

VORTEX



SCARY POPPINS RETURNS!

DOCTOR WHO: THE EIGHTH DOCTOR, LIV AND HELEN ARE BACK ON EARTH, BUT THIS TIME THERE'S NO ESCAPE...

PLUS! DOCTOR WHO
ROBOTS

THE KALDORAN AUTOMATONS RETURN





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COMING SOON

ABBY AND ZARA: WICKED SISTERS

Abby and Zara are sisters who have been doing it for themselves since they first met the Fifth Doctor in the third *Doctor Who: The Key 2 Time* trilogy released in March 2009.

THEY CONTINUED their adventures in four series of their own spin-off range, *Graceless*, as well as making an appearance in the special 2015 release, *The Worlds of Big Finish*.

Created by pan-dimensional beings the Grace to assist – and sometimes hinder – the Doctor in his second quest for the key to time, Abby (Ciara Janson) and Zara (Laura Doddington) are about to meet the Time Lord again in *Doctor Who: Wicked Sisters*.

The Doctor is recruited by Leela for a vital mission on behalf of the Time Lords. Together, they must track down and destroy two god-like beings whose extraordinary powers now threaten all

of space and time. Their names are Abby and Zara...

Three new adventures written by Simon Guerrier, *The Garden of Storms*, *The Moonrakers* and *The People Made of Smoke* have been directed by Lisa Bowerman and produced by Mark Wright.

Simon says: "As it's been a decade since the first series of *Graceless*, we thought it was time to bring things full circle and take the sisters back to where it all began – with the Fifth Doctor."

He adds: "Abby and Zara are very different to the women the Doctor met all those years ago when we did *The Key 2 Time* series. Back then he wasn't required to kill them..." **VORTEX**



EDITORIAL

WE'RE CURRENTLY in very interesting times, aren't we? The COVID-19 pandemic has changed all our lives in recent months, with lockdown becoming a part of our everyday routine.

Personally, as I write this, I'm on furlough from my day job which has meant I've had more spare time on my hands than usual. Ideal for *Vortex*, of course!

A real highlight this month has been interviewing Rufus Hound in his returning role as the Meddling Monk in the second *Missy* box set. He's always made me laugh on television so having the chance to chat with him has been a real highlight.

I've also been able to spend some time in the garden to get it in shape for the summer. I've loaded up my phone with Big Finish adventures and have been listening to the things I would normally play on my daily driving commute to the office. And I know, going by my Twitter feed, that I'm not alone in listening to Big Finish output to get me through this tough time. Thank you Big Finish! **VORTEX**



KALDOR'S UNIVERSAL

ROBOTS

LIFE ON KALDOR IS FAR FROM SIMPLE FOR LIV CHENKA...

I FOR A planet which only appeared (in part) in four television episodes of **Doctor Who** in 1977, Kaldor has made a huge impact. *The Robots of Death* by Chris Boucher is regularly cited as one of the best stories in the show's history, and even though Kaldor never appeared again on TV, such was the depth of the world created on screen that it has continued to resonate through the years.

Big Finish's new series **The Robots** is set on the planet, where the Eighth Doctor's companion Liv Chenka (played by Nicola

Walker) returns to spend a year on her homeworld with her sister Tula (Claire Rushbrook).

The first box set of three stories was released last autumn, and the final scene featured a voice familiar to fans of *The Robots of Death* – actor Pamela Salem playing Lish Toos.

Script editor John Dorney says: "We included that last scene in **The Robots** Volume One as we thought it would be an intriguing little hook for the second series.

"Listeners are very fond of the first series – we have a fantastic cast with two phenomenal leads in Nicola and Claire. We were

very happy with it but you never know if others will like it!"

Roland Moore's *The Robots of War* opens the second box set, and John says: "*The Robots of War* involves looking at the military of Kaldor and how they have Robots and what they do. It's possibly the most traditional of the three stories."

Roland explains: "The brief for this one was fairly open. We knew the relationship between Liv and Tula and the sort of adventures we wanted to tell following series one of **The Robots**. So I pitched *The Robots of War*. It was based on an article



Above (l-r): David Collings and V12



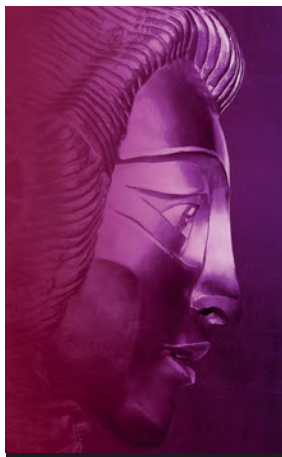
IT WAS BASED ON AN ARTICLE I'D READ IN A SCIENCE MAGAZINE ABOUT HOW THE AMERICAN MILITARY WAS USING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN COMBAT SITUATIONS.

ROLAND MOORE

I'd read in a science magazine about how the American military was using artificial intelligence in combat situations. One of the biggest hurdles was teaching the AI so it knew how to cope with the choices you'd have to make on the battlefield.

"One of these choices was prioritising the life of a higher ranking human officer over lower ranking ones. And that's the bit that fascinated me. I wondered what would happen if the Voc Robots – although unable to fight themselves – were used for strategising during war. And what would happen if they had to prioritise the survival of a senior human officer?"

THE SECOND story, *Toos and Poul* by Andrew Smith, features Pamela Salem as Toos and David Collings as Poul, recorded just a few months before David sadly passed away. John reveals: "*Toos and Poul*,



as the title already implies, is the reintroduction of Pamela Salem and David Collings into the world of Kaldor. Poul has to use his investigator skills once again to discover the details behind a crime. Bringing them back was an idea we had during our original discussions of the range. Both characters were still alive at the end of *The Robots of Death*, so it felt like a no-brainer, really. And we've worked with both of the actors before – regularly with Pamela on **Counter-Measures**, and she is always a delight to have along."

Andrew, who previously wrote *The Sons of Kaldor* for **The Fourth Doctor Adventures**, reveals: “I was absolutely delighted to be asked to be involved as *The Robots of Death* is one of my all-time favourite **Doctor Who** stories. I remember it very well from when it was first broadcast, and they did a repeat where it was edited into two 50-minute episodes. I devoured it – it’s just a great adventure by Chris Boucher, where the story, direction, costume and

is unusual – I just liked it so much. I love what Nick did with the Robots – it’s very interesting. I’ve written for the Robots before for the Tom Baker adventure, *The Sons of Kaldor*, and now *Toos and Poul* so the Robots are finally getting their time in the spotlight.

“We had an initial get together, myself, Matt Fitton, John Dorney and Ken Bentley, for a discussion about the series. Then we went away and came up with some ideas of how we would incorporate

Toos and Poul into the story. Early on I pitched the idea of Poul, having suffered robophobia in the TV series, adopting the life of a hermit and living a very solitary life. We made sure that would fit with the rest of the series.

