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VORTEX

BIG
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STORIES
ISSUE 109 • MARCH 2018



ATA GIRL

FEMALE PIONEERS IN AVIATION

PLUS!



THE OMEGA FACTOR
SERIES THREE



THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES
CYBERMEN AND THE MEDDLING MONK



SHERLOCK HOLMES
TO THE MANOR BORN



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EDITORIAL

ISSUE 109 • MARCH 2018

IF EVER there was a month that shows just how diverse the output of Big Finish is, then it has to be this one.

This issue of *Vortex* covers Victorian age investigations with **Sherlock Holmes**, all-new female-led original drama set during World War II in *ATA Girl*, new **Doctor Who** stories from the early 1970s, spooky happenings in Edinburgh in the present day in **The Omega Factor**, and life as we don't know it billions of years in the future, in *Tales from New Earth*.

That's just one of many pleasures in writing *Vortex* each month, knowing that we, as listeners, can be taken anywhere and anywhen by a clever bunch of

writers, script editors, directors, producers, musicians and sound designers, along with a very talented group of actors.

January revealed the launch of the new Big Finish **Originals** range that will come over the next year or so, with the first of them out next month in the form of *ATA Girl*. I had absolutely no idea of the existence of these amazing women and their contribution to Britain's war effort – until I learned about this series.

And talking to Louise Jameson, who originated the series, it's very easy to become as passionate about it as she is. The enthusiasm of producer Helen Goldwyn came across loud and clear when we spoke too. I really hope it hits the heights it deserves to. **VORTEX**

SNEAKPREVIEW

DARK SHADOWS: MAGGIE & QUENTIN

THIS JUNE sees the release of a new **Dark Shadows** collection, *Maggie & Quentin: The Lovers' Refrain*. Co-producer Joe Lidster teases us about what's to come with the witch and the immortal.

He says: "It's all Kathryn Leigh Scott's fault! She wanted to do a series of stories with David Selby – and how could we say no? Maggie Evans and Quentin Collins are two of the biggest characters in **Dark Shadows** and the idea of uniting them in a series of adventures was too

good an opportunity to miss. The only slight problem we had was that the characters actually had very little interaction in the television series.

"So, we decided to do a box set from when they were much older, detailing the days leading up to their marriage. Script editor and writer Alan Flanagan worked with the other writers to really produce something very different. It's four stories featuring two characters in the later days of their lives exploring what it means to fall in love again – when you've already



lost the love of your life. It's very different to anything we've done before. The stories are linked by the elements and it all feels very beautiful and poetic without losing the humour and horror that's so intrinsic to **Dark Shadows**. So, thank you Kathryn. Your suggestion has led us to creating something that I think is genuinely beautiful." **VORTEX**



BLASTS FROM *the past*

Kenny Smith goes behind the scenes of the fourth volume of stories from the Third Doctor's era...

THE THIRD Doctor's fourth set of adventures from Big Finish brings him into contact with a pair of old enemies.

It's a return for the Meddling Monk – in his Rufus Hound incarnation – and the Cybermen, to menace the Doctor with two new schemes.

Big Finish fans have been calling for the Third Doctor to meet the Cybermen, as he never did on TV (but don't forget he has already defeated them in **Companion Chronicle** *The Blue Tooth*), but now we have the first full-cast meeting between the Time Lord and his old foes.

This set's two stories are *The Rise of the New Humans* by Guy Adams and *The Tyrants of Logic* by Marc Platt, featuring Tim Treloar as the Doctor, while Katy Manning is at his side as the ever-dependable Jo Grant.

Tim admits he's feeling more settled in the role, as he continues to capture the spirit of the late Jon Pertwee.

He said: "People have been very kind to me about my performance. They can tell that I'm not trying to imitate Jon Pertwee, but capture the essence of his character, and Nicholas Briggs and Katy have been very kind in studio.

"They've helped me to try and capture the Doctor's relationship with Jo Grant, the love between them and the humour, which is all a part of the characterisation.

"There's a real bond growing between Katy and myself, and we're starting to feel like a bit of a doubleact now. I'm always delighted to go in to record these."

ON TV, the Third Doctor and Jo regularly crossed swords with another renegade Time Lord, in the form of the Master, but it's another cheeky chap from Gallifrey who is causing mischief this time around in *Rise of*

the New Humans. The adventure begins when the Doctor and Jo wonder why UNIT has been summoned after a man dies by falling from the top floor of a multi-storey car park. However, when they see the protuberances on the man's back, they realise as he fell he was trying to grow wings...

Writer Guy Adams explains, with a wink, that the Monk appears because: "It was a legal issue," he jokes. "We had no choice. In hindsight, David Richardson and I suspect the Monk went back in time and set up a contract with the BBC insisting that he had to appear in a Third Doctor story from Big

there to cause mischief with a bit of charm and wit.

What does Guy think are the main characteristics of this incarnation? He says: "Energy, wit and a moustache that could bring smaller celestial bodies within its gravitational pull. The Monk has always been the villain



Above (l - r): Tim Treloar, Katy Manning and Rufus Hound

The Doctor and Jo are led to a remote private hospital as they investigate the deceased man's history, and discover the staff aren't as helpful as they could be – and the Chief Administrator is unavailable to meet with them.

After learning of the presence of alien and futuristic technology when he breaks into some restricted wards, the Doctor fears another member of his own race is involved. But probably not the one he was expecting...

Finish ('Instead of that overused show-off who stinks of cigars and Axon waste vents.') Certainly there had been no previous indication that it was legally necessary and no other explanation for the document, written on a receipt for beard trimming scissors and moustache wax."

The Monk, in his Peter Butterworth TV incarnation, as well as Graeme Garden and Rufus Hound forms with Big Finish – is always

**“ I SUSPECT
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WENT BACK
IN TIME AND
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WITH THE BBC
INSISTING
THAT HE HAD
TO APPEAR... ”**

GUY ADAMS

that sets out to do something interesting rather than evil. He always claims that what he's up to is for the greater good (but, especially as he has overheads). I find that fascinating to play with. Of course, these days we're only too used to people who break the world while claiming altruism, often we vote for them."

