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THE FIRST DOCTOR

MORE ADVENTURES IN SPACE AND TIME...

THE FIFTH volume of **The First Doctor Adventures** will materialise in April next year for two more stories featuring the **An Adventure in Space and Time** team of David Bradley, Jamie Glover, Jemma Powell and Claudia Grant.

The Doctor, Ian, Barbara and Susan will travel back in Earth's history and then venture into the future in *The Hollow Crown* by Sarah Grochala and *For the Glory of Urth* by Guy Adams.

The Hollow Crown sees the TARDIS land in Shoreditch, 1601, where the Doctor suggests going to see a play at the Globe Theatre. But there is violence in the street, plots against the Queen and rebellion in the air. And at the centre of it all stands the most

famous playwright in British history – William Shakespeare.

For the Glory of Urth features the TARDIS landing in an alien sewer where a distant scream sends Susan racing to give aid and the team split up. Trying to reunite, the travellers find themselves in something resembling a monastery led by a man half-way between an abbot and a warlord. They discover that they are in 'Urth', a barbaric place clinging on to its former glory.

Producer David Richardson tells us: "What's so lovely about this team – and I see this in so many of the **Doctor Who** casts – is how this group of actors work well both on and off mic. Filming **An Adventure in Space and Time** was clearly a very happy part of their lives, and they've remained firm friends ever since." **VORTEX**



DUE TO the wonders of time and its wibbly-wobbly nature, I'm writing this just a few hours after the Virtual Big Finish Day finished on YouTube. I've been lucky enough to attend three Big Finish Days in person – Barking in 2013, and Derby in 2018 and 2019 – and had the most wonderful time at them all. I love the social side that goes along with the events, getting to chat face to face with people I normally just speak to on the phone or through email, as well as saying hello to the stars of our favourite audio productions.

This year of course was different as Big Finish Day moved online, but fantastically it meant that many Big Finish listeners who are normally unable to attend could also join in the fun. What I particularly enjoyed was seeing where viewers were in the world – places as far apart as Germany, the USA, Canada, Australia and Brazil – and everyone had a good time.

The live comments section was great – so much love and affection – and I was really pleased to be able to play a part in it as I loved producing the videos of listeners talking about their first Big Finish story. The choices were so diverse!

And what can I say about our panels? Just... wow! The highlight for me was Paul McGann and Alex Kingston questioning chairman, Jason Haigh-Ellery, when he was supposed to be interviewing them! **VORTEX**

If you missed any of the livestream, you can catch up now at the **Big Finish YouTube channel: [bgfn.sh/bfd2020](https://www.youtube.com/channel/bgfn.sh/bfd2020)**



GREAT IS THE VICTORY

BIG FINISH AND THE MULTIMEDIA EVENT THAT IS TIME LORD VICTORIOUS...

EARLIER THIS year *Time Lord Victorious* was unveiled – a brand-new multi-platform **Doctor Who** story told across several media including novels, comics and audio. *Time Lord Victorious* is set within the Dark Times at the start of the universe, and features the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Doctors.

The series features the Kotturuh – creatures who spread through the

cosmos dispensing mortality. They judge each and every species and decree its allotted time to live – but now the Doctor is coming for them.

Big Finish is playing its part in the grand story with Paul McGann and David Tennant featuring as the Doctor. Various stories will be released starting in October with *He Kills Me, He Kills Me Not* by Carrie Thompson, as well as a pair of **Short Trips**: *Master Thief* by Sophie Iles

and *Lesser Evils* by Simon Guerrier.

November sees the release of *The Enemy of My Enemy* by Tracy Ann Baines, and December's contributions include *Mutually Assured Destruction* by Lizzie Hopley, and *Echoes of Extinction* by Alfie Shaw.

Alfie is also the producer of these releases and he recalls: "I first became aware of the *Time Lord Victorious* project in late November when executive producer Nicholas Briggs emailed asking if I'd be interested in producing them for Big Finish. Literally the next day we were in a meeting with [*Time Lord Victorious* producer] James Goss and all the other licensees, which is when I



JAMES [GOSS] SAID THE OPENING STORY HAD TO INVOLVE AN OOD ASSASSIN NAMED BRIAN...

ALFIE SHAW

first got a sense of the ambition of the whole enterprise.”

Alfie's immediate priority was to get the stories for the Eighth Doctor ready. He explains: “The Eighth Doctor trilogy needed to be pulled together quickly but because it all had to tie into the larger story, there were a few more steps and checks than usual. It was an incredibly tight turnaround on these as we wanted to get them all recorded before they were announced.

“The vinyl record release, *Echoes of Extinction*, was probably the one that went back and forth the most. It went through several different iterations at the outline stage, a lot of them involving alternative timelines.

“With the **Short Trips** we had a little more time in development as they are simpler to record than the full-cast productions. There was talk of possibly seeing the earlier Doctors interacting with the Kotturuh, but once the idea of pitting the Master against them

slid into place, we were rolling!”

The series features a number of newer writers to Big Finish.

Alfie says: “I was keen to get some new voices for the Eighth Doctor, while keeping the experience of veteran writers Matt Fitton and John Dorney to help guide the series as script editors.

“Carrie Thompson has previously written a lovely **Short Trips** for me, and I'm familiar with her darkly-comedic stage work. So when James said the opening story had to involve an Ood assassin named Brian, Carrie's name shot to the top of the list. Tracy Ann Baines was a recommendation by the wonderful Roland Moore as he'd worked with her on the Chinese version of **Humans**. And I loved Lizzie Hopley's **Torchwood: The Dying Room** and have been keen to work with her for a while.

“For the **Short Trips**, Sophie Iles wrote a great **Subscriber Short Trip**, and I knew that she was a massive fan of the Master. I wanted

to pair a newer **Who** writer with an older-hand, and Simon Guerrier is someone whose work I've admired for quite a while. Simon and Sophie had actually worked together on a previous project, so that all just came together beautifully.”