“Liv and Tula don’t feature in this adventure which is nice in a way as it gave me a bit more freedom and meant I didn’t have to concentrate too much on the continuity of it all. I could just look at developing the story,



Above (l-r): Nicola Walker and Claire Rushbrook

sound design all come together to deliver something that’s almost as perfect as **Doctor Who** gets.

“One of my favourite Big Finish stories ever is *Robophobia* by Nicholas Briggs, which came out in the summer of 2011. I remember listening to it as I drove to Scotland with the family, and then I listened to it again twice that week which



Above (l-r): Ian Conningham, Indra Ové, Andrew Smith and Satnam Bhogal

I’M VERY INTERESTED IN AI AND QUESTIONS AROUND THE ETHICS AND THE POTENTIAL DANGERS OF IT.

SARAH GROCHALA

which is a bit of a whodunnit. It’s been quite a good thing, not to introduce Poul and Toos too early, to keep them back for the second series which is clever, clever stuff.

“Toos and Poul has got a kind of a Western vibe to it, as there’s a town out by the forest next to the plains, far away from society – a part of Kaldor that regards itself as a world apart from the city dwellers. They’re getting by – they’re farmers and ranchers – and a number have rickety old second-hand robots.”

THIS SERIES concludes with *Do No Harm* by Sarah Grochala. John explains: “*Do No Harm* investigates the consequences of a major event at a laboratory and looks



Above: David Collings

into the morality of robots dealing with humans." Writer Sarah says: "John wanted an episode in which a robot is put on trial for murder, and the murder is related to something that has gone wrong at the laboratory. I jumped at that as I've never written a courtroom drama before and I really fancied having a try at one.

Twelve Angry Men is one of my favourite films and I love the idea of having to try and piece together what actually happened from the different versions of events that are presented by the witnesses in the courtroom.

Sarah enjoyed exploring the world of **The Robots**, explaining: "I loved working

with Kaldor and the idea of Robots that might be becoming sentient. I'm very interested in AI and questions around the ethics and potential dangers of it. It was also great to get to write for Nicola Walker who I've always admired as an actress. And I enjoyed playing with both the laboratory and courtroom environments and trying to create believable versions of those worlds."

DIRECTOR KEN Bentley was pleased to be working with Pamela Salem again, having worked with her on **Counter-Measures**. He says: "I've had the pleasure of working with Pamela quite a few times now and she's utterly

**ONE OF MY
FAVOURITE
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ROBOPHOBIA
BY NICHOLAS
BRIGGS...**

ANDREW SMITH



Above (l-r): V12 and Pamela Salem

I'VE HAD THE PLEASURE OF WORKING WITH PAMELA QUITE A FEW TIMES NOW AND SHE'S UTTERLY DELIGHTFUL – ONE OF THE MOST KIND-HEARTED PEOPLE YOU COULD EVER HOPE TO MEET. KEN BENTLEY

delightful – one of the most kind-hearted people you could ever hope to meet. Producer David Richardson had arranged for one of the original Robots to visit the studio during recording and it was very entertaining to reunite it with Pamela. She was so excited.

“One of the uniquely rewarding things about working for Big Finish is bringing actors together again. I’m not entirely sure when Pamela and David Collings last worked with each other, it may well have been on **Doctor Who**. I hadn’t worked with David before but familiar faces and shared experiences always help to make the day more enjoyable for everybody.

“I’m amazed Big Finish have taken so long to revisit Kaldor. Not just because the cast are all actors we love working with, but because this story-world seems to be increasingly relevant. But as exciting and

full of potential as the planet is, I suspect producer David only came up with the idea because it meant we got to work more with Pamela and Nicola!”

Looking to the future, John teases: “There’s an overall plan for where the range is going which should slowly become clearer over the next few sets. It will build into a bigger scale storyline which I think people will get a great kick out of.

“It’s an interesting series to dive in on with a similar feel to working on **Counter-Measures** – which I had an amazing time with. I love collaborating with the writers and working out what the overall shape of the range is to be – taking ideas people have, developing them and forming an overall narrative that we’re happy with. It will play out over time, and it’s great to be working on something with a larger scale, almost like a Netflix

bingeable event. When the full run has come out, listeners will be able to go back and enjoy it all in one go.” **VORTEX**



DOCTOR WHO
THE ROBOTS: VOLUME TWO
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THE AVENGERS: STEED AND MRS PEEL

THE COMIC STRIP ADAPTATIONS
VOLUME ONE

John Steed and Emma Peel are as quintessential a British pairing as, say, fish and chips or scones and jam.

BASED ON adaptations of **The Avengers** comic strips published in the 1960s, **The Comic Strip Adaptations** Volume One has been brought to life on audio by actors Julian Wadham and Olivia Poulet. Massimo Moretti, from rights' owners StudioCanal, says: "When we discussed the options available to work with the Emma Peel character, I was eager to find a way to keep the momentum going. As there are no lost episodes from the Mrs Peel seasons, I needed an anchor to the wealth of materials that were created about and around the series at the time of its original broadcast. I remembered the *Diana* comics stories and I mentioned them to David Richardson."

Producer David continues: "Massimo had long admired the *Diana* comic strips, and thought they would be a good fit for being adapted by Big Finish. He sent over the artwork and I thought it was stunning – such delicate, hand-crafted frames – every one was beautiful. And the stories were terrific too, so I met with Massimo and Martin Lindsay at DC Thomson, and we formulated an agreement on the project."

John Dorney, who adapted many of **The Avengers: The Lost Episodes**, took on the post of script editor on **The Comic Strip Adaptations**.

Volume One, released in April 2016, contains four adventures. The first two, *Return to Castle De'ath* and *The Miser* were written by Simon Barnard and Paul Morris.

Simon says: "The brief was quite specifically to replicate the feel of television series five of **The Avengers**, which means, as aficionados will appreciate, starting each episode with a, 'Mrs Peel, we're needed' gag. Not such an easy task to replicate on audio!"

Paul adds: "Luckily the comics are already true, in their own daft way, to the spirit of the original programme. Here, we are positively encouraged to go to excess with outrageous plotting and indulgent dialogue. They're a joy to write."

The third story in the set, *The Golden Dresses*, was adapted by Paul Magrs, who recalls: "It's actually quite nice to adapt something where the story is already set and your job is to embellish and bring the secondary characters to life a bit more. The bare bones are provided but there was still quite a lot to do – I wrote a few words every day."

Completing the volume is *The Norse Code* by John Dorney. He says: "The idea of Vikings in Norfolk immediately excited me. To start with you read the strip, and you then keep reading it so you get it inside your head. After that, it's a question of looking for things to expand while critically analysing the story." **VORTEX**



THE COMIC STRIP ADAPTATIONS
VOLUME ONE

THE AVENGERS: STEED AND MRS PEEL

THE COMIC STRIP
ADAPTATIONS: VOLUME ONE
RELEASED: APRIL 2016
FORMAT: DOWNLOAD



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Scary POPPINS

She's back and it's about naughtiness!
Get ready for the second MISSY box set...