Without wanting to give too much about the story away, Guy teases: "Never mess with evolution, it bites back. The Doctor and Jo

derelict Spacehub. But there's a mystery, as no-one knows who it's for, or what it contains.

Strange creatures lurk around the outskirts, and a rag-tag population of misfits inhabit what is left of the town: a saloon bar owner, a literal one-man band and a hunter of very unusual prey.

However, the Cybermen want the contents of the crate – and will stop at nothing to get hold of it.

Marc, of course is no stranger to the Cybermen, with both of



Above (l - r): Katy Manning and Tim Treloar



DOCTOR WHO THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES

OUT THIS MONTH

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EXTRAS Interviews

Directed by: NICHOLAS BRIGGS

Starring: TIM TRELOAR, KATY MANNING, RUFUS HOUND

THE RISE OF THE NEW HUMANS BY GUY ADAMS

THE TYRANTS OF LOGIC BY MARC PLATT

investigate a health clinic whose patients have been turning up dead with some mysterious physical characteristics. Can someone who jumped from a multi-story carpark really have tried to grow wings on their inevitable journey between thin air and paving slabs?"

And having written for the Doctor on Earth and offworld, Guy adds: "I love dabbling in all vintages of Earth history, even those the Doctor would consider a table wine."

FROM A threat to the Earth, the Doctor and Jo head into time and space for the second adventure in the set, Marc Platt's *The Tyrants of Logic*.

The Doctor and Jo land on Port Anvil – a bleak, abandoned mining colony on the remote planet Burnt Salt, where a huge armoured crate has recently arrived in the almost



Above (l - r): Tim Treloar and Katy Manning



his previous stories to feature them – *Spare Parts* and *The Silver Turk*, are two fan favourites

Marc says: “My two previous Cyber stories are set in the past (both ours and theirs). This story is set in the future, although we already know a fair bit about the Cybermen’s future – the Cyber Wars, the withdrawal to their tombs on Telos.

“In this story, they are, as ever, in trouble. After the Cyber Wars, their numbers are seriously depleted, but the Cybermen are still finding new ways to evolve and become stronger, just as they have always done. Their latest development, known as the Leveller, has gone missing. They want it back, but there are other parties who have their own plans for the weapon and will go to any lengths to turn it to their own ends.”

HOW DID the story begin?

Marc recalls: “David Richardson asked for a Third Doctor and Jo story – very straightforward and authentic to that era, featuring Cybermen and set on an alien planet.

“You would think that something as impassive and emotionless as a Cyberman would have limited possibilities, but it’s their cold determination to survive that is fascinating. They always seem to be on their last legs, but it’s their response to the eternal threat of extinction that drives them.

“I SUPPOSE
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POTS TOO...”

TIM TRELOAR ON CYBERMEN

They have a scary ability to adapt any available resources to their own needs. They never give up. They always come back. But then humans are much the same.

“Humans and Cybermen are basically two sides of the same coin. They are pitted in a perpetual war-ridden balancing act, forever tussling to see who is better equipped to survive. I love their cold logicity in comparison to the fanatical mass hysteria of the Daleks.”

Although the Cybermen featured in *Companion Chronicle The Blue Tooth*, with Liz Shaw, this is Jo’s first meeting with them, and the first full-cast tale set in the Pertwee era.

Marc continues: “People have waited a long time for this and it’s obvious that the protagonists are not going to get along, are they?”

“What is great fun is that the Third Doctor is far more of an Action Man than his predecessors – and arguably his successors too. He has a no nonsense manner that counters that slight sneakiness that other Doctors nurture.

“The remarkable thing about Tim Treloar’s recreation of Jon Pertwee’s Doctor is how utterly faithful it is to the original. Tim has a couple of TV episodes recorded which he regularly consults in his recording booth before speaking his lines in the new story. And with Katy Manning there as well, full of suggestions as to how Jo Grant is likely to respond, it’s clear that the story is in very safe hands.”

Tim adds: “I remember the Cybermen from when I was young. They were my favourite monsters when I was growing up. They terrified the heck out of me! I don’t remember them talking, just moving about, but what really scared me about them were their faces – those horrible, blank faces.

“I suppose they kind of remind me of C3PO, except they are silver. And they remind me of tea pots too, with those handles on their heads.”

Nicholas Briggs is back as the Cybermen, and describes the voices he’s done this time as: “Sort of *The Invasion*, but better! And something new too for the Cyber Leveller!” **VORTEX**



ΩMEGA T H R E E

Kenny Smith prepares for some chills with the third series of the supernatural drama by taking some Omega Three...

SOMETHING THAT Big Finish has always done well is taking a television series, identifying its core strengths, developing them, and then adding something new into the mix.

It's worked many times, and **The Omega Factor** is no exception to this rule.

For the uninitiated, the series was created by thriller writer Jack

Gerson starring Louise Jameson as Dr Anne Reynolds, and was broadcast in 10 parts in 1979 – and it very famously annoyed self-appointed TV watchdog Mary Whitehouse! It was Britain's answer to **The X-Files**, with Department 7 investigating the strange and the supernatural for British Intelligence.

Revived for audio, Louise stars once more as Anne, and she is joined by John Dorney as Adam Dean. Series Three opens with *Under Glass* by Roy Gill – who in real life lives in Edinburgh, where Department 7 is based.

Adam's new relationship with a photography student tests him

in unexpected ways, while Anne's dealings with an art gallery lead her to a macabre exhibit.

Roy admits: "For this particular one, I wanted to take advantage of the Edinburgh setting. I wanted to do something that was specifically Scottish and bring that into the story. I didn't want to do anything too clichéd or obvious, though. I'd been to a couple of exhibitions of the work of two pioneering Victorian Scots photographers – Hill and Adamson. They had a studio on top of Calton Hill called Rock House, and part of this **Omega Factor** story takes us back there..."

“That’s the great thing about **The Omega Factor**, it’s horror and mystery in such a real environment. And now we’re telling new spooky stories in this spooky old city...

