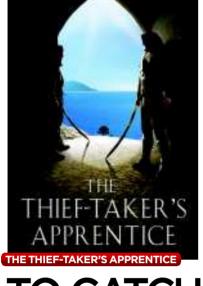
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STEPHEN DEAS



TO CATCH A THIEF Deas goes Dickens



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ust as JRR Tolkien drew on his experiences fighting in World War One for *The Lord Of The Rings*, history has long made for a fascinating canvas for fantasy to draw on. *The Adamantine*

Palace author Stephen Deas has delved further back for *The Thief-Taker's Apprentice*. The opening instalment in a trilogy, the Chelmsford-based writer's first young adult novel is inspired by the exploits of the Bow Street Runners, the forerunners of the modern police force.

"If someone stole your stuff, you'd hire a thief-taker to find them," Deas tells Red Alert. "You can see a bit of Dickensian London in it and I consciously echoed that idea of the shady old men recruiting young boys to do their dirty work."

Deas's teenage protagonist Berren finds his feet in *The Thief-Taker's Apprentice* but will come more into his own in next year's second volume, *The Warlock's Shadow.* "In the first book, he's 13 and he's discovering a father figure that has been absent from his life," Deas explains. "He's under the wing of the thief-taker until the end when he has to manage for himself. In the next book, he's older and more rebellious while in the third he becomes his own man."

Deas has also just put the finishing touches on *The Order Of The Scales*, the final part of the A Memory Of Flames trilogy. "The dragons are secondary in the first two books because if you let them become the foreground, they are so destructive you reach the end of the story really quickly," he laughs. "In the last book, they are more centre stage. I can promise lots of things being smashed and much death and destruction!" SFX

The Thief-Taker's Apprentice is published by Gollancz on 26 August.

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William Shatne

underwear

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"I didn't enjoy the

environment and the culture that we, the cast and crew, had to work in. I thought if I stay in this job, I'm going to have to blind myself to certain things that I thought were wrong."



Special K

Time for another Philip K Dick adap, and this time it's personal

rom Blade Runner to Total Recall, Philip K Dick's stories have provided cinema with some striking dystopian visions of the future. But, with the possible exception of Richard Linklater's A Scanner Darkly, few films have come close to realising the

esoteric undercurrents of the author's output. "They haven't

captured all the dimensions of his work such as his political, mystical, funny and tender appreciation of the fragile human condition," says writer/ director John Alan

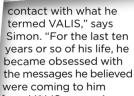
Dick's most autobiographical novel, Radio Free Albemuth, previewed at SCI-FI-LONDON earlier this year.

Dick himself (Shea Whigham) appears in the film as the sci-fiwriting best friend of Nick Brady (Jonathan Scarfe), a record executive who is convinced that mysterious alien entity VALIS (Vast Active Living Intelligence System) is communicating with him through his dreams. He teams up with fellow believer Sylvia (Alanis Morissette) in a bid to overthrow the authoritarian government of the Nixon-esque President Fremont.

"That came with a special responsibility as the central fictional aspect of the story was based on perhaps the most important event in Dick's real life – extraterrestrial

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from VALIS, presaging some kind of second coming and piercing what he believed to be the illusion of modernity."

Radio Free Albemuth's limited funds meant that Simon couldn't afford the lavish CGI of Dick-based blockbusters like Minority Report. However, he claims that the film's indie aesthetic better suits the story's more personal qualities. "From the first time I read the book when it was published in 1985, I saw it as something along the lines of a sci-fi, slightly noir version of Drugstore Cowboy," he says. "Human relationships are always the most important element of any film to me. But in the end, the special effects and the tone of the movie and the performances are really all of one piece." SFX

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DOCTORATES, DRAGONS, DICK