experiences like my divorce wasn't a pleasant experience, but I wanted to be as honest and straightforward as I could. A lot of actors would say the same things, but wouldn't in public because they have a career. I've finished my career so I can now say these things." This the reality of keeping a career on track, the endless auditions, including Ken's repeated failure to get lucrative advertising work, the difficult directors and producers, the drinkers and the back-biters (Julie Goodyear gets a particular pasting in the latter camp). But there are also the highs as well, such as when he played Billy Walker in *Coronation Street* on and off for 25 years,

"When they said: 'Stand by studio' and counted down to action you got this big adrenaline rush."

launching Channel Five soap *Family Affairs* and joining *Emmerdale*, where his character Tom King went from a three-month role to being at the centre of the soap's biggest recent storyline in just three years. "There are some really good people who have been through the soaps – Anne Reid and Sarah Lancashire came out of *Coronation Street* and they are superb actresses," he says. "I liked working under pressure. In the theatre you have three or four weeks to practice. When I started the *Street* we rehearsed for a week, did one episode live and the second was recorded. When they said: 'Stand by studio' and counted down to action you got this big adrenaline rush." Ken began writing his memoir several years ago as a way of collecting stories from his father and grandfather who had grown up in the back streets of Peckham. Gradually his experiences from *Coronation Street* and the acting profession found their way into his story. When he met Fantom Publishing at a signing event and they offered to publish the book,

After 25 years on *Corrie*, and nearly six decades on the stage, Ken Farrington is telling his story – with no holds barred

Report by Duncan Hall
Originally published in *Surrey Life*, July 2018
www.surreylife.co.uk

the decision was made to exorcise those early elements. Instead the story begins at the very start of Ken's interest in acting, which can be put down to the influence of one man – his former English master Michael Croft at public school Alleyn's in Dulwich. "Coming from Peckham I thought the masters were there to be seen what you could get away with," says Ken. "I wasn't vicious but I was difficult, I would mess about. Michael put me into the under-16s football team which gave me a focus. When he did his first Shakespeare play – an open air version of Julius Caesar in modern dress – he came to the football team and asked if we would be in a crowd scene. Our first reaction was no – we didn't want to be poofy actors. But then we heard on the last night there would be a booze-up with a bit of ale. As 14/15 year-olds we were well up for a drink. John Stride was in the team, he got a couple of lines as Cinna the poet. He went on to play Romeo to Judi Dench's Juliet directed by Franco Zeffirelli. "It snowballed from there – if you give a kid a sense of direction it changes everything. I became a house prefect, a school prefect, a house captain, ran, swam and played football for the school. It changed my whole life completely from somebody who was on the verge of being kicked out." When he left the school, following the publication of his best-selling novel Spare the Rod, Michael set up the National Youth Theatre, which helped launch the careers of Helen