“I was also influenced by a short story by Robert Louis Stevenson, called *The Bottle Imp*. It’s a fascinating tale, and one

young people to work on new apps, but their screen-time is having disturbing side-effects.

Although this is her first script for Big Finish, Natasha is part of a writers’ group in Glasgow, and says: “It was really exciting when script editor Matt Fitton asked me to be involved. My

is that people who enjoyed the original series have liked what’s continued at Big Finish. I’m eternally grateful to Big Finish for these three series we’ve done so far.”

Louise adds: “It’s terrific to have Natasha on the writing team – that’s another great trait of Big Finish, to encourage people and develop their abilities.

“Natasha has been kind enough to give us the licence to do **The Omega Factor**, and her dad would be so proud. She has written a cracking script – and when we



Above (l - r): John Dorney and Louise Jameson

“Some of the characters in the play are based on people I’ve seen when passing by landmarks in the west end of Glasgow.”

NATASHA GERSON

which Stevenson himself retold from several older sources. But you’ll have to listen to this to find out how it’s been brought into the 21st century!”

THERE’S A familiar name in the writer of episode two, as Natasha Gerson writes *Let Us Play*. Having featured in the original series as Morag and returned to play her again on audio, Natasha follows in her dad’s footsteps by also writing for the series.

Anne is called by an old acquaintance at Glasgow University, concerned about student welfare. An online developer is employing

big regret is that my dad isn’t here so I can’t tell him about it, but then again we’re talking about **The Omega Factor**, so the chances are he already knows!

“I decided I wanted to do something a little different with mine. Since I grew up and live in Glasgow, I wanted to bring it through here, rather than being in Edinburgh. Some of the characters in the play are based on people I’ve seen when passing by landmarks in the west end of Glasgow.

“It was a really fascinating process getting into script writing, and working with Matt was great. He was very patient with me.

“What I’ve found really gratifying

was in studio, it was a joy to see the look on her face. Glorious.”

Natasha isn’t the only star from the original series to write for this box set, as Louise scripts another of the four tales, *Phantom Pregnancy*.

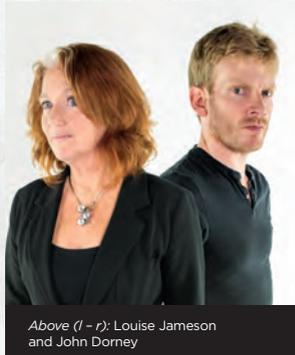
Doyle presents Anne with a psychic prodigy and takes a special interest in her progress. But Adhara is a vulnerable young woman, far from home, and Adam has concerns over Department 7’s duty of care.

As Adhara’s condition becomes apparent, Adam’s health declines – and only Morag knows the true connection.

Louise grins: “What’s so great about this series is how the writers have developed Anne’s scientific side, but she’s still very human. She can be hard and calculating, but at the same time, she’s not unpleasant. She’s still got her humanity, she simply needs reminding occasionally.

“Writing this one was inspired by something I am very passionate about. I was touring in Llandudno and went for a walk. I passed a couple, a man and a woman, who were dark skinned and very badly dressed for the time of year. They were holding hands, and in his other hand the man was clutching a loaf of bread. That was all they had.

“When I walked back in the other direction, they looked scared of me, maybe they thought I was going to say something to them,



Above (l - r): Louise Jameson and John Dorney

accusing them of stealing the bread. All around this area, there are caves in the cliff face, so I've brought all of that together to give me a starting point – what could be happening in the caves?

“I worry deeply about these poor displaced people, with no protection, no union, no identity...”

SERIES THREE concludes with *Drawn to the Dark* by Phil Mulryne.

Something is buried under Edinburgh's streets. A dangerous legacy, centuries old. Anne tries to protect the innocents, while Morag and Adam sense a darkness, long-imprisoned, on the verge of release.

Phil tells Vortex: “It was actually a pretty open brief – as long as the story was scary! The episodes in this series are relatively standalone. But my one is the last,

THE OMEGA FACTOR



SERIES THREE

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Directed by: **KEN BENTLEY**

Starring: **LOUISE JAMESON, JOHN DORNEY**

UNDER GLASS

BY **ROY GILL**

LET US PLAY

BY **NATASHA GERSON**

PHANTOM PREGNANCY

BY **LOUISE JAMESON**

DRAWN TO THE DARK

BY **PHIL MULRYNE**

so there were a few threads that had to be brought to a climax. There's a conclusion to a big story arc with James Doyle – the government bod who oversees Department 7. And there's a particularly evil character from a previous series who reappears.

“Other than that, the story was just something I wanted to tell, inspired by some bits of real history in Edinburgh and the idea of ‘dark tourism’ (visiting sites associated with very dark histories). Edinburgh is known, after all, as the most haunted city in the UK. Maybe that's exactly why Department 7 have their headquarters there...”

“As the story opens, Anne is as bound up in her work at Department 7 as ever, while Adam is really starting to question his position there. But those tensions are put on hold when Anne gets a call from an academic called Grace Roberts. She's worried about the mysterious blackouts she's been suffering, as well as by arcane looking artefacts inexplicably appearing in her house. As Anne and Adam investigate, everything leads to an old evil that's lain

“It was actually a pretty open brief – as long as the story was scary!”

PHIL MULRYNE

hidden in Edinburgh for a long time but is now working its way free. And Omega is just as invested as Department 7 in uncovering the truth.”

Phil adds: “I love that **The Omega Factor** drives for horror that will scare and unsettle, tapping into a great British tradition of spooky stories. I think audio can do that brilliantly, getting right under people's skin. In this particular episode, I enjoyed playing with visions, dreams, flashbacks – having the audio drifting in and out of different realities.

“I also love that Big Finish made the decision to fully reboot the 1970s series, setting it in the present – so the terror is in recognisable settings surrounded by modern day trappings and technology.”

Louise concludes: “The very last episode of this series looks to have tied things up with the current journeys – but I do hope we can do more.” **VORTEX**

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KENNY SMITH REVEALS THE FIRST OF THE BIG FINISH ORIGINALS WILL BE HIGH FLYING, ADORED, BUT FOR THE LADIES IN THE STORIES, IT WON'T ALWAYS BE...

