

THE **BIG FINISH** MAGAZINE

VORTEX



ISSUE 143
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BIG FINISH
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STORIES

MOON MADNESS! **SPACE=1999**

ONE SMALL STEP FOR MAN, ONE GIANT WORMHOLE FOR **MOONBASE ALPHA!**

ALSO INSIDE: GALLIFREY – TIME WAR

RESURRECTION OF **RASSILON**





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THE AVENGERS

STEED AND TARA KING

TARA-RA BOOM-DE-AY

TIME TRAVEL and raucous royals await **The Avengers** in 2021, as John Steed and Tara King return in four new tales of diabolical masterminds needing to be put back in their place!

Julian Wadham and Emily Woodward reprise their roles as Steed and Tara in **The Avengers: The Comic Strip Adaptations** Volume Five.

The adventures are: *Whatever Next?* by John Dorney, where an eccentric scientist correctly predicts an imminent asteroid collision and so Steed and Tara are dispatched to uncover the basis of his precognitive powers.

How Does Your Garden Grow? by Dan Starkey sees the plants around an Air Force base grow to prodigious proportions over night.

A Very Civil War by Roland Moore where a robbery ties into a local Civil War re-enactment society. Finishing up the set is *Mother's Day* by Sarah Grochala. Mother is called back to his alma mater to present the school prizes – but someone doesn't want him to survive the ceremony. **VORTEX**

■ RELEASED: APRIL 2021
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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EDITORIAL

HAPPY NEW Year! It's 2021 and I think we can all say that we're rather happy to see the back of 2020 – a year of much sadness with so many of us losing loved ones, and being in isolation at home for weeks at a time.

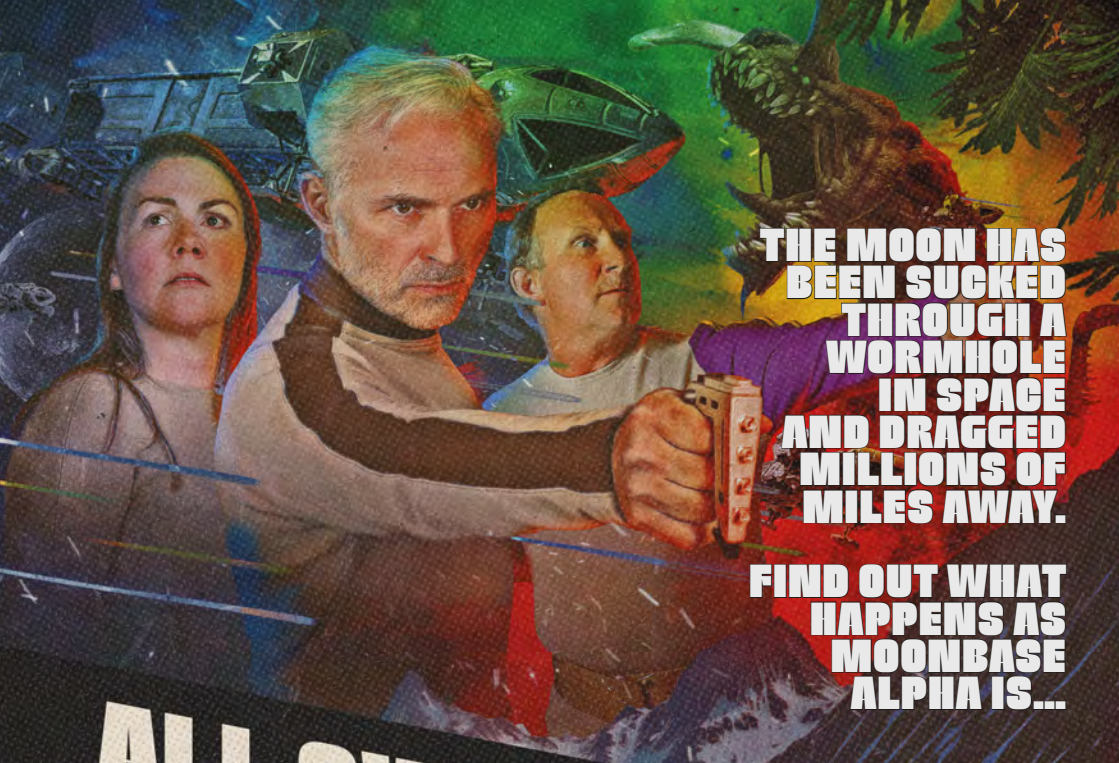
I've said it before but Big Finish has been a huge help for me during the lockdowns. My daily walks have seen me power through a host of things I haven't listened to since their original release and going back to them has let me appreciate them all over again.