KEN FARRINGTON

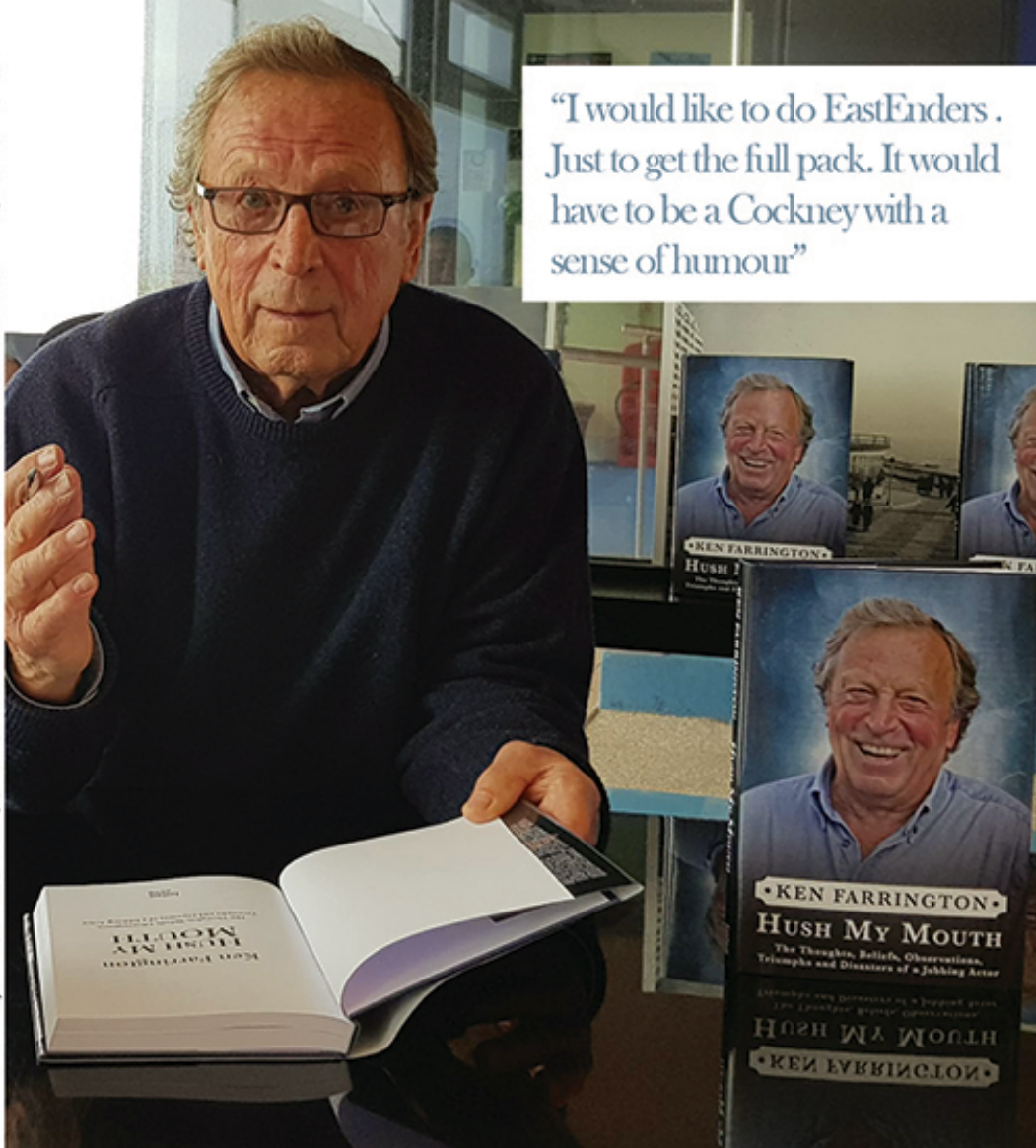
Mirren, Daniel Craig, Daniel Day-Lewis, Hugh Bonneville and countless more. Ken admits the National Youth Theatre has changed in the past 60 years – financial restrictions mean students now have to pay to go to auditions when before it was free – but he still recommends it to parents as the best way of discovering whether their child really does have a future on the stage. Ken worked closely with Manchester Youth Theatre for many

years himself from a desire to give something back to the youth theatre movement.

His book contains advice for anyone who wants to go on the stage. "The first thing when people want to be actors is they want to be stars, celebrities or be famous," he says. "You've got to do it and fall in love with theatre and acting – that is what is important, not your little ego showing yourself off." In the book he is honest about how he feels his

career has gone. Despite being part of two of the country's biggest soaps, playing Iago and Billy Liar onstage and achieving his long-held ambition to work with the Royal Shakespeare Company, he admits to being not completely happy in the way his career turned out.

"I would love to have been a bigger star," he says today. "But not a Hollywood star, a National Theatre star." He now splits his time between his house in Sanary-sur-Mer, France, and his partner Sandra's home in the Reigate area, and has been concentrating on writing. As well as his memoir he has penned a "Peter Mayle-type" book about owning Gallic property, based on his 20 years of legal battles with his Sanary neighbours. He has also penned five one-hour episodes about National Service. "I was one of the last to go, I was commissioned and sent out to Cyprus," he says. "The series is humorous, because there was a lot of fun to be had in National Service with the mix of characters and people, but it's also quite hard – the bullying and training. It centres on a working class boy who finds himself an officer in charge of boys who come from the same background as him. Perhaps somebody will pick up on it." And as for acting ambition? "I would like to do EastEnders," he laughs. "Just to get the full pack. It would have to be a Cockney with a sense of humour. There's not one in there that is likeable – they're all horrible!"