PLANE SAILING

IN JANUARY, Big Finish Productions revealed its exciting plans for 2018, with the announcement of a number of original dramatic series.

The **Big Finish Originals** range features a number of brand new series, which get underway with **ATA Girl**, a drama inspired by the real women of the Air Transport Auxiliary during World War Two. These brave female pilots, alongside the men, transported a vast range of aircraft from the factories to the squadrons,

often flying in perilous weather conditions and without radios or instrument instruction.

One in ten ATA pilots died. Told as a series of reminiscences from (fictitious) former pilot Amelia Curtis, the stories aim to honour these unsung heroes of WWII. **ATA Girl** was conceived by Louise Jameson, and uniquely, the series has not only been devised by a woman, but all four plays have been written by women, directed by a woman (Louise), and produced by a woman (Helen

Goldwyn). Big Finish senior producer David Richardson says: "Louise Jameson mentioned **ATA Girl** to me ages ago – and it was a couple of years ago when we started to have concrete discussions about making it as part of our **Big Finish Originals** range. It's such a lovely piece of work – I'm a fan of wartime dramas like **Tenko** and **Secret Army** anyway, and this fits right alongside them. It's been a privilege to stand from a distance and watch it blossom with such talented and creative



Above (l - r): Helen Goldwyn and Louise Jameson



Above: John Dorney



Above: Lydia Piechowiak

people involved. Lou and Helen and the team have done a brilliant job.”

Louise says: “I’m so excited by this – I’ve been living with it for 10 years. I had originally proposed it as a television series, but you then hit questions of finance, like, ‘Do you know how much it costs to get a Spitfire off the ground?’, and so on.

“I was telling David Richardson about it, so he invited me to pitch it as an idea, and the very next day Big Finish came back to me and said, ‘Yes, please.’

“The series is about the Air Transport Auxiliary, who were the pilots who delivered planes to the front lines. There were

eight women involved initially, under the command of Pauline Gower. They had no radar, no ammunition, nothing – and often they had never flown that kind of aircraft before. If you want a modern analogy, it

“THEY HAD NO RADAR, NO AMMUNITION, NOTHING – AND OFTEN THEY HAD NEVER FLOWN THAT KIND OF AIRCRAFT BEFORE.”

LOUISE JAMESON

would be like learning to drive in a Fiat 500, and then being given the keys to a Ferrari!

“They would be handed a small notebook, called *The Bible*, and in it would be one page of instructions for each type of aircraft.

“Sadly, one in 10 of the female ATAs died. They were all between the ages of 17 and 32 – all young women. Some were mothers, some were debutantes and others were land girls. It really crossed the classes, and you had Americans and Canadian volunteers coming over as well. There were so many wonderful characters, and a fantastic cross-section of women from the day.”

Producer Helen agrees: “It’s come at a very auspicious time, with the issue of female equality being such a hot topic at present.

“And it’s incredible what all this female energy has produced. For me, it’s been a great success story and the feeling around it is so different from what I’ve experienced before. It’s a great



Above: Helen Goldwyn

example of how forward-thinking and inventive Big Finish is. We know we can write things such as fantasy and science fiction, but this is a new market, and it's a bit of a gamble in many ways.

"But we're confident we can create an audience – Big Finish has such a great, positive attitude and lots of ambition.

"This whole new strand of original drama was, I suppose, inevitable, with all of the skills and creatives within Big Finish who are so used to writing and producing great drama. It makes sense to try and extend that, to reach out to everyone else in the population.

"When I talk to people about Big Finish, they ask if it's audiobooks, and I say, 'Yes, kind of, but it's so much more than that. It's like movies without the pictures.'"

EXPLAINING THE format of *ATA Girl*, Louise reveals: "As a team, we decided we would set each story in the past, but bracket it with some present day scenes. We have an older woman in her 90s (an ex *ATA* pilot), her daughter, who I play, and my daughter. So we have three generations of the one family, slipping back through the years. Their story remains linear.

"Each memory is a self-contained drama but we can jump around all over the place. Even if someone is killed off, and we really like the character, we can go back and tell a story before that happened."

Helen adds: "When it came to casting, we were talking about all of the talented actors we know who normally don't get a look in.



Above: Alicia Ambrose

We had a selection of people who we had worked with, and from them we knew we needed some distinctive voices, especially people who had a sensibility for the era.

"It was important these actors were as passionate about it as we were, who were interested in the characters and the settings, who would invest them with their enthusiasm, and that's exactly what we got."

The series begins with *Up in the Air* by Gemma Page, as young widow Daphne Coyne arrives at the Air Transport Auxiliary, having signed up to train as a new pilot. The second story,

ATA GIRL

Big Finish Originals



OUT THIS MONTH
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EXTRAS INTERVIEWS

DIRECTED BY: *Louise* JAMESON

STARRING:

Alicia AMBROSE-BAYLY

Anna ANDRESEN

Math BARBER

Nathalie BUSCOMBE

Kate COPELAND

Helen GOLDWYN

Louise JAMESON

Claire WYATT

UP IN THE AIR BY *Gemma* PAGE

DANCING WITH A SPITFIRE

BY *Victoria* SAXTON

FLYING BLIND BY *Helen* GOLDWYN

GROUNDED BY *Jane* SLAVIN

Dancing with a Spitfire by Victoria Saxton, features glamorous 'It Girl' Second Officer Mina Lauderdale enjoying her work with the ATA and receiving press attention, partying and endless flirting.

For the third story, Helen has written *Flying Blind*, with Judith Heathcote beginning to question the sacrifices she's making for the war effort.

Louise says: "Helen has been a dream producer to work with and she's also one of our writers. Her first draft was so good, it was virtually what we went into studio with. She has been so dedicated to it."

Helen continues: "This has been such a huge project for me, having taken it on. David Richardson said that: 'As producer, you have a responsibility to it, but it won't take up months of your time.'

"However, because it is historical and with the nature of it, I was determined that it was going to be historically accurate – and that meant weeks and weeks of research for all of the writers.