WHEN VORTEX asks Alfie what he can say about the ongoing story in the Big Finish releases, he tells us: “Oh, very little! Let's see now... The Eighth Doctor notices that time has gone wrong – and so have the Daleks. Wonders of the Universe have disappeared, whole new civilisations have popped into existence. They both have very different approaches as to how to fix it, but they need each other and so form a very uneasy alliance.”

The series opens with *He Kills Me, He Kills Me Not* by Carrie Thompson, with the Doctor on the desert world of Atharna. Looking to visit one of the Seven Hundred Wonders of the Universe, the Doctor is quickly



SOPHIE ILES WROTE A GREAT SUBSCRIBER SHORT TRIP, AND I KNEW THAT SHE WAS A MASSIVE FAN OF THE MASTER.

ALFIE SHAW

embroiled in a web of deceit. Worse than that, this Wonder of the Universe is missing – and he meets Brian, the Ood assassin.

Carrie says: “I had already written a **Short Trips** called *The Second Oldest Question*, produced by Alfie. He got in touch shortly after it was released and asked if I would be interested in writing a full-cast drama, and of course I said yes immediately! Alfie put me in touch with Matt Fitton, and my *Time Lord Victorious* adventure began.

“I was given a story outline as a guide and brief character descriptions. I was over the moon when I saw Brian the Ood on there. I have always had a soft

spot for the Ood, and writing his character was such fun.”

When asked by *Vortex* to sum up the story, she says: “**Doctor Who** meets **Westworld** meets sassy Ood.”

ALSO RELEASED in October are a pair of **Short Trips** featuring the Master. Alfie explains: “The two Master stories plug in to different bits of the greater narrative. One of them picks up a potentially loose looking thread from one of the Eighth Doctor stories, and the other shows the Kotturuh at their full height.”

Master Thief by Sophie Iles features Roger Delgado’s Master, and is narrated by – ahem – the master of impressions, Jon Culshaw.

Here, the Master wants to plunder one of the most secure vaults in the universe, the Repository. He’s got a plan and a deadly new weapon to assist him. However, as the Master quickly discovers, getting in might be easy, but getting away with it might cost him everything.

Sophie says: “It was a fascinating process because, for the first time, a lot of the story had been fleshed out for me. Due to this story intertwining with other events going on in the *Time Lord Victorious* project, I would get notes on expanding elements which would then tie in later. Funnily enough, I was asked initially to write it in a completely different tense. Working with Big Finish, you need to keep on your toes and work to



on the local species (possibly the Master went to that time on purpose). The Master tricks/convinces them to give the local species a very short lifespan/kill them instantly and takes what he needs.' We then went out for coffee and talked it over, and I wrote up the pitch that basically became *Lesser Evils*."

Simon sums up the story as: "The planet Alexis teems with life. When the Kotturuh arrive to impose death on it all, the peaceful creatures find that an unlikely hero is willing to defend them. It's the Master."

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SOPHIE ILES

what's required of you by the script editor and producer as things can always change last minute. It was a bit like writing my **Subscriber Shorts Trips** in that I had a lot of freedom to play with how I used the brief to tell my version of this story.

"To summarise the plot: the Master wants to get hold of something but, despite thinking that he's done his homework for his heist, not everything is as it seems."

Lesser Evils by Simon Guerrier features the Master as originally portrayed by actor Anthony Ainley. The Kotturuh have arrived on the planet Alexis to distribute the gift of death to its inhabitants. The only person standing in their way is a renegade Time Lord who

has sworn to protect the locals. A Time Lord called the Master...

Simon recalls: "Alfie Shaw emailed me on 6 January to ask if I'd be interested in working on two **Short Trips** stories – writing one and script editing the other – to tie in to the *Time Lord Victorious* epic. He didn't tell me what that epic was, but did mention I'd be working with Sophie Iles so I was happy to say yes. He then briefed me on *Time Lord Victorious* and once I'd read the storylines and things he sent, I pitched a few rough ideas. After feedback from James Goss who has been overseeing the project, Alfie sent me this on 11 January: 'The Master wants something from a planet, and the Kotturuh are there to pass sentence

NOVEMBER SEES the release of *The Enemy of My Enemy* by Tracy Ann Baines, where the people of Wrax are happy to begin peaceful negotiations with the Dalek Empire. The two species are preparing to engage in an alliance that will last throughout the ages. The only one who seems to object to this happy union is the Doctor. He knows that you can never trust the Daleks – and that the Wraxians should never have existed.

Tracy said: "I worked with Big Finish writer Roland Moore on a Chinese TV adaptation of **Humans** and he very kindly introduced me to Matt Fitton. Matt approached me at the start of the year and



asked if I would like to write for Big Finish on an exciting new, top secret, multi-platform project. Of course I was thrilled to be asked and to be given the opportunity to write for **Doctor Who**. I've been a fan since childhood and it's one of those dream jobs that as a writer I never thought I'd get to do.

"I was given an outline of the story *The Enemy of My Enemy*. I was also privy to the stories either side of my episode and how they all worked in conjunction with each other. My job was to bring the already outlined story and characters to dramatic life.

"*The Enemy of My Enemy* pits the Doctor against his greatest foe, the Daleks, yet not all is as it seems as the Doctor and the Daleks are forced to work together to solve the mystery of a time anomaly and contact with a civilisation that should never have existed."

TWO TIME Lord Victorious titles will be released in December. The first is *Mutually Assured Destruction* by Lizzie Hopley. Lizzie says: "I

was in the middle of another script and got a call from Matt asking could I drop everything to write, **'Die Hard** with Daleks, on a time ship falling through the Vortex – oh, and with the Eighth Doctor? I mean, he had me at, **'Die Hard** with Daleks!"

"So I said yes, and then panicked. This was going to be all-action and technical, it was going to need the Doctor to do clever sci-fi problem-solving and stuff, and I had to invent those things. I remember lying in bed thinking, I do character and dialogue, why have I got this storyline? But I can honestly say it's one of my favourite things that I've ever written for Big Finish.