This year looks like it's going to be another audio cracker! Lockdown gave Big Finish the chance to record a host of exciting things with David Tennant as **Dalek Universe** and **Out of Time 2** – *The Gates of Hell* are on the way. We've also got Christopher Eccleston's hugely-anticipated return as the Doctor to look forward to too – I won't say anything else because I'll just melt into a puddle of excitement!

And there's so much more. I love Rory Williams and can't wait for **The Lone Centurion** starring Arthur Darvill. There's more **War Master**, **Stranded 2**, Eric Roberts in **Master!**, a **Torchwood** special release, more **Lost Stories** with Tom Baker, **The War Doctor Begins** – and that's just the things that have been officially announced as being on the way!

As I type, I'm already planning ahead and thinking about who I can interview for each of them. After all, we do like a wee exclusive interview now and again...

Stay safe, and I wish you and yours a 2021 full of happiness and excitement. **VORTEX**



**THE MOON HAS
BEEN SUCKED
THROUGH A
WORMHOLE
IN SPACE
AND DRAGGED
MILLIONS OF
MILES AWAY.**

**FIND OUT WHAT
HAPPENS AS
MOONBASE
ALPHA IS...**

ALL OVER THE

SPACE

WITH THE Moon removed from its usual place in orbit around the Earth, the crew of Moonbase Alpha are coming to terms with their new lives. In *Space: 1999 Volume One*, out for release in February, we find Commander Koenig, Dr Russell and the rest of the Alphans where they

were at the end of *Breakaway*, the first Big Finish *Space: 1999* release.

Big Finish executive producer Nicholas Briggs, writer and director of *Breakaway* and director of this new set of tales, admits he was delighted with the response to *Breakaway*. He confirms: "Yes, I was really pleased as I'd put my heart and soul into

it. There'd been a lot of meticulous storylining with great input from producer David Richardson and script editor Jamie Anderson. I feel we really had that story nailed down. The only problem with the scripting process was that it ran long and gave us a double-length episode, which in retrospect I think was



Mark Bonnar
(Commander John Koenig)

SPACE: 1999 AND MARTIN LANDAU WERE TWO OF MY FAVOURITE THINGS GROWING UP.

MARK BONNAR

no bad thing. So after all that hard work, it is really gratifying to see how quickly and well it's sold – and that all the reviews are so positive.

"I feel it is vindication of the approach of our reinvention of the series. When you are so close to something it's easy to lose perspective, and by the time you've been through all the sound design, music and artwork notes there's often a part of you that says, well I think this is good but how on Earth can I actually tell?! So great reviews and congratulations from the audience give a huge feeling of relief."

The **Space: 1999** range stars Mark Bonnar as Commander John Koenig in the role made famous on television by Martin Landau.

Mark says: "**Space: 1999** and Martin Landau were two of my favourite

things growing up. I auditioned for this part of Koenig. I sent in a recording saying some lines and, because I've played the Eleven for Big Finish, they knew I could do different voices. They specifically wanted an American accent and they wanted to know if I could maintain it.