"I would like to do EastEnders. Just to get the full pack. It would have to be a Cockney with a sense of humour"



OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Fantom Publishing is thrilled to announce we shall be releasing **Run the Shadows, Walk to Sun** the memoirs of actor and Doctor Who legend John Levene. Michael Seely discovers more...

He is a man of many names...

John Anthony Woods...

Jonathan Blake...

Gentleman Johnny Bingo...

John Anthony Blake...

We know him best as John Levene, the actor and entertainer who exactly fifty years ago first appeared in Doctor Who as Benton, the UNIT corporal who quickly became a Sergeant and far more. He had already appeared in the programme as two of the most iconic monsters ever produced - a Cyberman prowling across the surface of the Moon, and as a fearsome Yeti lurking in the London underground. He was also for a while a familiar face on television. Perhaps he is the policeman in the background with a few lines to say, or a suspicious taxi driver having an egg sandwich or as a doctor delivering some bad news... No job too small, and it always amazed him when he won a part. After all, he was not a proper actor... He never went to

stage school. Is that not what a proper actor does?

We learn how director and later good friend Douglas Camfield practically gave John his chance at becoming not just an actor, but a regular player in the popular Saturday teatime television series. John Levene's time on Doctor Who stretched over an incredible seven years, from black and white into colour. We meet Barry Letts, a producer who could see the potential in John in playing something more than just a small part.

Then there is John's great friendship with Jon Pertwee with whom he would frequently accompany on his many cabaret performances and learn at the feet of the master the secrets of this extraordinary entertainer who mastered movies, radio and now television, and was once considered the Royal Family's favourite comedian. We get to meet Roger Delgado, who created arguably the most sinister villain Doctor Who ever produced - the Master, but how in real life, he was a sweet, gentle and encouraging

man to be within the company of. We also learn of John's friendship with Anthony Ainley, the Master for another generation of children.

John's five years with Jon Pertwee at the helm were the building and making of him, but it had to end sometime. Yet Doctor Who never leaves you, and there would soon be convention appearances, spin-off videos to make, audios to record, and PBS station pledge drives to appear on. But we discover when it is correct to turn

great love he found and lost, and how he came to terms with his own failings as a father. We discover the struggles he had with trying to get his own father to love him, in a time when there was not much love on display in a Man's world where every working class boy was expected to know his place. How does someone with crippling self-doubt about his own worthiness, and insecurities that he might let other people down due to his lack of training manage to survive in a cut-throat

nurse in a burns ward, a builder on Salisbury Plain, a clothes shop salesman in a top West End store, a London bingo caller, and worked the casinos on cruise liners based in Miami and New York, to name but a few. He even worked for a private detective and experienced some hair-raising moments. We discover the dreams which propelled him forward and how sometimes what you watch at the movies and fantasise about being can come true...



something down, and what happens if you do not. How the sickly child John Anthony Woods left Salisbury in deepest, darkest Wiltshire to go to the bright lights of London's West End and become John Levene, and later living in the foothills of Hollywood via the cruise liners of South America, is a fascinating tale of someone who does not know how to turn down surprising opportunities which most of us would fight to be offered.

Run the Shadows, Walk the Sun explores what makes John Levene tick and the struggles he has had to face in life and how he overcame them, the

environment, on either side of the world? How does a working class lad from Salisbury, the son of a Geordie coal miner and second world war hero, escape his certain fate and dare to count the rich and famous as his friends? How does someone who left school with no qualifications, with only the most mundane of jobs to look forward to, end up having dinner with the CEO of Revlon in Paris or organise some of the greatest Tennis and Golfing stars in the world for charity events in Los Angeles? Acting was but one job, albeit a very significant one, in an extraordinary life. John has been a male

We also discover how some dreams do not come true, no matter how much hard work you put in, but the lesson learned is it is fine to dream that dream... We learn how running and singing saved him from the thick shadows of depression that can cover us all, eventually.

Run the Shadows, Walk the Sun is a positive and honest and sometimes shocking book as it shows how John Levene tries to conquer the demons in his life, both imaginary and real, and try to find a peace that we all deserve in the end, with a little help from someone special.



