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DOCTORATES, DRAGONS, DICK



THE THIEF-TAKER'S APPRENTICE

TO CATCH A THIEF

Deas goes Dickens



Just 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.

NEWS WARP

All fact, no filler

» Paul Cornell signs exclusive writing deal with DC Comics

» *Atonement* director Joe Wright working on live-action adaptation of *The Little Mermaid*

» Ray Harryhausen donates life's work to National Media Museum

» *Avatar* to get 27 August theatrical re-release, with eight extra minutes added

» *Prince Of Persia* becomes highest grossing videogame adaptation ever

» Matt Smith makes surprise Glasto cameo with Orbital

» Zoe Saldana is the new face of Calvin Klein underwear

» William Shatner to direct documentary about his own life

» Radio 4 to broadcast *League Of Gentlemen* documentary

Don't Quote Me!



"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."

Christopher Eccleston on his *Who* exit.



RADIO FREE ALBEMUTH

Special K

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

From *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 Simon, whose adaptation of 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-fi-writing 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



Nick gets nicked – what a jagged little pill.



Jonathan Scarfe and Alanis Morissette, but you oughta know that.

contact with what he termed VALIS," says Simon. "For the last ten years or so of his life, he became obsessed with the messages he believed were coming to him 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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