"The Dalek Time Squad who are running the ship were new to me, so playing with them was great fun. As fast as they are doing their repairs, the Doctor is thwarting them at every turn. My favourite scene involves the Doctor and the scientist. No spoilers, but I hope Paul McGann and Nicholas Briggs had as much fun performing it as I did writing it.

"Matt gave me two other characters to throw in the mix. This opened up the whole story as it gave the Doctor someone to engage with, in addition to out-smarting the Daleks who don't know he's onboard and what he's doing."

Lizzie adds: "Sometimes when you're given a project by Big Finish you know it's going to take a lot of research, there are so many storylines out there and *Time Lord Victorious* is one



of them, but the framework of this particular adventure was so concise. I was basically told, 'this is all you need to know up to this point, and this is how we exit it' – and the rest was up to me."

The second December release, *Echoes of Extinction* by Alfie Shaw, will be available as an ASDA exclusive limited edition vinyl commissioned by Demon Records as well as on download from Big Finish.

Featuring Paul McGann and David Tennant on a side each, Alfie tells Vortex: "My brief came from James, not from me! The brief was two separate stories ('a double A side release' to directly quote the document), for the Eighth and Tenth Doctors. As I mentioned earlier, initially we were playing around with different timelines but those didn't quite work for

various reasons. James suggested I think of it like the films *Alien* and *Prometheus*, each one is its own story and you can watch either one first, but they inform each other.

"I wanted both adventures to explore the theme of greed and its corrupting nature, but they are different stories – I took the idea of *Alien* and *Prometheus* and ran with it! The Eighth Doctor episode traps him on a space station and it's quite claustrophobic, whereas the Tenth Doctor episode is set on a planet and he's teaming with a crew to uncover a mystery."

Alfie is delighted that he got to put words into the mouths of both Doctors. He explains: "I mean, getting to write for Paul McGann and David Tennant is a highlight in and of itself! It was a really interesting challenge to create two stories that had to be both

self-contained and also add-up to a whole, and that was something that we worked hard to achieve. Plus, when you're writing for two Doctors, there's the opportunity to do a bit of a back and forth between them. I've previously written a story which was basically two Doctors proactively bickering, so I wanted to go with a different direction for this one."

THE WRITERS are all over the moon to have worked on *Time Lord Victorious*, with Sophie adding: "It is such a massive project spanning over so many types of **Doctor Who** related media, to have even a small part in this event feels completely surreal. I'm still in awe that I've had a chance to write for the Master, for the company whose work has been

there for me when I've needed it. It's an enormous privilege."

Simon agrees: "It was really fun to be working on a story as the baddies in it were being developed. I got a description of the Kotturuh from James Goss. I think some of the questions and the way I wrote my story then fed into some of what he was thinking. And by the time I'd written my first draft, Anthony Lamb was working on the design of the Kotturuh for the cover art, so we had some fun discussions about how it all might fit in, me

I MEAN, GETTING TO WRITE FOR PAUL MCGANN AND DAVID TENNANT IS A HIGHLIGHT IN AND OF ITSELF!

ALFIE SHAW

incorporating what he said. That was really satisfying, joining it all up into one cohesive whole."

Tracy concurs: "I've been a fan of *Doctor Who* since I was a child and hiding behind sofas, so to be given the opportunity to be part of this world and to write for the Doctor was just too exciting for words! It also meant the pressure to do it justice was immense, especially when the story involves one of the Doctor's most iconic enemies, the Daleks. I'm so excited to hear and read all the stories and see how they all work together."

Carrie concludes: "I am thrilled! I was a huge fan of *Doctor Who* before I came to write for Big Finish (*Doctor Who* even featured in my wedding vows!), so it really has been a dream come true. It's a delight to be involved in a transmedia story with such huge scope; I can't wait to see how it unfolds across all of the other platforms." **VORTEX**

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BOOKCLUB

DRACULA

For many people the ultimate horror character is probably Count Dracula. Since first appearing in Bram Stoker's 1897 novel, the vampire has never been far from people's imaginations.

ACTOR MARK Gatiss has brought Stoker's legendary figure to audio life on several occasions, beginning with Jonathan Barnes's adaptation of the original text in the **Big Finish Classics** range.

Producer/director Scott Handcock says: "When I knew I'd be producing *Dracula*, I couldn't not ask Mark to play the part. Thankfully, he said yes, so we worked around his dates with the National Theatre. Mark brings everything you could want to the role – and more!"

Mark – a long-term Big Finish collaborator – was delighted to be involved with the production. He said: "I said yes immediately. As a child, I used to go around wearing a red curtain and re-enacting Christopher Lee's death throes from *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave!*

"*Dracula* is certainly one of my favourites. When I read the book as a teenager I was blown away by how modern and thrilling it was. *Frankenstein*, by contrast, is a tough read. It's an important book but not a great one. Whereas *Dracula* is the definition of a page turner!

"It's a very old vampire tradition, obviously, but Bram Stoker sort of

invented this rather Byronic, middle European backdrop for it all which persists to this day. It's just a wonderful, scary story, and in *Dracula* himself you have one of the great villains. Ancient, infinitely wise, infinitely corrupt – yet finally destroyed by the ingenuity of a few dedicated friends.

"It's a very good adaptation so in a way I just wanted to play that. I knew I wanted to give him a Hungarian/Romanian lilt but not do the full 'Lugosi' as it were. I was doing a play at the National Theatre at the time of the recording so my voice was very deep and gravelly which worked nicely. I wanted to do the whole thing very close to the microphone. Powerful people don't have to raise their voices..."

Writer Jonathan adds: "I wanted to be as faithful as possible to the original book – indeed that was part of the brief from Scott. The opening – the beautiful, eerie slice of gothic pastiche; that wonderful two-hander between Harker and the Count – has been recreated almost exactly. I think it would be accurate to say that it's one of the most faithful adaptations ever."