MISSY – THE Master's larger than life female incarnation played by Michelle Gomez – is returning for a second dose of mayhem in the most delightful way... In her first box set of adventures we saw Missy act as a nanny in Victorian England and encounter the Meddling Monk as she sought to gain herself a functioning TARDIS.

Missy Series Two contains four thrilling new stories: *The Lumiat* by Lisa McMullin, *Brimstone and Terror* by Roy Gill, *Treason and Plot* by Gemma Arrowsmith and *Too Many Masters* by John Dorney. Producer David Richardson explains: "It all

began with a meeting in the Big Finish office where we threw around ideas. John Dorney was there, Matt Fitton, Gemma Arrowsmith and Lisa McMullin. We all have so much love for the character and for the series that the ideas just kept on coming, and we soon had the line up of a very rich second series. There are characters returning from Series One (Lucy, Oliver and the Monk), plus Missy gets to meet Strax. And then we have Time Agents from the future and the enigmatic Lumiat... It's a fantastic set of stories, and we spent so many happy days laughing at these scripts and at the recordings."

Script editor Matt Fitton adds: "In this second series, Missy has the TARDIS she was after but it hasn't brought her what she wanted as she's missing her best frenemy! During the course of these stories, Missy meets a do-gooder who is even more infuriating than the Doctor. She has a couple of attempts at causing mayhem across Earth's timelines: first running into her Victorian wards from Series One plus Strax. And then Guy Fawkes when she plans to give his Gunpowder Plot some added oomph! Finally, when Missy does attract someone's attention, it's the Meddling Monk and he's out



It's absolutely delicious that she can casually order a drink at a bar as people are being gnawed to death!

LISA McMULLIN



Above (l-r): Dan Starkey, Ony Ukiara, Ben Fox, Philip Pope and Christopher Hatherall

for payback... Unfortunately for them both, so are the Ogrons!"

Lisa McMullin was delighted to write for Missy. She laughs: "I think *The Lumiat* is one of my favourite things that I've ever done – the sheer fun of it is incredible. Michelle Gomez is just an absolute genius, she's frighteningly like the character. There's a glint in her eye that's somewhere between insanity and genius!"

"The writers got together and chatted about the series. John Dorney already knew he was writing for the Meddling Monk again and somebody was throwing Ogrons

around in the air. This story was actually John's idea originally. He suggested something and straight away, I said, 'I'm having that!'"

"The Lumiat keeps popping up everywhere Missy is, foiling her wicked plans, which makes Missy cross. And Missy wonders, Who is this person? When she finds out who she is, Missy's even more furious!"

"Gina McKee plays the Lumiat – and it's joyous – she's just brilliant and you couldn't have cast her better. She's absolutely gleeful."

"I'm quite pleased with the ridiculous silliness of it all. At one

point Missy has a box of rats – but they are man-eating rats! There's just such a joy in writing for Missy. It's absolutely delicious that she can casually order a drink at a bar as people are being gnawed to death!"

BRIMSTONE AND Terror sees Roy Gill return to **Missy**, writing a sequel to *A Spoonful of Mayhem*, the opening tale of **Missy Series One**.

Roy says: "Missy has such a distinctive voice I think I know when I hit a good Missy line – it's playful, ambiguous and more than a little dangerous. I kind of enjoy channelling my inner Missy! The real delight is discovering what spin Michelle puts on it in performance."

"Producer David was keen on a sequel to *A Spoonful of Mayhem*, picking up on the same characters a few years later. We actually went back and cut out a line from the finale of *Spoonful*, just before release, to make that possible. I felt like I could happily keep writing Scary Poppins stories forever – I'm very comfortable with urban fantasy as a writer – but I needed to find a way to move the story on. I started thinking about Oliver



Above (l-r): Ajjaz Awad, Dan Starkey, Glen McCready, John Dorney, Helen Goldwyn and Robert Whitelock

I mean, *what* a joy to write villainous lines for Michelle Gomez. It doesn't really get much better than that for a writer, does it?

GEMMA ARROWSMITH

and Lucy's backstory – what would happen if Oliver's dad found a new school with a sinister headmistress for him, and Lucy has to find a way to get him home?"

Roy brings Missy and her charges north of the border as his story features: "Dark magic at an isolated Scottish boarding school with a dangerous headmistress (and some very strange



Above: Michelle Gomez

teachers). Winter is coming – and Missy's army is on the rise!

"And there's a guest appearance from Strax! I love writing Strax (I think I must have an inner Strax too!), he always adds to the fun and absurdity. And it's always flattering to be asked to bring back characters you've created. You feel like you're helping build a bigger world."

The third adventure in the set

is *Treason and Plot* by Gemma Arrowsmith where Missy encounters a historical figure in Guy Fawkes. Gemma says: "The initial brief was wide open, Missy stories have a lot of scope. In Series One there is an episode in the style of a true crime podcast. It's really bold, high concept storytelling and it really appealed to me. So I put together a page of story ideas I thought would work with Missy at the helm. Mostly moments in history which would have been oh so much worse if Missy had been there! The writers of this volume were then called in for a meeting and ideas were thrown around. It became clear that my *Treason and Plot* pitch would work best alongside the other writers' stories so I settled on that.

"The Gunpowder Plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament was foiled in 1605. Missy intends to make sure it isn't foiled this time around. Maybe then she can install herself as head of state, ruler of Earth and Empress of the galaxy? Just as long as no-one meddles with her plan.

"I mean, *what* a joy to write villainous lines for Michelle Gomez. It doesn't really get much better than that for a writer, does it? Knowing that you are handing lines to someone who can not only



Above: Michelle Gomez

inject them with villainy but also someone who has incredible comic delivery as well. Missy is a delight.”

THE FOURTH story in this series is *Too Many Masters* by John Dorney, and is a sequel to Series One’s *Divorced, Beheaded, Regenerated*. Once again we see Missy finding out more about the Meddling Monk and his habits. John said: “I had an absolute ball writing the first one, and I was very pleased that the fun of it translated to the audience. Everyone seemed to like it in studio on the day, and we all said that we wanted to do another as it felt like a natural pairing with such comedic potential. From that day of recording *Divorced, Beheaded, Regenerated* I think we were pretty sure we were going to do another one.”

John admits that his first ideas for the story were more complex than the final plot. He reveals: “The initial thought I had was that the Monk is out for revenge which led to an opening scene I had a very long time in advance.

“The basic premise is given away relatively early. I was thinking about the Master’s relationship with the Ogrons

There’s a lot of potential for fun, particularly given the Ogrons aren’t terribly bright and wouldn’t realise that Missy is actually the Master.

JOHN DORNEY

and realised they had worked together before, which was an interesting starting point. At the end of the TV episode, *Frontier in Space*, it’s not entirely clear where the Master goes, so I thought that perhaps the Master hadn’t properly paid the mercenaries for their services and that was the hook I decided to go with in *Too Many Masters*.