"Even if I hadn't been writing one of the episodes, I'd still have felt that I'd have to come to the project as knowledgeable as the writers so



Above: Jane Slavin

we could honour the stories of these brave women. I want there to be no, or as few mistakes as possible. I think we've all done our best."

This series concludes with *Grounded* by Jane Slavin, as the end of the war is closer than the pilots realise, but there are losses still to come...

Jane admits she threw herself into the research: "It's the only period

of history that has ever consumed me, but there is always more and more to learn. For this project, rather than researching the pilots, I listened to hours and hours of audio archives from WWII, covering the blitz, rations, everyday life, you name it. The Imperial War Museum is just the best archive ever.

"I also listened to audio books (factual) and I bought a ton of the diaries written during the war for the 'mass observation'

“ I LISTENED
TO HOURS
AND HOURS
OF AUDIO
ARCHIVES
FROM WWII ”

JANE SLAVIN



Above: Lucy Pickles

project, really to get a feel for life during that time. I found old perfumes and sniffed them and cooked food from rations. I really loved it. The whole experience.

"Throughout the research, when I got an idea for a scene or a moment or a character, I would scribble it down on an index card and then at the end of a month I put the cards together and tried to



Above (l - r): Helen Goldwyn and Louise Jameson

knit a life out of it. My knowledge of the ATA was limited but my knowledge of loss and love and longing and despair is vast, and that's what I drew on. My episode is the only episode that sees all the pilots grounded. Every single person walks into the episode entirely entrenched in their own war. They are all enormously different. It was thrilling to live with those characters for the time it took to write the script. Also it was thrilling to actually bring one of them to life, and hear it for the first time out of my actual head and in studio.

"It was an extraordinary time and I'd do it again like a shot."

Louise says: "Our problem with this series isn't what to include, but what we had to leave out. We didn't want to cram everything into one hour. We had so many ideas, and hopefully people will like it and there will be more stories to follow.

"I'm confident it will appeal to everyone, with something for people of both sexes. At the risk

“I REALLY BELIEVE IN THIS AS A SERIES – AND THAT’S NOT ME JUST DOING THE PR SPEAK...”

LOUISE JAMESON

of sounding sexist – which I don't mean to! – there's the excitement of the planes, all the backdrop of World War Two drama, as well as the romantic side of things, and how these women bond in adversity. In many respects this has reminded me of doing **Tenko**.

"It's like a family. At the end of the four days of recording we went into the green room, and all of the actors burst out in applause, which I've never known

before. We were so thrilled.

"I really believe in this as a series – and that's not me just doing the PR speak – because we're talking about situations real people lived through, and we're being respectful to that.

"People weren't nice to each other all the time – sometimes they would steal from others, or they would call each other names behind their backs, or have affairs with married men. It's very, very real."



Above: Claire Wyatt

Helen concludes: "It was such a remarkable experience, I've never had a week like it before because everyone was just so committed. People were even getting tearful about it, and talking about the potential.

"Hopefully it will take off, as it would be interesting to see where we can take it. I'm hugely proud of it. I've just listened to episode one, and the work sound designer Iain Meadows has done is brilliant." **VORTEX**

LISTEN AGAIN

TORCHWOOD: 5 - RELEASED JANUARY 2016

TORCHWOOD: UNCANNY VALLEY



IF EVER there was a **Torchwood** story that showed how different the spin-off series is from **Doctor Who**, then *Uncanny Valley* has to be the one. When **Torchwood** was launched it was heralded as being adult and sexy, and this story most definitely is.

Writer David Llewellyn says: "Producer James Goss and (then script editor) Steve Tribe had already hit on the idea of sentient, lifelike 'adult dolls', and wanted to come back to Jack's investigation into the Committee. I don't remember if it was much more developed than that, or if they just let me run with it, but the initial spark came from them."

Uncanny Valley really pushes **Torchwood** into interesting adult territory. David admits: "I was a little hesitant at first. We

were still finding our feet with the series, working out what we could and couldn't do with it. The first draft was probably a bit coy.

“I WAS A LITTLE HESITANT AT FIRST. WE WERE STILL FINDING OUR FEET WITH THE SERIES.”

DAVID LLEWELLYN

James and Steve really had to egg me on to make it more 'adult', but not gratuitously so. This had to be a drama about sexuality and loneliness and jealousy. I seem to remember one of James's notes being, 'This should be the worst threesome ever. We should be cringing throughout.'"

Guest starring alongside John Barrowman was another Scottish actor, Steven Cree, who played Ian Murray in the international hit series **Outlander**.

Steven says: "I'd worked with the director Neil Gardner before having first done a radio play with him about 10 years ago, and we've worked together a few times since. He's really become a friend in that time. He asked me if I'd be interested in coming in to do a **Torchwood** script, and he put my name forward to Big Finish. They

fired the script over to me and I was completely blown away by it.

"When I was describing the story to a couple of people I know, I told them I was playing a character, the character's robot double, and that he gets to sleep with himself and John Barrowman!

"I'd never seen **Torchwood** when it was on television, but I was very aware of it. I knew it was a bit of a bonkers world, and this story, even by **Torchwood** standards, is kind of off the wall."

Neil adds: "Steven was in Palm Springs recording his side of it and it was about 9am for him, and it was around 6pm for me.

"We had a great laugh, because we have a similar sense of humour, and we were both trying to outshock each other!

"Considering it was first thing in the morning for him, he was really bright and ready to go. It was good fun."

David adds: "I think Steven Cree did a fantastic job of playing two characters, often in the same scene. It's difficult getting that across in an audio play, so the credibility of the whole thing rested on his performance. And the out-takes of him and John Barrowman are... well... let's just say they will never be made public!"

Note: *Uncanny Valley* contains adult material and is not suitable for younger listeners. **VORTEX**

Uncanny Valley is available now on CD and download from www.bigfinish.com



CAT'S TALES

KENNY SMITH TRAVELS FORWARD BILLIONS OF YEARS AND FINDS BIG FINISH ARE TELLING CAT'S TALES...

DOCTOR WHO has always been fortunate in that it has had many writers who could quickly build alien worlds, in the space of a few words.