Scott adds: "I just remember feeling very honoured that executive producers Nicholas Briggs and Jason Haigh-Ellery trusted me to take this big, iconic classic into studio. It's a story and a character I love, and the combination of letters, journals and phonograph recordings from the original novel make it all the more appropriate for audio. We wanted to do it justice, and had a brilliant time recording it. It really was a very special project." **VORTEX**



DRACULA
BIG FINISH CLASSICS
RELEASED: MAY 2016
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The Paternoster Gang are back for the concluding box set of their first Big Finish series...

WE DELVED into the pasts of the Paternoster Gang – Madame Vastra, Strax and Jenny – in May’s release, *Heritage 3*, and discovered more about their individual backgrounds. Script editor and writer Matt Fitton says: “The theme of *Heritage* is the Paternoster Gang’s own personal histories coming back to bite them, and how they can face that together. We’ve had Jenny’s family history, Madame Vastra’s Silurian heritage and Strax’s

Sontaran past, which all play into what builds into a climactic finale.”

Neve McIntosh, Dan Starkey and Catrin Stewart effortlessly resurrected the trio on audio, having first been introduced in *A Good Man Goes to War* during Matt Smith’s second season of **Doctor Who**.

The Paternoster Gang: Heritage 4 is being released this October as we move from Autumn towards the festive season, with the appropriately titled box set opener,

Merry Christmas, Mr Jago. Matt says: “We had mentioned in the planning meeting that it would be lovely to have the Paternoster Gang meet up with Jago, but we decided to hold it off until this last set of adventures. Paul Morris has written some brilliantly funny **Jago & Litefoot** stories, and he also wrote the episode when Jago bumped into River in **The Diary of River Song: Series Six**. I knew this set would be coming out near the end of the year so I wanted to have Jago pop in for a Christmas special.” Producer David Richardson adds: “I think by the third box set that this series really began to earn its subtitle! We now know why it’s called *Heritage* – and that continues to be the theme of the thrilling final set of stories. And we have a brilliant part of **Doctor**



(l-r): Catrin Stewart, Trevor Cooper, Dan Starkey, Neva McIntosh, Elizabeth Burrow and Christopher Benjamin

*Some little nods
to Die Hard
and quite a big
tip of the hat
to Gremlins
(by way of a
notorious Star
Trek episode!).*

PAUL MORRIS

Who and Big Finish heritage joining the series in the first episode with Christopher Benjamin as Henry Gordon Jago in *Merry Christmas, Mr Jago*. Yes, it's a Christmas episode! And of course Jago dresses as Santa – how could he not?!"

Writer Paul Morris says: "The brief for this story came complete with all the important story points: Jago meets Vastra, Strax and Jenny at Christmas – with the possible involvement of an attempted burglary at Paternoster Row.

"It seemed to me that Matt's outline was riffing on *Home Alone*, which set me thinking of other Christmas films that might be worth paying homage to. There are a few that are similarly set mostly in a single house, and I thought there was mileage in exploring what secrets Vastra's home might be hiding...

"I couldn't fit all my ideas into sixty minutes, but among those that made it through are some little nods to *Die Hard* and quite a big tip

of the hat to *Gremlins* (by way of a notorious *Star Trek* episode!)." Jago, of course, has previously met Strax in *Jago & Litefoot*

& *Strax – The Haunting*. Paul adds: "Listeners have been clamouring for the Paternoster Gang to cross over with Jago and Litefoot, who indeed have had a hilarious encounter with Strax.

"Here we see Jago – alone over the festive season much as we last saw him in *Jago & Litefoot Forever* – invited to the gang's home for the first time. Again he spends much of the time stuck with Strax, which, with no disrespect to the other characters, is just the most irresistibly funny pairing one can make from the two teams. With no Litefoot or Vastra to help them, things very swiftly turn from bad to worse..."

THE SECOND story of the set, *The Ghost Writers*, has been written by Roy Gill, and it leads us into the finale. Roy explains: "I think this one evolved fairly organically, leading on from discussions we'd had for *Heritage 3*. There's a sense of things long buried bubbling up to the surface across the entire *Heritage* series, both in terms of our heroes' past and from the depths of the Earth itself... "Strax and Jenny discover something strange lurking in

the steam baths, while Madame Vastra is drawn to help antiquarian Edith Renner in her quest to join the mysterious A.D. Club. Who are the Ghost Writers and what power do they wield?"

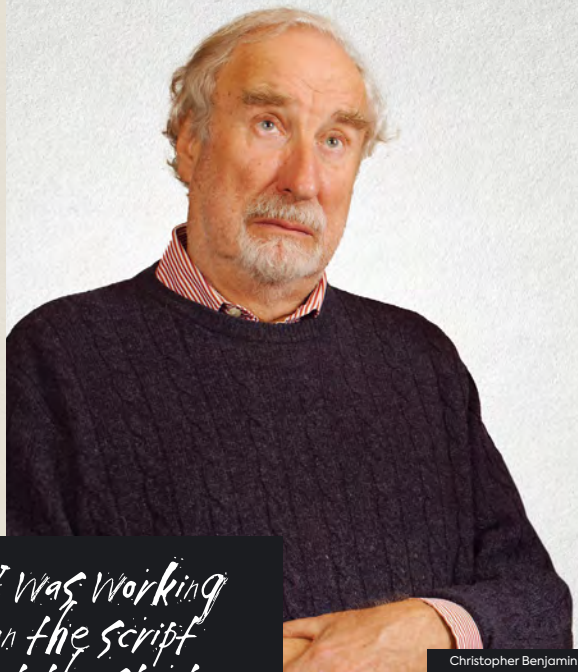
How did Roy find setting up the season finale? Roy explains: "It's a different dynamic. I'm used to creating and then wrapping up an entire narrative within sixty minutes! Matt and I worked quite closely on the concluding elements that cross between the last two stories and we script-edited each other's episodes. Hopefully between us we've come up with something that will give the series a big exciting finale – and remind us all what the Gang stand for.