“There’s a lot of potential for fun, particularly given the Ogrons aren’t terribly bright and wouldn’t realise that Missy is actually the Master. They have tracked the Master to a particular spaceship and the Monk is there – and they make the natural assumption that any Ogron would!”

John was particularly happy about setting Time Lord against Time Lord again. He adds: “The Monk isn’t quite as clever as he thinks he is, which makes him fun to write for. It’s a great angle to work with.”

Speaking exclusively to *Vortex*, Rufus says: “I can’t help but be deeply pleased by how much love my Monk has been given.

“I was asked to design a moustache wax – it’s called Triumphant – and it has gone down so well they’ve turned it into an aftershave. I’ve joined the hallowed ranks of Britney Spears and Ariana Grande in having my own perfume line! When I sat down to design it I came up with something that smelt like every other moustache wax – a bit sandalwood, a bit tobacco-y – but there’s already 300 of them out there and not that many people buy moustache wax. So I thought, why not design something that smells different?”

“It’s a bit like that with **Doctor Who** villains – there’s the Master who is full of darkness; the Daleks who just want to destroy; and the Cybermen who want to convert everyone to make them uniform. With the Monk, you have someone who isn’t just out for the same old villainy.

“Why is the Monk not the Master? It’s because he’s not really bad, per se, he’s just bored. It’s something I’ve thought a lot about – living that long, how does it affect you? It’s very easy to get bogged down in the short term, but if you look at the long term, nothing really matters apart from climate change, really. In terms of being the Monk, if you’ve got the same tools at your disposal as the Doctor and the Master, why aren’t you them? I think that’s where the Monk gathers his strengths.

“The Comedian in **Watchmen** isn’t a particularly funny character, but he’s reached a point in life

where the only way to make sense of it is to see it as one enormous joke. That's where the Monk fits in, between the Doctor and the Master. If, along the way, a few Picassos and Da Vincis fall down the back of the sofa, then so be it. He's enjoying life – it's the great game. He's in it for self-amusement!"

To date, the Monk has faced several Doctors, but Rufus particularly enjoys the clashes with Missy: "I love them! If John Dorney starts writing Post-It notes, I'm going to be hovering on his shoulder to read them! It was *Vortex* that told me there would be a second series, which was very pleasing, and I was delighted to read the scripts and realise it is as good, if not better, than the first.

"I made a kids TV show about 15 years ago called **Hounded**. We didn't get it right but if we had a second series we would have had a better handle on it. We were trying to do think-y sci-fi, but because it's think-y, that doesn't mean it can't be stupid! With this script from John, and knowing Missy is Michelle Gomez, there's not much more you can want."

Rufus has enjoyed playing the Monk as a guest character in other series – but would he like him to star in his own box set?

He pauses before replying: "I'm always impressed by all the ranges Big Finish does. As in comics, there are ideas such as what if the X-Men hung out with Spider-Man, which provide such verdant soil.

"I think there's something about the Monk being in other peoples' stories. For want of a comparison, I played a part in *One Man, Two Governors*. I stepped in for the lead on tour and in the West End. For two-and-a-half hours, I did improv in a wolf suit, running around eight times a week. We got to the curtain call and there was a fellow who played a waiter for one and a half scenes, and the place went mad for him. Then I stepped out and I didn't get half the reception he did because they'd already given me their laughs and applause during the show.

"Maybe with the Monk it's best to have him guesting. He can be the waiter!"



Above (l-r): Cameron Percival, Dan Starkey and Alex Hope

I'm always impressed by all the ranges Big Finish does. As in comics, there are ideas such as what if the X-Men hung out with Spider-Man, which provide such verdant soil.

RUFUS HOUND

COMPOSER JOE Kraemer was delighted to be providing the music for this series.

In his first interview with *Vortex* he reveals how he came to be involved with Big Finish: "Like so many things these days, it all started with social media. I had just released my score to **Jack Reacher** and people started following me on various platforms. One such person was a film music fan called Andrew Cartmel, whose name I recognized from the DVD special features on the Sylvester McCoy **Doctor Whos**.

"After confirming it was indeed the same Andrew Cartmel, I began a friendly correspondence with him which eventually led to me imposing on him to mention me to Big Finish as someone who would love to write music for them. That got me in the loop with Nicholas Briggs, and after some back-and-forth with him I was brought on board to do an hour-long story for **Vienna** series two."

Joe wrote the theme tune for **Missy** (as well as other spin-offs



Above (l-r): Matthew Jacobs-
Morgan and Gina McKee

such as **Jenny – The Doctor’s Daughter**), and he recalls: “The two points of departure were the many allusions in costume and dialogue to Mary Poppins, and Murray Gold’s arrangements of the **Doctor Who** theme – I hoped to marry those two concepts into one theme. I also tried to balance the fact that Missy is a villain with the interesting concept that she’s the star of this series of audio adventures, so we are in a way rooting for her to win! So I wanted the theme song to have an element of fun in it too.

“I suppose for me the bottom line of all the music in the **Missy** series is to keep it mischievous. She’s frankly a lovable character when she’s not being totally evil, so I have a lot of latitude in the music to play up when she’s having a laugh, but also when she’s plotting the subjugation of the universe.”

Joe admits he had plenty of fun scoring a series with a fun, yet evil, protagonist. He grins: “It’s such a great time. As I say, I really love

being able to move so drastically from light to dark in the music. One terrific thing about doing scores for audio dramas is that I can push the music much harder than in something with a visual element. Action music can be bigger because it has to help paint the picture in the listener’s imagination. When something tragic happens we can’t see the actor’s tears, so I must emphasize the emotion we’re not seeing through passionate music.

“Another terrific thing is that Missy often breaks the ‘fourth wall’ between the drama and the listener, which gives me another avenue for fun and also mischief as a composer.”

Joe admits he had a personal highlight from **Missy Series Two**, saying: “I am so glad that Rufus has come back as the Meddling Monk. The chemistry he has with Michelle is just terrific, and I love working against their amazing performances. But even aside from that, it’s so fulfilling being part of this series of stories.

“I think the character of Missy, which started with Steven Moffat and was then interpreted by Michelle before coming to the wonderfully talented writers at Big Finish (as well as the director Ken Bentley) is just the best. Michelle, especially, makes it sound so natural to be evil and likeable at the same time, and that makes my job as composer easier as well.” **VORTEX**



Above: Michelle Gomez



MISSY:
SERIES TWO
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LIFE ON MARS

THE STAR COPS ARE BACK – AND THEY ARE LITERALLY MORE OUT OF THIS WORLD THAN EVER...

IN THE near future, mankind is expanding its presence in space meaning the International Space Police Force, known colloquially as the Star Cops, have got their work cut out with an ever-expanding territory to cover.

Late last year, the third Big Finish *Star Cops* box set *Mars 1* was released, with Nathan Spring travelling to the red planet in the hope of establishing an ISPF office.