A month or two ago, a disgruntled fan lobbed a cabbage at an underperforming football manager. Naturally there was a flurry of comment on Twitter. And many drew a comparison with Crackerjack. One wag said the manager would be useless on Double or Drop. Somebody else had been on the verge of tweeting his own genius Crackerjack quip, only to discover that dozens of others had beaten him to it.

It's quite remarkable that a show that finished in 1984, and a game that featured in fewer than

half of its episodes, should still be uppermost in so many people's memories. But check Twitter almost any day and someone somewhere will be referencing Crackerjack. Perhaps they're bemoaning the fact that they never won a Crackerjack pencil. Perhaps they're tweeting a link to that YouTube clip of Peter Glaze warbling David Bowie's Golden Years. And then, every Friday, as the working week comes to a close and the weekend beckons: 'It's Friday, it's five-to-five and it's Crackerjack!'

There's something faintly wicked about that

phrase. 'It's five-to-five! Let's sneak off five minutes early. Who's to know?' But then Crackerjack was always faintly wicked. Right from its very start, in 1955, it was a rumbustious celebration of anarchy. There were silly jokes, there were custard pies, and every episode ended in an explosion. That's what I loved about the show. It was 45 minutes of fun and laughter. And, most importantly of all, nobody was ever trying to teach me anything.

My previous Fantom book – Too Naked for the Nazis – was the story of a bizarre speciality

IT'S FRIDAY, IT'S CRACKERJACK

The Inside Story of a Teatime TV Classic with Alan Stafford



"I'm a pretty nifty private detective. I managed to make contact with virtually every surviving Crackerjack host, comedian and resident singer...

act from the days of variety. They dressed in Egyptian garb, shuffled over a sand-strewn stage mimicking the postures of ancient hieroglyphs, and called themselves Wilson, Keppel and Betty. But the book was about far more than just three people. It was about the worlds of American vaudeville, British variety and European cabaret. And, thanks to Betty's subsequent journalistic career, it also took in the Second World War and the Nuremberg Trials.

Similarly, It's Friday, It's Crackerjack has plenty to say about the world of TV variety from the mid-1950s to the mid-1980s. When it started, it was the first ever children's TV variety show. But it quickly widened its appeal, and pretty soon the whole family was watching. If you didn't care for the comedians, there were games and quizzes. If you didn't care for the attractive resident songstress, there were the pop groups. And each show concluded with a mini costume drama in which characters from history sung current chart-toppers.

When I first started writing *Too Naked for the Nazis*, I feared, however hard I researched, I'd never succeed in bringing these characters to life. In the end, I felt I knew them (especially Betty Knox) as well as if I'd actually met them. As I embarked upon my Crackerjack book, I had the

same aim. To bring the show alive by talking to as many of its participants as I could track down.

As it turns out, I'm a pretty nifty private detective. I managed to make contact with virtually every surviving Crackerjack host, comedian and resident singer, plus a good assortment of those who worked behind the scenes. It has been an absolute joy to be able to speak to so many Crackerjack participants – some on the phone, many more face-to-face. Michael Aspel, Little and Large, Don Maclean, Jacqueline Clarke, Jan Hunt, Bernie Clifton, The Krankies, Stu Francis – to name but a few.

My own childhood memories of the show are from the early 1960s, with comics Leslie Crowther and Peter Glaze, singer Pip Hinton and hostess Jillian Comber (who also joined Pip in the musical finales). So it was a particular pleasure to meet Pip and Jillian in person, and to talk to Leslie Crowther's wife Jean and Peter Glaze's son Tony.

Delving back into the 1950s, the resident comic for three series was Ronnie Corbett. This was at the start of his TV career and well before he met his wife Anne. However, I managed to find Alan Fenton, who had known Ronnie since they did National Service together, and who later (with Ronnie's encouragement)

became a Crackerjack scriptwriter. I also met Teddy Johnson (then approaching his 98th birthday) who, with wife Pearl Carr, did two series of Crackerjack, and could tell me first-hand of those days rehearsing sketches with Ronnie.