"The Paternoster Gang

Heritage series sometimes touches on dark and scary moments and themes, but the Gang themselves always go about their adventures with a strong sense of justice, compassion and fun. The episodes may be set over a hundred years in the past, but these are pacy, contemporary stories. I was working on the script at the start of lockdown, and spending time with the Gang felt like a lovely escape from the worries of the world. I hope when people listen they're getting a chance to have a bit of a fun adventure and escape too!"

Matt adds: "Roy is so good at characters and will find emotion, paths and connections between characters that you don't expect. He and I worked together as the stories that finish this series are a big two-parter. We had a lot of discussion back and forth about the set-up, where we would leave everyone at the end of episode two, how we would end it, and what the threat is that's starting to emerge from the depths of the Earth."

HERITAGE 4 concludes with *Rulers of Earth* by Matt Fitton. Matt explains: "In *Rulers of Earth*, Vastra has to confront her demons and Jenny and Strax face their own challenges. There's a threat building across these box sets which now emerges and affects the whole way of life on Earth – and the Gang will have



Christopher Benjamin

I was working on the script at the start of lockdown, and spending time with the Gang felt like a lovely escape...

ROY GILL

to deal with it. Though there may be some help on hand from an unexpected ally...

"I like putting together the final pieces of the jigsaw, especially if it's something I've been script editing and been involved in the planning of. It's very satisfying to pay things off, to look at how things have happened over the course of the series."

Dan Starkey, who plays Strax, was able to contribute ideas towards the overall shape of the season.

He concludes: "It's lovely to cast our minds back to a sunny afternoon in crowded central London when Neve and I went to the Big Finish office to kick ideas around about our proposed new

series. I had my faithful tatty notebook in which I'd scrawled some of my suggestions, and it was great how our impressionistic points took shape under the eye of David and Matt into a rough arc.

"It's amazing what you can do on audio when you don't have to think about juggling prosthetics, CGI and period drama budgets! **The Paternoster Gang** is only just getting started, though, so I hope we're back for more soon." **VORTEX**



THE PATERNOSTER GANG
HERITAGE 4

RELEASED: **OCTOBER 2020**
FORMAT: **CD/DOWNLOAD**



ORDER NOW AT:
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NO COVER

COVER OPERATION

With the rise in use of the jewel case for most ranges, it sadly meant the loss of individual covers for each story which in my opinion was a bit of a shame. I was wondering why you made the decision to get rid of them? I always thought that if you're not going to do individual CDs (which is a good call, glad to see you're environmentally conscious and all that), you could put them on the inside booklets that are with the CDs much like the old CD illustrations from 2010-ish. It would also make the Big Finish app look a little more interesting than just seeing the box set cover four times.

Ivan

Nick: With our ever-expanding roster of productions and the ever-increasing costs of everything, we're always looking for ways of streamlining the process and making sure costs don't skyrocket. Fewer pieces of cover art means less time taken up in BBC approvals and a cost-saving where many other production costs are rising – so the decision was economic and organisational in nature. However, we're always revising and adjusting our plans, Ivan, so I will bring this up again.

VIRTUAL SANITY

Just a quick little note to say thanks for the Virtual Big Finish Day. I've been unable to attend any of the actual Big Finish days so it was nice to enjoy one without even leaving the house! It was clear that a lot of work went into the organisation and everything flowed perfectly. My favourite panels were probably the two Susans and the chat with Paul McGann and Alex Kingston, but it was

so obvious that everyone taking part was glad to be there and genuinely cares about the work Big Finish does. Jon Culshaw's regular appearances were great fun too. So, kudos to everyone involved in setting it up.

David Steel

Nick: Thanks very much, David, everyone worked so hard on it. Glad you loved our Susans' panel. My favourite part was when Claudia clearly thought there was an intruder in Carole's house! Hilarious!

TREASURE TROVE

I've just been having the most enjoyable few months as I have been digging into Big Finish! I am a new listener and it's been amazing to discover this whole treasure trove of **Doctor Who** content. I think it's wonderful that you are all still recording despite the global situation, and I'm particularly looking forward to *Out of Time*. I would like to give my sincerest thanks to the warehouse team and the customer service team who have really gone above and beyond in their duties. Take care all!

Hugh Brown

Nick: I'm joining you in the thanks to our team in the Big Finish Warehouse, Hugh. They do a tremendous job and are lovely people too.

CASTLES IN THE SKY

Since you've been exploring the works of the brilliant Gerry Anderson, is there any chance you'll explore the weird and wonderful **Lavender Castle**? One of Anderson's later projects, it's a sci-fi/fantasy adventure about a tight-knit cottage-slash-starship crew's quest to find and defend the Lavender Castle, the miraculous entropy-defying structure that keeps the universe alive from the nihilistic Dr Agon. There's room to explore both weird ideas (just look at the main characters!) and big ideas (while it's obviously not a religious work, it can be interpreted as being ABOUT religion and why so many people prefer it).

John Wallace

*Nick: Hi John, I am aware of this production through my good friend Jamie Anderson, but we have no plans to pursue this. I think it's a little bit niche, even for us. **VORTEX***



IT'S A TALE OF TWO TIME LORDS IN AN EXCITING
NEW BOX SET AS THE WAR MASTER RETURNS...

WAR GAMES

I"I'M IMMENSELY proud of the work we've done on **The War Master** range to date," says producer Scott Handcock, "so it's a great thrill to be able to reunite with Sir Derek Jacobi and tell even more stories with his particular incarnation of the Master."

The fifth box set in the series, **The War Master: Hearts of Darkness**, sees the Master pitted once again against Paul McGann's Eighth Doctor in an epic four-disc tale written by David Llewellyn and Lisa McMullin. And this time the Master is recruited by the Celestial Intervention Agency to track the Doctor down in deepest enemy territory.