Script editor, Andrew Smith, brings us up to speed: "In *Mars 1*, the regulars from the TV series – Nathan Spring, Pal Kenzy and Colin Devis from the International Space Police Force – have gone off to Mars to set up a Star Cops base to bring law enforcement to the colonies there. There isn't any law enforcement

there yet, so to do that the Star Cops have got to get the colonists on side to gain their approval – there's a hearts and minds thing going on.

"The Star Cops have already had some adventures – investigating murders, being hunted down across the Martian desert. Devis has been saved from certain death by a mysterious masked figure, with further murders and disappearances going on in other locations.

"We've set up what Mars is like with various colonies, mainly privately-sponsored corporate enterprises across the planet, with just one or two government-run bases. We've established some characters like the co-ordinator of the main base, Barbara Holmberg, and the colony at Olympus Mons, and at the end of the box set there

was a cliffhanger that I don't want to explain, yet! We got a very strong response to that, with listeners asking, 'Wow, what's been going on for *that* to happen?'"

STAR COPS: *Mars 2*, out for release this July, consists of three new tales: *Bodies of Evidence* written by Andrew, *Human Kind* by Helen Goldwyn, and the conclusion, *The Highest Ground*, also by Andrew.

He explains: "We actually begin this second set of Mars stories by going back to before the Star Cops were on their way, when a cargo ship from Mars crashes on the Moon's surface. The three Star Cops investigate along with two other cops who are now left behind – Priya Basu and Paul Bailey.

“That investigation stirs up a bit of a hornet’s nest politically for Nathan, which takes us forward, and that then has implications for the Star Cops on Mars. It all escalates towards quite an epic resolution in the final episode when they go back to Olympus Mons and it all

difficult – who’s experienced what and who knows who – and with flashbacks too, it took a lot of focus.

“It’s a police drama set in space and when you’re writing fantasy science fiction, you can get yourself out of all sort of scrapes by making things up, but with **Star Cops**, it

be in the future. I did an awful lot of research for this, as did the other writers, and everything we’ve done is intended to be as honest as it can be, to say this is how it could really look one day.

“Describing Mars, the atmosphere, terraforming it, the radiation



Above (l-r): David Calder, Linda Newton and Trevor Cooper

gets very dangerous and fraught: there’s been a conspiracy going on. People have their own agendas and ideas about what the future of Mars should be, and they are not wanting interference from the Star Cops.”

Human Kind writer Helen Goldwyn has also directed this series, and says: “For me, it was the biggest writing challenge I’ve ever had – I hadn’t anticipated it being so difficult! I was familiar with the characters and the premise of the whole series, but what I hadn’t realised was that I have mostly written standalone stories in the past, and this story is part of a very complex massively researched bit of work by Andrew.

“My story slots in after a first series on Mars, and I was writing for the second run. Not all of the scripts in the first half had been written, so I was trying to position something and create character journeys without being fully sure what’s come before, or coming after! I found that really



Above: Philip Olivier

has to be logical and methodical police procedure. I certainly learned a lot on this project.”

Andrew confirms: “With all the **Star Cops** stories, we try to say this is very feasibly how it could

and how long it would take, how people would survive, how it would appear – we’ve looked at all of that and reflected how humanity would live there, and also what form crime would take and how it would be investigated.

“It’s not hard sci-fi, there’s no alien threat, it’s all about human beings, being human beings, being greedy and lustful after power, looking after themselves. But there’s also the other side with kindness and support. We have that mixture but have put it into a Martian environment with the result of some powerful drama.”

MARS 2 sees the return of the new **Star Cops** regulars created for the Big Finish audios. Andrew says: “We recorded *Mars 2* at the same time as *Mars 1*, and it was lovely. It was especially nice to get Rakhee Thakrar and Philip Olivier back in studio. It wasn’t feasible to send all five characters to Mars on

FOR ME, IT WAS THE BIGGEST WRITING CHALLENGE I’VE EVER HAD – I HADN’T ANTICIPATED IT BEING SO DIFFICULT!

HELEN GOLDWYN

this mission to set up the Star Cops base as that would have them away for a period of two years. So it was great to find a way to feature Priya and Paul, by going back to the Moon, and the whole gang was at the recording.”

Helen adds: “What’s wonderful is that Linda Newton comes over from Australia especially to do these audios, which is just incredible. The dynamic between the three originals, Linda, Trevor Cooper and David Calder, is really great to be around. There are lots of in-jokes, and it’s just like a family get together with them. There’s memorabilia in the green room with old photographs being passed around, and Trevor always wears his **Star Cops** T-shirts! There’s a great vibe about having those three together.

“And of course, there’s also Rakhee and Philip, who are our fantastic new members of the crew and have slotted in brilliantly. The whole thing is a joy to direct.

“Philip gets some really meaty stuff to do. His character has come from the background of being an undercover policeman and so gets to have a different perspective on procedure and sees things from another angle. He’s got lots of action too – he has loads of fight scenes and you can tell that he’s done plenty of them on TV.

“Rakhee’s character is really multi-faceted – quite introverted, very analytical – she mainly plays by the rules, but she’s also got this maverick side where she’s so fixated on doing the right thing and catching the bad guys that she will veer off from the straight road and do something unorthodox. It’s great when she does something quirky. It shows her different layers – she’s not just a straight-laced rule follower.”

BRINGING THE story to life is sound designer Steve Foxon. How long does a dialogue edit take to prepare for a release like this? He explains: “It depends on the average amount of characters per scene, but an hour long episode takes between three and five hours to prepare a dialogue edit. In this



Above (l-r): David Calder and Trevor Cooper

LINDA NEWTON
COMES
OVER FROM
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WHICH IS JUST
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HELEN GOLDWYN



Above: Linda Newton

case it was just under 11 hours for the three episodes, which I completed over a couple of days.

“Dialogue is generally pretty straight forward, unless you are dealing with multiple characters recorded at different times. There was only one occurrence in this – a character being

recorded separately – but that didn’t cause any difficulty.”

Steve spoke to *Vortex* as he was working on the sound design, and says: “I am really lucky that this is the second part of a story I have already worked on, as it means 90% of the preparation is already done.



Above (l-r): Phillip Olivier and Trevor Cooper

CRASHING SPACESHIPS AND BEING ATTACKED BY MACHINERY ARE ALWAYS GOING TO TAKE SOME WORK TO GET RIGHT!

STEVE FOXON

"Most of the background atmospheres are already created, and things like driving in the Mars rovers and shuttles are already designed. I have template projects where I can, for example, import the different tracks for the Mars rover starting up, driving along and stopping,

with just the need to alter the timing where necessary. With the backgrounds, I can just import those from previous projects. Even sounds such as footsteps are all saved as presets that can be easily recalled depending on the character and location, as well as reverbs of rooms, settings for helmet filters etc.