"The tone had to be right but because I know **Space: 1999** so well, it made it a little easier than when you're doing a 'normal' audition. I've always been interested in science fiction – whether it's **Star Wars**, **Doctor Who**, **Alien** or **The Thing** – I've got a bit of history in being a fan. It's a sign of a misspent youth! I know the genre fairly well and **Space: 1999** in particular.

"Unlike the kind of characters that I usually play who can be untrustworthy and often cross

the line, Koenig's a solid good guy and very decisive."

Nick adds: "Mark Bonnar is one of those actors who has an inner power and a really tangible imagination. He can be anyone. He can be strong and dependable, he can be conniving and manipulative, charming, fierce, weird, loving... there's really no limit to what he can do.

"He's a chameleon, but a rare chameleon in that he can also play those heroic, leading roles where he takes the audience on the journey with him. That last attribute and the fact that we knew he loves science fiction and **Space: 1999** in particular led to us casting him. And also that he's so brilliant and rewarding to work with."

THE NEW box set features two original stories, plus a third inspired by one of the TV episodes. Nick continues: "There's a good amount of variety in this volume. Given that our poor protagonists are stuck on the Moon with their trajectory out of control, there's a potential that the series itself could drift as aimlessly. But we've focussed both on the characters and the diverse situations they find themselves in."

THE SIREN CALL by Andrew Smith sees the Alphans respond to the signal detected at the end of *Breakaway*, a signal which somehow caused the catastrophe of drawing the Moon away. Nick says: "*The Siren Call* deals with the immediate aftermath of their odyssey, with a new threat emerging. *Death's Other Dominion* is an adaptation of the TV episode of the same name, but there's a much more analytical approach to the



Maria Teresa Creasey
(Dr Helena Russell)

monsters, death and destruction. There's a real atmosphere of threat, and Andrew Smith has created a great storyline. For me, the major challenge has been to draw all the stories together in terms of character development, their speech patterns and their relationships with each other."

WRITER ANDREW tells *Vortex*: "It was really lovely to be asked to be involved. Nick's adaptation of *Breakaway* was so good it's set things up perfectly for the box set. I get the impression people are really excited to hear these as **Space: 1999** has such a fan base, and to be involved in anything Gerry Anderson related is very exciting.

"While I was writing **Blake's 7** there were things that gave me a rush of nostalgia when I found myself writing iconic phrases like 'down and safe' and 'confirmed' – and here there were things like 'comlock' and 'Eagles' that really took me back.

"I remember watching the broadcast of *Breakaway*, the first



Mark Bonnar

UNPICKING THE ILLOGICALITIES OF THE ORIGINAL PLOT WAS QUITE A TASK... NICHOLAS BRIGGS

bizarre set of circumstances our crew find themselves in. Unpicking the illogicalities of the original plot was quite a task, with writer Roland Moore and I really working hard to solve the problems. A lot of that

original episode was held together by the sheer force of Brian Blessed's fairly youthful performance. But at its heart, it's a story about hopes dashed. *Goldilocks* is more of a terrifying action set piece, with

episode, and all of that series quite clearly and really loving it. I had actually read the novelisation of *Breakaway* before I saw it on TV.

"The *Daily Record* newspaper had a large **Space: 1999** spread with colour photographs (a novelty at the time) – there was a lot of excitement about it.

"Nick sent me *Breakaway* before it was released so I could have a listen to everyone and get their voices, and see how Big Finish were approaching it.

"What we're doing with these subsequent episodes is bringing in the alien elements, and I got the very nice job of exploring the mystery planet from *Breakaway* when they are getting

Chris Jarman
(Dr Chaney Rowland)

a signal from the planet Meta. In the TV series there was this very odd thing of picking up the signal from Meta, and then it's never mentioned again.

"*The Siren Call*, my first episode, is all about that, when the Moon approaches Meta, and someone arrives on the Moon whose intentions are unclear. There's some nice stuff going on – some of the Alphans go to Meta and have new experiences there, and we have some action happening on the Moon. And we make a point that this is (ostensibly at least) humanity's first ever meeting with an alien species."