As far back as 1963 in **Doctor Who's** second story, *The Daleks*, Terry Nation quickly invented Skaro and its warring populace, creating a world that inspired the imagination.

Skip forward to the second story of the revived series, and Russell T Davies achieved the same in *The End of the World*, creating a backdrop with all the strange creatures we were to meet on New Earth.

Tales From New Earth extrapolates on that story, as well as the other TV episodes *New Earth* and *Gridlock*. Senator (previously Novice) Hame is

working to restore her home. The cities, forests and skies teem with strange and wonderful species. Some trace their ancestry back to Old Earth, others came later, but all have their own agendas, and their rivalries.

Producer David Richardson says: "I'm a sucker for **Doctor Who** stories that come with their own fleshed-out world. I loved the Peladon TV episodes for that reason – you felt that it was a planet with this incredible history and so many stories to be told. And that's what attracted me to New Earth. Over three episodes, Russell T Davies created characters and a place with so much colour and backstory, and I just loved the idea of going back there and exploring further.

"As always, I started by sending Russell an email just asking if he'd be happy for us to do this. And, as always, he replied with boundless enthusiasm and encouragement, and gave us some really helpful steers too.

"I can't speak highly enough of Russell – not just in admiration of his talent, but how he encourages and inspires people. Some writers in his position might be too busy to care, but he seems somehow to make time to care about everyone."

Having been given Russell's blessing, Matt Fitton was appointed as the script editor, and he created the set-up for the new Big Finish series.

David continues: "Matt worked up the series pitch and developed the storylines with the writers, while I approached Anna Hope to reprise the role of Hame, and Yasmin Bannerman to play Vale (the sister of Jabe)."



Above (l-r): Kieran Hodgson and Anna Hope



THE SERIES begins with *Escape From New New York*, written by Roy Gill.

Here, we are introduced to our new lead, Devon Pryce, who has lived all his life in the high rises of New New York. However, the city faces a new danger.

Roy says: “When I was asked to be involved, I went back to watch the ‘far future trilogy’ episodes on television – *The End of the World*, *New Earth* and *Gridlock* – and read what Russell T Davies had said about them in his book, *The Writers’ Tale*, and listened to the various commentary tracks. They offer such a bright and vivid world, there’s lots of fun to be had in exploring it further.

“When I was listening to Russell on the commentary for

Gridlock, the thing that grabbed me was a comment he made about the storytelling, which is on the vertical rather than the horizontal – as is normal for *Doctor Who*, where people usually run up and down corridors!

“When you think about it, in *Gridlock*, the Doctor breaks the system everyone else is trapped in by going up and down. It’s the same in *New Earth*.

“When I had that, it gave me a starting point for the story. The new character we’ve introduced, Devon Pryce, is an orphan. He’s a child of some New Humans, but he has grown up

he had to be called Thorn!

Thorn is quite happy with the world he’s got, but Devon wants something bigger and better.

“Because Devon’s parents were New Humans, he’s not that fond of the cat people. When he meets Hame, it’s a bit like the scene in *Partners in Crime*, where the Doctor and Donna are investigating but keep missing each other. So, when they finally run into each other and she rescues him, Devon’s appalled because she’s a cat!”

The adventures continue in *Death in the New Forest* by Roland Moore and *The Skies of New Earth* by Paul Morris, before

“THEY OFFER SUCH A BRIGHT AND VIVID WORLD, THERE’S LOTS OF FUN TO BE HAD IN EXPLORING IT FURTHER.” ROY GILL

under the wings of the Elevator Lodge – an organisation that tend the lifts of the sprawling metropolis. He’s used to being at the bottom of the pile, living in the Under City, a bit pushed around, dreaming of a way out.

“Meanwhile, Senator Hame inhabits the lofty heights of the Senate and has to deal with the politics there. Something mysterious is going to make their two worlds collide – and New New York will never be the same again!”

While we are already somewhat familiar with Hame, Roy was happy to reveal more about Devon, who will guide listeners around New Earth.

He reveals: “Devon Pryce is our new guy, whose voice leads us all the way through these stories. He’s really bright and enthusiastic, but also a little naive.

“I decided to give Devon a boyfriend. Devon’s boyfriend is a spiky alien briar, so, of course,

concluding with *The Cats of New Cairo* by Matt Fitton.

Without giving too much away about the dangers the residents of New Earth face, Roy teases: “Matt had suggested in his series outline that our characters would find themselves up against a mysterious force called the Lux – I had a lot of fun developing that, looking into different connotations of the word, and thinking how they might fit into New New York. New Earth seems to be a place where anything is possible...” **VORTEX**

OUT THIS MONTH

Starring
KIERAN HODGSON
ADJOA ANDOH
YASMIN BANNERMAN
ANNA HOPE

Directed by
HELEN GOLDWYN

CD: £23.00
Download: £20.00
EXTRAS Interviews



New Holmes

GUIDE

It's back to 221B Baker Street this month, as Kenny Smith finds out more about the newest case for the Great Detective...

SHERLOCK HOLMES is back in the foggy streets of London this month, for an all-new adventure with Big Finish's critically-acclaimed team. Nicholas Briggs reprises his role as the Great Detective with Richard Earl at his side as Dr John Watson, in plays written by Jonathan Barnes and directed by Ken Bentley. We're in safe hands.

Nick tells *Vortex*: "*The Master of Blackstone Grange* is very much

in the classic Holmes mould. There's a link with *The Adventure of the Fleet Street Transparency* which was released on download in December. Jonathan is always working in all sorts of connecting themes between stories – he's kind of got a masterplan going on!"

Director Ken continues: "What I've always liked about Jonathan's work is his ability to weave so much into a story. His work is always faithful to its source, but he also manages to invent and to introduce fascinating new characters and layers of storytelling, some that are obvious and others that are less so.

"Those familiar with the episode released over Christmas will already recognise one such connection, but there are threads here that I

can already see connecting with forthcoming *Big Finish* releases. It's fun, but it's also intricate world-building that takes great skill."

With the Victorian age getting further and further away with each passing year, it indirectly causes Ken some problems.