"Also, whilst **Star Cops** has little action, it's very dialogue orientated which suits the story telling, so there aren't too many challenging parts. But crashing spaceships and being attacked by machinery are always going to take some work to get right!"

Howard Carter is composing the music for this series, and adds: "**Star Cops** is great fun to work on as the score is largely written electronically. These adventures have given me the chance to break out the synthesisers and various electronic toys and write in a slightly different way than I would with a more traditional score. When you have fewer sonic resources you sometimes

have to be more creative when it comes to the application of music for storytelling.

"As always with Big Finish, the writers and sound designers do such a great job in imagining these other worlds. When it comes to scoring the plays it's very much a case of building on the brilliant and creative work that has gone before. The images conjured by the scripts and soundscape are so rich that writing music to enhance them is a joy. There's a particular element of mystery and danger with Mars that permeates the stories, and hopefully that's reflected in the music. Mars provides such a great backdrop for these stories, there's so much to explore in terms of the imagery and atmosphere."

Andrew concludes: "Everyone was saying in studio that they thought *Mother Earth* was great (the story arc for our first two box sets), but they felt this was even better!

"What I do like is that we planted lots of seeds in *Mars 1* for what's coming up in *Mars 2*, but I don't think many people will have noticed them yet as they're quite subtle.

"It was difficult to set everything up, as knitting it all together was quite a thing, but the other writers did a great job revealing what they had to when they needed to. I'm very proud of it." **VORTEX**



STAR COPS:
MARS 2
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VORTEX MAIL



MEASURED UP

Just wanted to sing some praise for **Counter-Measures**! Every time I listen I'm amazed at how brilliant the cast is. I will be sincerely sad if this is truly the end after the Movellan/Dalek stories. I hope, nevertheless, the cast can pop up in a monthly special down the line.

SCOTT MARKLE

Nick: As you may know, Scott, we never say never at Big Finish. But, at least for the time being, this is the end of the Counter-Measures series. So glad you've enjoyed it. Personally, doing the music for Counter-Measures has been one of my favourite jobs.

BACK TO COAL HILL

I've noticed the release of more **Class** stories, but interestingly none of them are an official continuation of the show in the form of a series two that resolves the cliffhanger which you have teased the possibility of doing before! Is that going to happen? I am dying to see if you could get Patrick Ness back to write or at least supervise/advise an official continuation of his show, and what he would do with that. Or, at the very least, see what your creative writers would do using the hints he dropped on his Twitter a few years ago of what a **Class** series two would have entailed had it not been cancelled as guidance (including 'Weeping Angel civil war and planet, Quill has a dangerous son, Charlie and Matteusz shirtless wood chopping...', of which the Weeping Angel bits sound amazing!).

NATHAN NEISINGER

Nick: Hi Nathan, a condition of our current licence specified by Patrick Ness is that we don't go beyond the events of television series one. We'd love to do more though.

MENTOR HEALTH

The Mentors are just as relevant today as they were in the 1980s, and quite possibly one of the best **Doctor Who** aliens to be adapted to audio, as their horror is very much in their monstrous morality. Will we ever get more of the Mentors?

SHANEY

Nick: There are currently no plans for that, Shaney. Great creations though.

TORCHWOOD TALES

Have you considered doing something equivalent to **Short Trips** for **Torchwood**? Single voice enhanced reading format. Mission Reports, perhaps?

MICHAEL EVANS

Nick: Lovely idea, Michael, one we have certainly been considering.



A SENSE OF HISTORY

Fantastic work all round with *Last of the Romanovs*! The jury is always out for me with the pure historicals – they don't really grip me in the way the rest of **Who** does. But a new classic was created with this one. Not only was it superbly performed, but the Hartnell-era genesis of the 'we can't interfere' trope was depicted so clearly, and the first spark of the Doctor wanting to get stuck in and actively help rather than observe and get carried along with events was so thrilling. Far more than re-creating the era, this episode added to the whole **Who** canon in a subtle and hugely satisfying way. Great work.

ALEX KNOTT

Nick: Thanks, Alex. I always think that the real history of Earth is as strange as any alien planet – if not stranger at times! **VORTEX**



Above: Not amused

sessions getting to grips with the structure to allow optimum atmosphere while also advancing the plot. James was absolutely brilliant, I have to say. Producing is a hard task, especially on **Torchwood**, but both he and script editor David Llewellyn were great at conveying what they wanted and how the idea could be delivered.”

Scott gives added authenticity to the story by having visited the location. He explains: “One unexpected highlight was being able to visit Flat Holm earlier in the year. Tours run regularly from Cardiff Bay so I booked myself on and travelled out one afternoon with a handful of others. It was a really evocative experience,

GOING FLAT OUT

We travel back to the early days of **Torchwood** and its founder in *Save Our Souls*

AN EXPERIMENTAL radio mast has been set up on a remote island. It has been picking up signals – a voice that claims it knows the future.

Five people have come to the island to hear the voice. A scientist, a soldier, a medium, an alienist and the most powerful woman in the world – Queen Victoria. The voice has something to say to all of them. It starts by saying who will be the first to die.

WRITTEN BY Scott Handcock, *Save Our Souls* sees the return of Rowena Cooper as Queen Victoria, in a location which featured in the **Torchwood** television episode, *Adrift*.

Scott says: “I’m quite lucky, living in Cardiff, that I get to know a lot of the city and local area. One thing I never realised until

recently, however, was that Flat Holm Island was the site of the first radio transmission conducted by Marconi across open water. And somehow that information – coupled with the fact that Flat Holm was established as a **Torchwood** isolation facility – made it an irresistible combination. I knew producer James Goss was looking for more stories featuring Queen Victoria and, given the date of that original test, this seemed an obvious fit. So it all stemmed from the idea: what if Marconi transmitted his test signal and received an unexpected reply? Cue **Torchwood!**

“Originally I wanted something rooted more in the science of Marconi’s original discovery, and that sense of forging new technology as a voice from beyond claims foreknowledge of Victoria and her Empire. James enjoyed that premise but wanted something slightly more MR James, so the focus and tone shifted. We spent a lot of time sat in cafes after recording

bombing across the channel out to the island, and it just happened to be around the time of year that Marconi would have conducted his tests. That meant I got a sense of the elements a bit more, not to mention the habits of Flat Holm’s massive gulls during mating season!

“The whole island is maybe only around 500 metres end to end, but the place has so much history: not just the Marconi transmissions, but army barracks and a hospital building. The island used to serve, theoretically, as a leper colony. But it’s a gorgeous place, and well worth a visit if you ever get the chance.” **VORTEX**

TORCHWOOD:
SAVE OUR SOULS
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A BUNCH OF FIVES

The eighties are back in fashion for the next few months as Peter Davison returns as the Doctor...

THE FIFTH Doctor, Nyssa, Tegan and their new friend Marc return to **The Monthly Adventures** this summer – and they're in trouble!