When Crackerjack started it went out live. In later years it was recorded live. Retakes were never encouraged. So there are tales of onscreen injuries. Of last-minute redubbing of a dodgy line. Of gunge tank malfunctions. And of the time an indisposed Bernie Clifton was replaced by an elephant. But, somehow, the show always went on. And, of course, perpetual stooge Peter Glaze just went on and on and on ... Everyone I interviewed spoke of Crackerjack with such joy. In the case of Syd Little and Eddie Large, it was joy bordering on hysteria, because their series as resident comics came close to scuppering their career. They struggled with scripts that didn't suit their style, and every evening they had to travel up north for a late-night cabaret engagement. By the end of the series they were ill and utterly exhausted. Thankfully, they could look back at those days and laugh.

My book follows Crackerjack through all 29 series (plus a couple of series of a mid-60s Australian spin-off) with script extracts, anecdotes and press reaction throughout.

Children's television changed much over the decades. Sometimes Crackerjack led that change, sometimes it lagged behind, and just occasionally it may have lost its way. But it lasted as long as it did because it was loved. By those that watched it and those that made it.

It was a love of Crackerjack that brought so many of its stars to the book launch in September. From the 1960s we welcomed comic Rod McLennan, singer Valerie Walsh and hostess Jillian Comber. From the 1970s, Don Maclean, Jan Hunt and Christine Ozanne (who deputised for Jacqueline Clarke on the Crackerjack LP). And from the 1980s (reunited after almost 35 years) were co-hosts Leigh Miles, Downtown Julie Brown and Sara Hollamby. Plus producer Alan J W Bell, scriptwriter Tony Hare – and impressionist Kate O'Sullivan, who won Crackerjack Young Entertainers in her teens and went on to make a career out of it. It was also a personal delight to meet three of Leslie Crowther's children – Liz, Nick and Caroline – because, for me, Crackerjack will always mean Leslie Crowther and Peter Glaze.

Whatever your era of Crackerjack, the people I've met and the stories I've uncovered will bring the memories flooding back. Or maybe you're so ridiculously young you regard Crackerjack as ancient history? Oh no, it's far better than that. It's ancient history with pop songs!



MASTER OF WORDS

Better known to science-fiction fans as playing The Master in Doctor Who, Geoffrey has found new fame in recent years as a script writer and novelist, and this month Fantom releases his third novel Superseeds.

Geoffrey explains that his new book fits with his earlier novels *The Forgotten Fields* and *The Progress Road* "...as a kind of loose trilogy, in that they all probe into the future, and play with the idea of time and what are the implications for the future of the way we live now."

"One early inspiration for *Superseeds* was thinking about the idea of communicating across time and space and how difficult it might really be in practice; it's so often taken for granted in science fiction. So I first thought of it as a kind of impossible love story between scientists across time."

Geoffrey continues "I was also interested in the science of genetic engineering, and wondered what would happen if one corporation captured a great advance in the technology and was able to impose a monoculture on the world.."

"There were many ideas in the air in the early 90s which I used. The controversy over GM foods, and the fascination with the intelligence of whales, are still unresolved today. Terrorism and social unrest are more immediate problems than they seemed then. And though I was writing before the age of the Internet, or social media, nevertheless the power that large corporations have to impose a monoculture on our lives is surely more relevant than ever!"



THE FORGOTTEN FIELDS

A young monk discovers a secret doorway buried deep beneath the monastery fields.

Forbidden to explore further, Brother Magnus' curiosity drives him on, and with help from a local girl, uncover secrets and surprises from a different time and civilisation.



THE PROGRESS ROAD

A man dreams that a giant roller moves over the city, crushing everything in its path in the name of Progress.

Behind it unfolds a wide road.

The man knows he must follow this road into the future to try to find his missing children.



SUPERSEEDS

Joe, in 1990, has made a brilliant discovery in the world of genetics that could feed the world.

But Kassey in 2050, is facing failure and world-wide famine.

They need each other but how can they meet across the barrier of time?

Propelled to stardom at the age of 15, until his tragic death from cancer at the age of 53, this is the story of actor Jack Wild, in his own words – published for the first time.

Jack was just an ordinary young boy, whose talent was spotted by chance by a theatrical agent, and propelled onto the world stage through his performance in the 1968 film musical *Oliver!* It brought him an Oscar nomination and international stardom.

As his fame grew, Jack also began to battle with alcoholism, which eventually dominated most accounts of his life. After the glittery highs of the 60's and 70's came the "lost decade" of the 80's; the lows of debts and sectioning under the Mental Health Act. The real story of this is here, in Jack's own words.