He explains: "I love language and exploring the changes to language over time. For that reason I particularly enjoy working on period plays. Jonathan has a very solid grasp of the language required. The dialogue can be complex compared to how we speak now, and Watson's narration is a mountain to climb. But it's beautifully written and when spoken well it's a delight to hear. Sadly the ability to speak with period accuracy is a dying art, and

so it's a privilege to play a small part in keeping it alive. That we're recording examples now that will survive indefinitely, I find a very satisfying part of the job.

"The voice is so important and so specific in the world of Holmes. In Victorian times demarcations with regards to class and education

like them to. Things set within the current era give you lots of freedom what with technology, transport and industries all giving you a larger palette of sounds to draw from, but that's not so much the case with Sherlock Holmes.

"Instead I try and draw as much detail as I can, the sounds

from it. I always know I've done a good job when hopefully no-one comments on the sound design!"

Joe adds: "This has been one of my proudest pieces to work on. I've read all of the original shorts and have various Sherlock-themed artworks both hanging in my house and tattooed upon me so I can comfortably declare that I am a large fan of Sherlock Holmes!

"I listen to Big Finish dramas whenever I'm driving and when I put on *The Judgement of Sherlock Holmes*, I was taking longer routes

“Distinction between good and bad needs to be clear or, if necessary, clearly ambiguous.”

KEN BENTLEY



Above (l - r): Nicholas Briggs
 Blake Ritson and Richard Earl



were much more distinctive. Also – particularly on audio – the distinction between good and bad needs to be clear or, if necessary, clearly ambiguous. So it's important to cast actors with the vocal dexterity to play with these distinctions. I'm always careful when casting a **Sherlock Holmes** play to make sure the cast are vocally appropriate and reflect the mix of characters that Jonathan has populated the story with."

Joe Meiners worked on the sound design for this set. "I actually prefer to work in a specific period. It forces you to be quite creative as the limitations of available sounds often don't stretch as much as you'd

of rain on a window or distant movement in a busy household can all serve to ground the dramas location, even if a scene is quite isolated from that action.

"It certainly helps that we all have an idea of what it should sound like. You hear a few horses clip-clopping down a pedestrianised street and it instantly sets a date on it – sound designers long before I was born are responsible for that – but I've got to drop my ego at the door when I'm working on something like this and not let what I can do start to overtake the drama.

"It's easy to make big, enormous flying machines for the **Doctor Who** universe and have it sit parallel to the action, whereas Jonathan Barnes's scripts could quite comfortably fit alongside Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's work. I've got to serve the production and not distract

home just to spend more time lost in the story! That's when I asked Nick if I could be involved the next time around, and he kindly pulled some strings, so not only did I get to do the sound design but I also had the privilege of engineering the original recording sessions too. Nick I've worked with many times but I was trying to 'play it cool' working alongside Richard Earl, who's far too modest about his brilliance as Watson – he's really the medium of the stories and always absolutely smashes it." **VORTEX**

OUT THIS MONTH

Starring
NICHOLAS BRIGGS
RICHARD EARL

Directed by **KEN BENTLEY**

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EXTRAS Interviews

VORTEXMAIL

Email: feedback@bigfinish.com and put 'Vortex Mail' as the subject...



MANY HAPPY RETURNS

I wanted to send you a quick email to say thank you for the brilliant **Blake's 7** *The Way Ahead*. I was and am a fan of **Blake's 7** and this story has reinvigorated my love for it. To have new stories I haven't heard yet is wonderful. I listen to them on the way to work. This story was so fantastic and the end speech genuinely gave me a lump in my throat. Please pass on my thanks to all involved, it is loved.

● ROB WALTON

Nick: Rob, thanks so much. We are very grateful to the whole cast, the directors and the producer. And there's much more to come.

RETURN OF THE COMPANIONS

Can you tell me if Philip Olivier will return once again as Hex in the **Doctor Who** range in 2018? I really enjoyed his return and hope that he will be with Sylvester and Sophie again. Also, will Travis Oliver, Yasmin

Bannerman, John Pickard and Jean Marsh return to the audio adventures, as I am great fan of all of their characters?

● SW BAKER

Nick: Hex will be back this year. There are some plans for Travis and Yasmin, but they're so top secret I can't even remember them myself! No plans for John Pickard and Jean Marsh, sad to say. Lovely people. But there are only so many months in a year, you know.

RIVER'S DEEP

I wanted to send in feedback on **The Diary of River Song** Series Three. I quite enjoyed seeing River get to be a regular companion with the Fifth Doctor for a while and I loved how well they clicked right out of the gate. It was a rush similar to my first time experiencing River and the Tenth Doctor playing off each other on screen. River facing Kovarian was electric! It was completely new series territory and it was wonderful. I've been itching to know more about the details of her life under Kovarian's rule. And then what? What about that gap of time between her 1969 regeneration and then being Mels in 1990s Leadworth? What about her time at Luna University? Or teaching students as a Professor?

● CAMILLE

Nick: All good points, Camille. I will feed all that into the Big Finish ideas machine. We do quite like her meeting Doctors, though.

DYNAMIC DUOS

Upon recently purchasing *The Wrong Doctors* and *The Rani Elite* in a recent Sixth Doctor sale, I find what you have done with Mel, Peri and the Rani amazing, but recently the Sixth Doctor and Mel, the Sixth Doctor and Peri or the Fifth Doctor and Peri haven't had many Main Range trilogies. I was wondering if you had plans to revive any of the duos anytime soon?

● DANIEL ADAMS

Nick: There will be some Sixth Doctor and Peri stories coming up in a special series beyond the Main Range, and I'd certainly like to get Peri back into those monthly adventures. No plans for the Fifth Doctor at the moment.

DOWNLOAD OPTION?

I'm a big fan of the **Gallifrey** range. I've heard everything from series four onwards and I want to listen to the first three series. Unfortunately, I can't get the CDs delivered to where I am. I don't want to go into too much detail about it, but suffice to say that custom laws are a bit strict here. So I was wondering if you guys would consider adding a digital download option to those stories?