Scott continues: "I love these box sets. There's something fascinating about stories that focus on anti-


heroes and villains. Creatively it's more challenging because you have to find an angle that makes the audience engage with the Master – and sort of root for him to succeed – even when he's doing the most despicable things!

"I suppose it's very loosely inspired by Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. It's about the Master being recruited by Narvin and the CIA to track the Doctor down in enemy territory. That's very much our starting point. Beyond that premise, it spirals off into an altogether different direction!

"At its core, it's a nice examination of what makes the Master and the Doctor the people they are, and the unique relationship that ties them together, no matter what faces they wear. And there's a lot more

going on! We veer from futuristic cities to spaceships, gothic castles to jungle planets. Each of the four episodes feels different tonally too: we go from heist film to action movie, then Universal horror to race-against-time thriller. It moves along at a fair old lick!"

The adventures in this set are: *The Edge of Redemption* by David Llewellyn, *The Scaramancer* by Lisa McMullin, *The Castle of Kurnos 5* by David Llewellyn and *The Cognition Shift* by Lisa McMullin. Scott explains: "It's all one big adventure divided into four distinct parts. Our opening episode sees Narvin recruit the Master to track down the Doctor and, in order to do so, features the Master assembling a crew to help him on this mission. The journey



Apocalypse soon...
(l-r): Derek Jacobi
and Paul McGann

IT'S A BIG ADVENTURE AS THERE'S INDIANA JONES MEETS BLADE RUNNER MEETS STAR WARS MEETS DOCTOR WHO. LISA McMULLIN

continues in episode two where their ship comes under fire from space pirates. Part three then fills us in a bit on the Doctor's activities and why the Time Lords are so keen on the Master tracking him down. Then, of course, the final episode throws our leads into a confrontation as the Master's scheme comes to fruition..."

Writer David says: "The title should give a clue as to the basic

set-up for anyone familiar with the Conrad novella or *Apocalypse Now*. There was something else in the brief that I really can't talk about without spoiling it, something that was Scott's idea...

"I really enjoyed creating a new world and new characters in *The Edge of Redemption*. That was a lot of fun, giving each of them some sort of back story, their reasons for being in this awful place.

"We start with a heist set on the semi-spherical planet of Redemption followed by a bit of swashbuckling derring-do, a sci-fi homage to the Universal horror movies of old and ending with... well, that I cannot tell you."

Lisa says of *The Scaramancer*: "I really wanted to do something with space pirates in it! Originally, I wanted to call the Scaramancer the 'Buccaneer', but I was told that was too whimsical, so she became the Scaramancer as it sounds more threatening! She sounds like someone that would kill you.

"I wanted swashbuckling in space but with laser swords! I had to remind myself that I was writing for a family audience – you can't go chopping up people, even on audio! It's a big adventure as there's **Indiana Jones** meets **Blade Runner** meets **Star Wars** meets **Doctor Who**."

Of the writing process, there was some liaison between David and Lisa. David explains: "We chatted quite a bit early on, bouncing ideas back and forth, and we made a conscious decision to split our episodes up so that we weren't each writing a block. That way it might feel more like a cohesive adventure, each part leading into the next. We liaised again towards the end of the process, mostly so that episodes one to three were consistent. But I still have no idea how part four ends because I shied away from reading it. I'll find out when I listen to it! It's nice to have some surprises with something you've worked on."

The series concludes with *The Cognition Shift*, and Lisa says: "Being given the conclusion was scary – I almost didn't want to do it as they are always so good.

"The Master is trying to take over the universe... and the Doctor doesn't want him to. He's doing something called the Cognition Shift... and that's pretty much all I can say!

"It's an alien world, there's a quest-type adventure, and it stems from the novel *Heart of Darkness*. There's venturing into unknown, dangerous territory and a figure that's revered by some but turns out to have ulterior motives... that was the starting point."

IT'S ALWAYS A PLEASURE TO WORK WITH DEREK AND PAUL INDIVIDUALLY, BUT HAVING THEM TOGETHER IN STUDIO WAS AN ABSOLUTE BLAST.

SCOTT HANDCOCK

MUSICIAN IOAN Morris has written the scores for this box set. He admits: "I love it. Derek Jacobi is never less than brilliant. When I'm 'spotting' the episodes (i.e. identifying where music is needed), I sometimes find myself drawn into his performance and need to remind myself there's a job to do! He's hypnotising in his own way, appropriately enough. And then you add Paul McGann to the mix – what could be better?"

Does having an established theme tune, plus the four note beat, help Ioan when it comes to structuring the incidental score? He says: "Those elements, plus various motifs I've established in the previous *The War Master* sets I've scored are definitely helpful. They're the baseline tone or

character of the music. Once that's in place it's easier to introduce new or contrasting elements depending on the requirements of the story. In this series, for instance, the Doctor is as much of a presence as the Master and that's reflected in the music.

"There are a couple of cues introduced in the third episode and developed in the fourth that I'm particularly fond of. They feature a trumpet, which for whatever reason is an instrument I haven't used in my scores before now. When a story takes an unexpected direction I'll often find that extends to my choices as a composer and that's what happened here. More broadly, the whole series was a joy. I couldn't wait to find out what happened next."

Joe Meiners has worked on the sound design, and this set challenged him to create soundscapes for four very different locations. He reveals: "I actually prefer projects with a lot of range such as this, I find that it gives me more opportunity to use the sound design to support the story. I'm a Ridley Scott fan so I enjoy doing little nods here and there; the futuristic Edge City I imagined as something *Blade Runner*-esque albeit cleaner. Making things like the weather and people sound pleasant gives me room to let things deteriorate as the story progresses and becomes more reckless. I really enjoy horror and the sound design of it, so for me it was all trying to build throughout the story. Sadly, I didn't get to scare people in this one!"