But this isn't a memoir of pity and darkness. Jack loved life, and loved his life. In the 90's, and fully sober, Jack returned to the screen in films such as *Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves*. Even in the face of the tragic diagnosis of mouth cancer which eventually killed him, he remained resolutely optimistic about life.

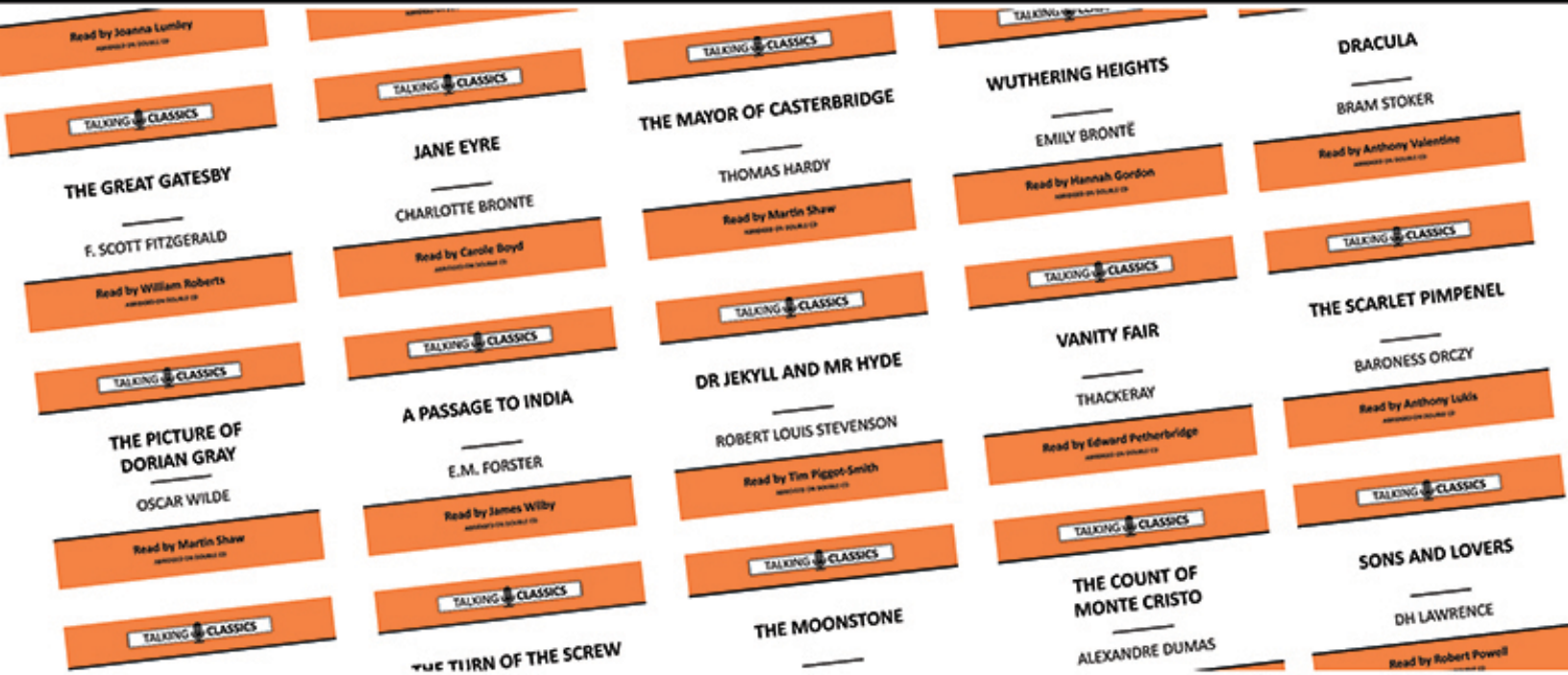
His story contains vivid behind the scenes accounts of many great names he worked with, from British favourites such as Diana Dors and Ron Moody to international stars like Bing Crosby and Kevin Costner.

Completed by Jack's widow Claire, the book is in Jack's unique narrative voice with honesty, roguish charm and a breath-taking lack of self-pity.



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