● ELLEN

*Nick: As you will have seen on the website, we have now made all of Gallifrey available on download having sorted out the various contractual issues. At last! **VORTEX***

COMINGSOON

MARCH 2018

- **DW • THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES: SERPENT IN THE SILVER MASK**
(236, FIFTH DOCTOR, TEGAN, NYSSA AND ADRIC)
- **DW • SHORT TRIPS: THE SIEGE OF BIG BEN** **DLO**
(8.3, META-CRISIS DOCTOR, JACKIE TYLER)
- **DW • TALES FROM NEW EARTH** (BOX SET)
- **DW • THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES VOLUME FOUR** (BOX SET)
- **TORCHWOOD: THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN JACK** (19)
- **THE OMEGA FACTOR: SERIES THREE** (BOX SET)
- **THE OMEGA FACTOR: SPIDER'S WEB** (NOVEL, AUDIOBOOK AND EBOOK)
- **SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE MASTER OF BLACKSTONE GRANGE / THE ADVENTURE OF THE FLEET STREET TRANSPARENCY** (BOX SET)

APRIL 2018

- **DW • THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES: THE HELLIAX RIFT** (237, FIFTH DOCTOR)
- **DW • THE TENTH DOCTOR CHRONICLES: VOLUME ONE**
- **DW • THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: RAVENOUS 1** (BOX SET)
- **DW • SHORT TRIPS: THE TURN OF THE SCREW** **DLO**
(8.4, EIGHTH DOCTOR, CHARLIE SATO)
- **BLAKE'S 7: CROSSFIRE** (PART THREE)
- **TORCHWOOD: BELIEVE** (BOX SET)
- **TORCHWOOD: THE LAST BEACON** (20)
- **BIG FINISH ORIGINALS: ATA GIRL** **DLO**

MAY 2018

- **DW • THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES: THE LURE OF THE NOMAD**
(238, SIXTH DOCTOR)
- **DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: SERIES 7B**
(78, FOURTH DOCTOR AND LEELA, BOX SET)
- **DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE SHADOW OF LONDON** **DLO**
(7.5, FOURTH DOCTOR AND LEELA)
- **DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE BAD PENNY** **DLO**
(7.6, FOURTH DOCTOR AND LEELA)
- **DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: KILL THE DOCTOR!** **DLO**
(7.7, FOURTH DOCTOR AND LEELA)

■ DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:

THE AGE OF SUTEKH **DLO**
(7.8, FOURTH DOCTOR AND LEELA)

■ DW • SHORT TRIPS:

FLIGHT INTO HULL! **DLO**
(8.5, META-CRISIS DOCTOR, JACKIE TYLER)

■ JAGO & LITEFOOT:

JAGO & LITEFOOT FOREVER (14, BOX SET)

■ UNIT - THE NEW SERIES:

CYBER REALITY (6)

■ STAR COPS: MOTHER EARTH PART 1

 (BOX SET)

■ TORCHWOOD:

WE ALWAYS GET OUT ALIVE (21)

■ BIG FINISH ORIGINALS: CICERO

DLO

JUNE 2018

■ DW • THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES:

IRON BRIGHT (239, SIXTH DOCTOR)

■ DW • THE COMPANION CHRONICLES:

THE SECOND DOCTOR: VOLUME TWO (BOX SET)

■ DW • JENNY - THE DOCTOR'S

DAUGHTER (BOX SET)

■ DW • SHORT TRIPS: ERASURE

DLO

(8.6, FOURTH DOCTOR AND ADRIC)

■ TORCHWOOD: GOODBYE PICCADILLY

 (22)

■ DARK SHADOWS: MAGGIE & QUENTIN - THE LOVERS' REFRAIN

JULY 2018

■ DW • THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES:

HOUR OF THE CYBERMEN
(240, SIXTH DOCTOR)

■ DW • THE FIRST DOCTOR ADVENTURES:

VOLUME TWO (BOX SET)

■ DW • THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:

THE TIME WAR: SERIES TWO (BOX SET)

■ DW • SHORT TRIPS: TRAP FOR FOOLS

DLO

(8.7, FIFTH DOCTOR AND TURLOUGH)

■ TORCHWOOD: INSTANT KARMA

 (23)

■ TORCHWOOD ONE: MACHINES

(BOX SET)

■ CALLAN: VOLUME ONE

 (BOX SET)

■ BIG FINISH ORIGINALS:

JEREMIAH BOURNE IN TIME **DLO**

AUGUST 2018

■ DW • THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES:

RED PLANETS

(241, SEVENTH DOCTOR, ACE AND MEL)

■ DW • THE DIARY OF RIVER

SONG: SERIES 4 (BOX SET)

■ DW • SHORT TRIPS:

THE DARKENED EARTH **DLO**
(8.8, SIXTH DOCTOR AND CONSTANCE)

■ THE AVENGERS: TOO MANY TARGETS

■ TORCHWOOD: DEADBEAT ESCAPE

 (24)

SEPTEMBER 2018

■ DW • THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES:

THE DISPOSSESSED (242, SEVENTH DOCTOR, ACE AND MEL)

■ DW • THE EARLY ADVENTURES:

THE DALEK OCCUPATION OF WINTER (5.1, FIRST DOCTOR)

■ DW • SHORT TRIPS:

A SMALL SEMBLANCE OF HOME **DLO**
(8.9, FIRST DOCTOR AND SUSAN)

■ BIG FINISH ORIGINALS:

SHILLING & SIXPENCE INVESTIGATE **DLO**

OCTOBER 2018

■ DW • THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES:

THE QUANTUM POSSIBILITY ENGINE
(243, SEVENTH DOCTOR, ACE AND MEL)

■ DW • THE EARLY ADVENTURES:

AN IDEAL WORLD (5.2, FIRST DOCTOR)

■ DW • THE EIGHTH DOCTOR

ADVENTURES: RAVENOUS 2 (BOX SET)

■ DW • SHORT TRIPS:

I AM THE MASTER (8.10, THE MASTER)

■ BIG FINISH ORIGINALS:

BLIND TERROR **DLO**

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