SCOTT DIRECTED the series, as well as producing it, and was delighted to have Sir Derek Jacobi and Paul McGann in studio together. He explains: "It's always a pleasure to work with Derek and Paul individually, but having them together in studio was an absolute blast. For the third box set, *Rage of the Time Lords*, Paul was unable to record with Derek due to his shooting dates on *Holby City* changing, so he picked his role up in Cardiff several months later. Both gave such sublime performances you





(l-r): Paul McGann, Amanda Shodeko, Colin McFarlane, Luyanda Unati Lewis-Nyawo, Henry Nott and Derek Jacobi

AS A DIRECTOR, YOUR LIFE IS ALWAYS MADE SO MUCH EASIER IF YOU GET THE CASTING RIGHT...

SCOTT HANDCOCK

would never have known they recorded separately, but there's certainly an extra spark when you get actors of that calibre together. And when you have two brilliant actors you want to make sure the material challenges them, which I think it's safe to say these scripts did. There were a lot of tricky bits but they both embraced the madness of it all!"

Scott was also particularly pleased with the other actors joining the established pair. "Oh, the entire guest cast for this box set is fabulous. As a director, your life is always made so much easier if you get the casting right – which is just

as much about getting great actors as it is about getting people who will gel together quickly in studio.

"Colin McFarlane is an actor I've loved for years and worked with a fair bit at Big Finish, so when the role of a grizzled space captain came up, I knew he'd jump at the chance. And he's a great foil for both the Master and the Scaramancer: an invading space pirate playing brilliantly by Luyanda Unati Lewis-Nyawo. I'd only worked with Unati once before on the Fifth Doctor story, *Thin Time*, but she instantly impressed and I knew she'd have a ball playing an uncompromising space pirate. And, of course, Tom Webster brought those characters to life perfectly on the cover art! It's a fantastically striking image."

It's already been announced that the War Master will return in a sixth season, and Scott teases: "**The War Master: Killing Time** is a fantastic set of adventures written by James Goss and Lou Morgan that form a loosely connected arc. James opens and closes the set with a story featuring the Master attempting to take over an empire in order to exploit the fallout from the Time

War, while the middle two episodes by Lou are more intimate character pieces, pitting the War Master against classic companions Jo Jones and Nyssa, long after they left the Doctor. Jo and Nyssa both have a strong history with the Master, so it's a real thrill to pit them against such a dangerous incarnation, and Derek really enjoyed learning more about the Master's past." **VORTEX**



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Oblique SHADOWS

THE DALEKS RETURN
TO **DOCTOR WHO**
THE MONTHLY
ADVENTURES...

“NECESSITY REALLY is the mother of invention,” says Big Finish senior producer David Richardson. “In the very early days of lockdown we knew we would have to adapt some of our plans for **The Monthly Adventures**. What we needed were two releases that could be achieved with one Doctor and four guest cast members, recording remotely in a block. When you have a brief like that, it’s not at all restricting – instead it forces you to do something different, something bold, something fun.

“So what we have in *Shadow of the Daleks 1* and *2* are eight half-hour

stories in which the Fifth Doctor lands in different times, different places... and keeps meeting the same faces but as different people. The mystery is heightened by the oblique appearances of Daleks. But not only that – Time War-era Daleks!

“The Fifth Doctor is not where he should be. Something is very wrong. And so we had a lot of fun with these adventures – weaving them together, pushing in different directions and getting to play with the audacious concept. And Peter Davison really enjoyed it. We had a fantastic and esteemed guest cast, and by the end of recording it was almost like we were in a real studio together, sipping coffee in the green room and chatting like old friends.”

Script editor and writer John Dorney adds: “It’s basically an anthology release in the old style but with a bit of

a twist, with its own identity. There’s a recurring theme running through it, but that doesn’t mean that the stories don’t work as stand-alone episodes. The general brief was to work with the same three recurring actors – Deriva Kirwin, Anjali Mohindra and Jamie Parker – although technically you might veer towards a fourth, who features occasionally. And it’s a specific age range and type for them, returning throughout time. The actors recur, but not the characters. Then there’s the question of why that’s a thing...”

THE FIRST story in *Shadow of the Daleks 1*, out this October, is *Aimed at the Body* by James Kettle. James says: “I’m not sure why John asked me to write the first episode but it was good news for me, it allowed me to get some mysteries going without having to worry myself



The third story of the set is *The Bookshop at the End of the World* by Simon Guerrier. Simon says: "I [initially] thought of cricket, because it's the Fifth Doctor. But James Kettle had already pitched a story about cricket so I scratched that and had another think.

"The Doctor is just one of the troubled souls taking shelter in a second-hand bookshop that is also a bar. But he's forgotten who he is... As for the Time War, my initial draft of the script dealt with it in only the vaguest terms because that's what I've always had to do before. But David and John wanted the Time War much more present in my story, so I beefed that up in the rewrite. That was exciting. But I think the real challenge was in coming up with something different for the cast to ensure that they weren't playing the same roles as in the other stories."

Interlude by Dan Starkey concludes the October release. He says: "I was invited to pitch for the *Shadow of the Daleks* sequence after a brief explanation of the limitations the

about paying them off! Paul Cornell once said (regarding *The Ultimate Foe*) that it's easy to write the first episode of anything. How easy it was for me, let the listener judge...!

"It's one of those **Doctor Who** cut and shuts – putting together two unrelated events and seeing what happens. In this case, it's the historical facts of the Bodyline scandal where aggressive tactics in a series of Ashes cricket matches led to a national outcry in Australia and a near-collapse in relations between Australia and the UK, and the mysterious mood of the classic film *Picnic at Hanging Rock*. Oh, and Daleks. John suggested the Bodyline element and I was very keen. I'd done a lot of reading up on it for a feature film project (still gloriously unmade) and was fascinated by the character of then-England captain Douglas Jardine, who's at the centre of this story. That said, it's not a story that's intended to be only for cricket-watchers. Though being into Daleks helps."