As a confirmed fan of the original series, Andrew was able to get the voice of Big Finish's Koenig in mind when he wrote the dialogue: "I did have Mark Bonnar in my head, actually, rather than Martin Landau of the TV series, when writing the Commander's scenes. Nick was very keen that the characters were updated, so they were themselves

reimagined. Writing for Mark Bonnar is always a treat – he brings so much to each part he plays.

"Helena Russell is really quite different from how she was in the TV series, she's much more challenging with Koenig, they are less of a couple than they were.

"We've also got Simmons, who appeared in a couple of episodes in the original series, and is now part of the action for a longer time than on TV. He's played by Tim Bentinck which is great, with him having been in a couple of my other stories and worked a lot for Big Finish. He's just a perfect Simmons."

DEATH'S OTHER *Dominion* by Roland Moore is adapted from the original teleplay by Anthony Terpiloff and Elizabeth Barrows, in which a voice calls to the Alphans from a mysterious, snowbound planet. When

Commander Koenig and his team investigate, they discover the planet Nival holds many terrible secrets.

Roland explains: "The run was going to include both new episodes and adaptations of classic episodes from the TV series and David Richardson approached me to ask if I fancied adapting *Death's Other Dominion*. I was very excited about the prospect so I said yes!

"It's an episode that fans remember – not least for Brian Blessed's nuanced performance as Doctor Rowland. It was clever casting as

IT'S AN EPISODE THAT FANS REMEMBER – NOT LEAST FOR BRIAN BLESSED'S NUANCED PERFORMANCE...

ROLAND MOORE

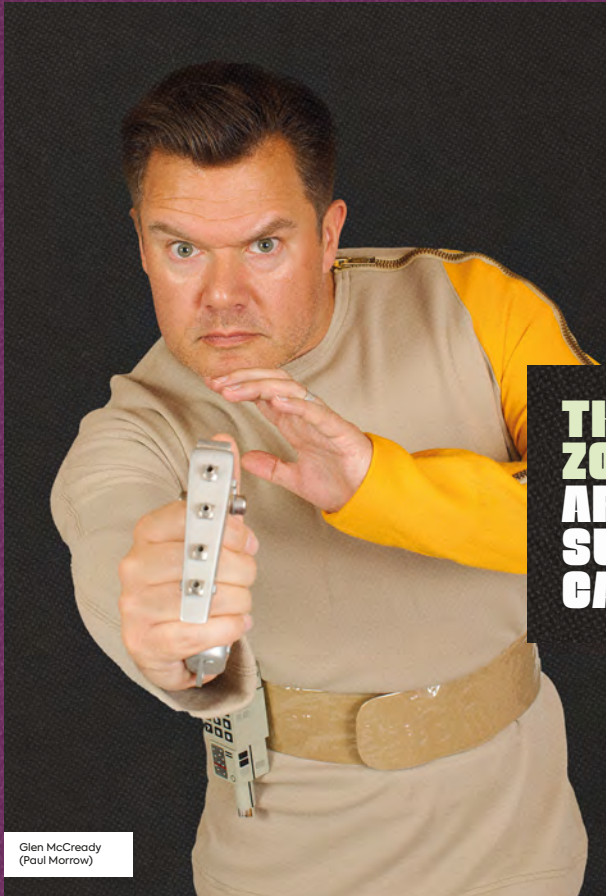
the obvious route would have been to cast him as Jack Tanner – a far more eccentric character played brilliantly by John Shrapnel.

"It also has some massive themes crammed into it – immortality, destiny, evolution and the choice to have children. Some shows would make that last an entire series!

"I was rewatching the series anyway – totally coincidentally – when David asked me about writing one. So yes, I'd watched it before and I've watched it a few more times, noting everything from story beats to specific lines of dialogue. One technical thing I always marvel about with this episode is how effective the snow scenes are. It must have been a small studio but it looks very convincing as Koenig, Russell and Bergman are overcome by the cold in a desolate wasteland."