In the last run of stories to feature these characters, their final adventure, *Conversion*, ended with the Time Lord separating from his friends as he went off in the TARDIS on his own. What happens to him is now being revealed in *Time Apart*, a collection of four standalone Fifth Doctor stories.

Producer Scott Handcock explains: "*Time Apart* is an anthology release: four single-episode stories from writers Steve Lyons, Jacqueline Rayner, Tommy Donbavand and Kate Thorman. These adventures are loosely connected in that they see the Doctor travelling alone

(having left his companions at the end of an earlier story), and zipping back and forth through the history of his favourite planet.

"There are some lovely historical details in these adventures. We have one set in an abandoned underground station in East Berlin; one that deals with a superstition about shadows from British folklore; the third meeting Mary Wade (the youngest convict to be transported to Australia); and finally arriving during the Dancing Plague of Strasbourg."

Steve Lyons's *Ghost Station* opens the release. He says: "Scott wanted a story for the Fifth Doctor who is travelling solo because he feels his friends are better off without him. He asked for a historical story, with or without an alien element. I made a few suggestions, and *Ghost Station*

was both Scott's favourite and mine.

"It's a ghost story set in an abandoned underground train station beneath East Berlin in 1975. It feels odd to call it a 'historical' story, when it's set in a year that I remember! It is about a particular period in history, though, when the Berlin Wall divided Germany. The story is a two-hander between the Doctor and an East German border guard called Peter – whose partner has just been killed by something lurking in the shadows."

Steve – a Big Finish veteran – adds that crafting this story brought back happy memories: "It felt like writing **Sapphire & Steel** again, and I've missed that!"

Jacqueline Rayner has written the second story, *The Bridge Master*, which she sums up: "It's got a slight



Above (l-r): Laura Aikman and Peter Davison

brought him to my attention. Tommy was aware of his illness and very keen to fulfil his ambition of writing a **Doctor Who** audio but wasn't sure how much he could commit to, so an episode in this anthology was ideal. It was obviously hugely upsetting to see Tommy's condition deteriorate as quickly as it did, and I'm sad he won't hear his words brought to life, but I hope we brought him some positivity at an extremely difficult time. The story serves as a fitting tribute to a brilliant author."

IT'S NICE TO GO TO A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT PLACE THAN 'CELEBRITY HISTORICAL' OR 'WELL-KNOWN HISTORICAL INCIDENT'.

JACQUELINE RAYNER

folk-ish, fairy tale-ish vibe. Bridges feature in a lot of myths and legends and this is inspired by some of those. It's nice to go to a slightly different place than 'celebrity historical' or 'well-known historical incident'.

This was one that gave Jac – an experienced Big Finish writer – some worries. She explains: "I was quite nervous, actually. I'd only written for the Doctor once before, for a **River Song** box set, and here he is all on his own, in the spotlight! I was worried I wouldn't get him right. People talk about the Second Doctor being hard to write for because of the physicality of Patrick Troughton's performance, but I think that goes for Peter Davison too – there's so much restless energy in his portrayal. I hope I did him justice, though."

What Lurks Down Under was written by the late Tommy Donbavand, a popular author who passed away in 2019 after a long illness, which he fought bravely to the end.



Scott explains: "It was my first, and regrettably only, time working with Tommy Donbavand, who passed away shortly after delivering an early draft. It was actually Paul Magrs who

Kate Thorman is the writer of the final adventure in the set, *The Dancing Plague*. She laughs: "My title gives away a bit of what it's about: the mysterious dancing plague of 1518

– Strasbourg, in Alsace. Determined to find the alien source of the long-unresolved plague that's wiping out the medieval city, the Fifth Doctor misses the very human threats around him.

"I was also interested in writing a story where the Doctor didn't have all the answers, and where we played with the way humans respond to crisis (ha!), so that was cool to get to do. It's still very escapist, though, I promise!"

WE'LL FIND out what happens to Nyssa, Tegan and Marc during the Doctor's absence, in the next release, *Thin Time / Madquake*. Scott explains: "When I took over the Fifth Doctor strand of **The Monthly**

they did, and really fear what might befall him in *Conversion*.

"*Thin Time* and *Madquake* is another double-bill release written by Dan Abnett and Guy Adams respectively. Our TARDIS teams are still separated from one another so the first tale focuses on the Doctor's exploits, while the second checks in on his companions. *Thin Time* is a gloriously creepy script from Dan – whose New Deadwardians comic series I loved – so I was thrilled to be able to let him tackle something a bit more atmospheric here."

Writer Dan says: "It's Halloween night in Victorian London, and in a quiet town house two old friends are meeting to set an outlandish plan in motion involving the past, the

'shut in' or 'shuttered house' story where the characters are trapped together. It was great to work on."

Of the second tale in the release, Scott tells us: "*Madquake* is something altogether different, dealing with our companions' sense of loss following their abandonment, and having to overthrow an alien plot in the Doctor's absence. And naturally, knowing the Doctor won't be around and continuity isn't threatened, I couldn't resist including a monster from the 2005 series of **Doctor Who**. Did anyone imagine Tegan and Nyssa would face off against the Sliitheen? Probably not, but they do, and it provides a bit of levity against the more emotional story arcs we've been building."



Adventures, I was keen to shake things up slightly and throw a new element into the mix, hence the introduction of Marc: a new companion from Ancient Rome. I sort of pitched him as a male version of Leela. He's intelligent but uneducated, acting on instinct and skills he's taught himself. Having lived a life as a slave, travelling with the Doctor is the ultimate freedom. I'd always planned for him to continue into this next set of adventures, so it was a relief to see people warm to him as quickly as

future and the thinning of the 'veil' at All Hallows. But not everything is what it seems, and the knocking at the door is NOT trick or treaters. Stay inside and DO NOT open the door!"

Dan is no stranger to Big Finish, having written *The Harvest* and *Nocturne* for the Seventh Doctor. He adds: "I enjoyed writing *Thin Time*. It is a very character-driven piece, and it was great to come up with a small cast of people who would bounce off the Doctor to great effect. It's a very spooky story too – I love those! – and is almost literally a

THE KNOCKING AT THE DOOR IS NOT TRICK OR TREATERS. STAY INSIDE AND DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR!

DAN ABNETT

Writer Guy adds: "At the end of the last trilogy, we saw the Doctor and friends splitting up, and so the plan was that when we returned, the first release would show what the Doctor got up to in that time, and *Madquake* shows what his companions do when they are left behind, on the planet that's possibly insane..."

"I really wanted to write something about the fragility of everyone involved and I couldn't think of a more fun way of doing it, suggesting the very ground they stood on was as unstable as they were.

"I hope people assumed we wouldn't do anything too nasty to Marc... and yes, we did! It's probably the most tactless thing to do to the Doctor and friends, give them a new companion and then throw the Cybermen at them again. These stories are very much about dealing with the fallout of that, which is not just biological.