Lightspeed by Jonathan Morris is the second episode. He says: "Since 2014 I have been pitching a story idea called *Lightspeed* – not just for audio but for comic strips, for short story collections. And, as is the case with ideas that aren't used, you don't just forget them, you keep mulling them over while going for walks or trying

IT'S ONE OF THOSE **DOCTOR WHO** CUT AND SHUTS – PUTTING TOGETHER TWO UNRELATED EVENTS AND SEEING WHAT HAPPENS.

JAMES KETTLE

to get to sleep. It becomes a process of refining the idea, adding to it, coming up with jokes and characters and updating the pitch every six months or so. So while *Lightspeed* was written very quickly, you could say that it was over five years in the thinking!

"This also meant that when I pitched it to David Richardson he already knew what the story was I was talking about, and then when I got to write it I had five years of bottled-up enthusiasm inside me, all raring to go. I couldn't wait to get started – and once I started, I couldn't stop!

"It is exactly what it says on the tin. The Doctor is trapped on a spaceship with a motley crew and even motlier passengers – and the spaceship has been sabotaged so that if it ever drops below the speed of light, it will explode! And then, if that wasn't enough, things begin to go wrong..."

production team were dealing with in the early stages of lockdown. I came up with about four or five outlines after the instruction from John that we were to go for 'high concept' settings, the better to embrace the stand-alone episode structure.

"The germ of my idea was the Doctor having to team up with a company of travelling players, like the ones in *Hamlet*, in order to get his TARDIS back. Everything else spidered out from that really.

"I hadn't written for the Fifth Doctor before, but it's 'my' period – from when I was a kid and the programme first etched itself onto my imagination – and it's great to exploit his mixture of decency and understated sarcasm. The Time War only impinges into my story as a spur to the wider mystery, but it's good to have him thinking on his feet through most of the story."



Peter Davison

IN NOVEMBER, *Shadow of the Daleks 2* opens with *The Echo Chamber* by Jonathan Barnes. He says: "It was really a dream kind of brief, a chance to tell a one-off, largely self-contained short story starring the Fifth Doctor. I'd had the idea which formed the basis of *The Echo Chamber* bouncing around in my head for months and this really did seem like a wonderful opportunity to see how it might work in practice."

When asked to sum up the story, Jonathan grins: "Hopefully amusing and intriguing with a dash of satire, in a format which *Doctor Who* hasn't quite done before. The Doctor finds himself, inexplicably, the host of a radio talkshow where people phone in with incredibly strong opinions on whatever happens to be the issue of the day. He's not sure quite how he's got there or who is profiting from his situation but he's determined to find out. And the fact that, out of all the incarnations (unlike, say, the First or the Sixth), the Fifth Doctor is perhaps the worst suited to the job, only adds to the fun."

Towards Zero has been written by Roland Moore, and he tells *Vortex*: "This was such a brilliant project! It was a fascinating brief. I thought of three characters that would be great for the actors to play, giving them something different to do that they wouldn't have done in the other stories.

"It's a murder mystery set in a country house but the twist is that the Doctor is both the investigator and the victim. It was exciting to write a story with obvious links to Agatha Christie (the title comes from one her novels but also specifically relates to what happens in this story). Intentionally, I used characters who you would expect to find in a drawing room mystery. There is a fair bit of humour and some nods to other aspects of *Doctor*

Effect and Cause by John Dorney concludes the eight-episode adventure. He tells *Vortex*: "I can say practically nothing about *Effect and Cause*. It's the one that's most fully Dalek-y. They are often hinted at – a background presence or given a brief mention in previous adventures – but this is properly a Dalek story. This is the end of the trail the Doctor has been following where everything is resolved.

"During the initial discussions it made sense for me to write the final one that ties everything up since I was going to script edit these stories. I could bring the things together that everyone else had written, as I would see the scripts more closely than the others.

"I had interesting emails back and forth about what the general arc of

THIS IS THE END OF THE TRAIL THE DOCTOR HAS BEEN FOLLOWING WHERE EVERYTHING IS RESOLVED...

JOHN DORNEY

Who. Can the Doctor solve his own murder? I hope it'll be fun for people!"

The penultimate story is the ominous-sounding *Castle Hydra*, written by Lizzie Hopley.

She says: "*Castle Hydra* was born from a heap of ideas I pitched for a story arc based around Daleks. It was great having such initial freedom but things soon sped up and before I knew it people were fixing on incredible ideas and John had written the final episode! During all of this, the vision of *Castle Hydra* arrived in my brain. It took some refining as it was complicated but I ran with it.

"It's hard to say too much without giving away spoilers. The Daleks are a theme running through the stories and John's final episode is an ingenious pay off to a very clever idea.

"The Hydra is the many headed snake from mythology and seemed a perfect name for a castle that isn't as straightforward as you'd think. John and David thought it was crazily elaborate but thankfully went with it!"

the series could be. Due to having a gap in my schedule I wrote this one early on, before I had all of the other storylines through, which meant I could send it out to the writers and say, 'This is what we're aiming for,' and I could feed bits of their scripts back into mine. It was a creative to and fro." **VORTEX**

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Where it's supposed to be grim."

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- **DW • TIME LORD VICTORIOUS:**
The Enemy of My Enemy (2, EIGHTH DOCTOR)
- **DW • SHORT TRIPS:**
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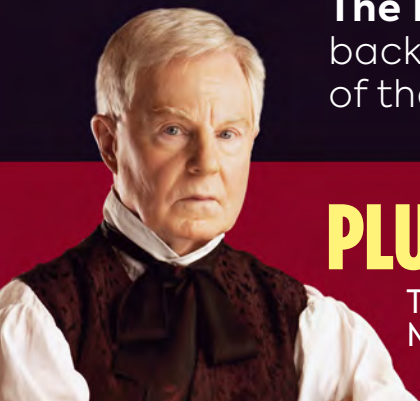
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