Above (l-r): Luyanda Unati Lewis-Nyawo, Wilf Scolding, Peter Davison, Nicholas Khan and Zaqi Ismail



Above back (l-r): Harley Viveash, Raj Ghatak and George Watkins
Above front (l-r): Doña Croll, Janet Fielding and Sarah Sutton

MADQUAKE SHOWS WHAT COMPANIONS DO WHEN THEY ARE LEFT BEHIND, ON THE PLANET THAT'S POSSIBLY INSANE...

GUY ADAMS

whole thing between Rose and the Doctor, which you wouldn't get in classic **Who**. You could show the modern stories out of order and you wouldn't really notice.

"In a way, we've overlaid more classic sensibilities on this TARDIS team, which keep spreading out over the stories."

Scott directed *Thin Time* and *Madquake*, and adds: "It was a lot of fun reuniting with this team after their initial trilogy together had been released. There was a proper sense of coming back together, buoyed by the positive feedback we'd had online. The stories with the Doctor travelling solo earn their place as we catch up with the absent companions. These two releases won't be the last we hear from this TARDIS team, with two more stories due out in 2021!" **VORTEX**



DOCTOR WHO:
TIME APART
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"With this run of stories we decided that the Fifth Doctor does angst so well! On one hand you can look at this crew and think they are antagonistic – do they even like each other, particularly Tegan and the Doctor? You either script against that and say, let's have them making friends, or you look at the differences between people who do care deeply for one another, but there's a big clash of personalities, so let's embrace that. It's really the first TARDIS crew you could do that with, after Susan departs. The TV episode *The Green Death* has an

emotional moment. And when you get to the Fifth Doctor there's a sense that the emotions continue a little. Arguably the TV episode *Time-Flight* is quite quick to forget that one of them is dead. When Tegan leaves, it's with an accretion of misery. It felt more interesting to play with that, you can really write these people.

"A lot of today's newer listeners expect a certain level of characterisation and emotional depth – that there will be consequences which you have in modern **Doctor Who**. Like the

DIVINE INSPIRATION

The Omega Factor returns in a Big Finish exclusive audiobook...

SCARES ARE on their way this month as **The Omega Factor** returns to Big Finish.

Following on from *Spider's Web* written by Iain McLaughlin and *Festival of Darkness* written by Natasha Gerson, the third audiobook in this Big Finish series, *Divinity*, has been written by Doris V Sutherland.

Editor Xanna Eve Chown explains: "Doris's brief was to write an **Omega Factor** audiobook set in the 1970s to explore more of Tom and Anne's time at Department 7. This has been the theme of all the audiobooks so far as a counterpoint to the modern investigations that take place with Adam in the Big Finish audio dramas.

"Doris won the 2018 writers' opportunity after she submitted a **Bernice Summerfield** short story for the collection *In Time* with her adventure, *The Bunny's Curse*. We wanted to give her a chance to write something a bit longer and more involved, and as Doris is a big horror fan, **The Omega Factor** seemed like a good fit."

Divinity sees Tom Crane sent to the sleepy village of Coldad to investigate a poltergeist. The terrified Wright family invite him to spend the night in their haunted house where he gets to experience the unsettling phenomenon at a closer range than he might have liked.

Doris tells **Vortex**: "It was less a case of being handed a brief, and

more a matter of battling ideas back and forth with Xanna. One idea that we both thought had potential was a prequel set in the 1940s. According to the TV show's backstory, that was when the villain Drexel had his reign of terror. Xanna gave me a number of story suggestions – most notably, she asked me to include a plot thread set in the 1970s so that Tom and Anne could be included as characters. Beyond that I had a lot of freedom in expanding the world of **The Omega Factor**.

"After I'd worked with Xanna on my short story for **Bernice Summerfield**: *In Time*, I asked her if there were any opportunities going at Big Finish for longer-form work. Since my short story had a rather ghostly theme, she nudged me towards **The Omega Factor**. I wasn't familiar with it at the time, but I bought the series on DVD and devoured it. I've long been fascinated by the 1970s vogue for occult and paranormal themes – with **The Exorcist** in cinemas and the *Fortean Times* making its debut – and I understood the series inside-out from the start. Creating a story set in its world came naturally to me."

Writing the audiobook was an exciting time for Doris. She concludes: "For me, the highlight was in expanding the world of **The Omega Factor** into a different era.

When I was writing the sequences set in the 1940s, I asked myself what the series would have been like had it existed in that period? The 1940s had a vibrant occult scene – Aleister Crowley, Dion Fortune, Gerald Gardner and Dennis Wheatley were all around, and people like MR James were still in living memory. It was a really interesting experience trying to work those influences into a story while remaining true to the television series from 1979. I hope that listeners of **The Omega Factor** will like the results." **VORTEX**



THE OMEGA FACTOR:
DIVINITY
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JULY 2020

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- **TORCHWOOD:** *Save Our Souls* (40)
- **STAR COPs:** *Mars Part 2* (BOX SET)
- **THE OMEGA FACTOR:** *Divinity* (AUDIOBOOK) **DLO**

AUGUST 2020

- **DW • THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES:** *Thin Time / Madquake* (267, FIFTH DOCTOR)
- **DW • THE SIXTH DOCTOR AND PERI:** *Volume One* (BOX SET)
- **DW • SHORT TRIPS:** *These Stolen Hours* (10.8) **DLO**
- **TORCHWOOD:** *Torchwood Soho – Parasite* (BOX SET)
- **TORCHWOOD:** *Red Base* (41)
- **ADAM ADAMANT LIVES:** *Volume 2* (BOX SET)

SEPTEMBER 2020

- **DW • THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES:** *The Flying Dutchman / Displaced* (268, SEVENTH DOCTOR)
- **DW • THE EIGHTH DOCTOR:** *Time War 4* (BOX SET)
- **DW • SHORT TRIPS:** *Her Own Bootstraps* (10.9) **DLO**
- **TORCHWOOD:** *Ex Machina* (42)
- **BIG FINISH CLASSICS:** *Dracula's War* (BOX SET)
- **GEMINI FORCE ONE:** *TBC* (AUDIOBOOK) **DLO**
- **INTO INFINITY:** *TBC* (AUDIOBOOK) **DLO**
- **CALLAN:** *Volume 2* (BOX SET)



AMID THE ONGOING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, BIG FINISH HAS MOVED TO A DIGITAL-FIRST RELEASE SCHEDULE. ALL PHYSICAL ORDERS WILL BE FULFILLED, BUT YOU WILL HAVE TO WAIT LONGER FOR YOUR CDS TO ARRIVE.

DLO = DOWNLOAD ONLY • **DW** = DOCTOR WHO
DATES CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS.

VORTEX



FIRE UP THE SPACE SHUTTLE

THE STAR COPS ARE BACK – AND
THEY ARE LITERALLY MORE OUT OF
THIS WORLD THAN EVER...

PLUS! DOCTOR WHO
ROBOTS

THE KALDORAN · AUTOMATONS RETURN