Vortex asks Roland how difficult it was to update and revamp the story for audio?

He reveals: "Adapting it for the medium of audio wasn't a massive



Glen McCready
(Paul Morrow)

change in itself. What did change was some of the story. I mentioned that you've got all these big themes vying for space and the trouble with the original is that because of the running time some of it is unexplored or unresolved. There are a few plot hiccups too – such as Doctor Rowland wanting the Alphans to vote on coming to join him at the same time as he is experimenting on Bergman. You'd think he might realise that could influence the result...

"So I stripped it back and looked at the motivation. Why does Doctor Rowland want the Alphans to join him? Why would the Alphans want to come? How

would Koenig, Helena and Victor react to be offered immortality?

"I had so many directions I could take things in. Nick was a huge help in streamlining the storyline – thanks Nick! In the end I hope we've given the themes space to breathe and be explored – while keeping the tension and intrigue going until the end."

THE FINAL adventure, *Goldilocks* by Andrew Smith, sees the Moon pass by the perfect planet on which to live and thrive – not too hot, not too cold. But not all forms of life in the

THE GOLDILOCKS ZONE IS THE AREA AROUND A SUN WHERE LIFE CAN EXIST.

ANDREW SMITH

Goldilocks zone are peaceful. Andrew says: "Before writing both scripts I went back and watched the original TV series and took notes. I remembered having a toy Eagle Transporter made by Dinky so I went on eBay and had a look and there was one which I bought and put by my desk as I wrote. It turns out the person I got it from was Iain Meadows – he's doing the sound on this series – it's a small world!"

"The toy actually contributed to *Goldilocks*. If you look at a planetary system, the goldilocks zone is the area around a sun where life can exist. The scientific definition is that it's where water can exist on a planet in its natural liquid state.

"In my story when the Moon goes into a new planetary system, they are looking at planets in the goldilocks zone as somewhere they can potentially start a new life. They find a planet and go down to the surface.

"I needed two story strands and the initial thing was to have two Eagles. One would go down to the planet with a scientific expeditionary group and the other would have Koenig and Bergman flying off to see what what else was on the planet.



Nicholas Asbury

What were the main challenges in this box set?

Iain replies: "Any time you encounter creatures not of this world you want your sound to live up to the description on the page and the reactions that the cast have committed to the recording, so that's always something to look out for. There's one creature that needed quite a bit of time on it before I felt I had the right effect, but I'm pleased with the result – it sounds big and it sounds mean and it spells trouble for the Moonbase Alpha team... I'm not saying any more as I don't want to spoil anything!"

Joining the team for this set is Joe Kraemer who scored the music for the adventures.

He reveals: "I was pretty young when *Space: 1999* first aired in the US – I didn't watch a lot of TV in the 1970s apart from cartoons! I saw some episodes of the show in re-runs after I had caught *Star*

MARTIN LANDAU HAD A CERTAIN CEREBRAL QUALITY...

JOE KRAEMER

Amaka Okafor
(Dashka Kano)

The Dinky Eagle toy has a button you push which leaves the main pod section behind, and this gave me the idea that only one Eagle should go down to the planet then separate with Koenig and Bergman flying off. This leaves the expeditionary group headed by Helena Russell with no means of getting away and the worry of what might happen if the Eagle can't get back to them. So, my little toy has contributed!"

AS MENTIONED by Andrew, Iain Meadows is working on the sound design for this set. As he'd already worked on *Breakaway*, Iain didn't need to create the main sound effects before

starting on this series. He explains:

"It always helps if you have a suite of sound effects (FX) ready to go because it means you have more time to concentrate on the new FX that need to be created for specific areas of Moonbase Alpha or planetary environments. Additionally this time round, as the recordings were made in lockdown, there was some sound restoration and matching to be done in the dialogue edit to bring all the recordings up to the same level before I could then start placing the various characters where they needed to be in story terms. That said, the cast has been brilliant in handling the technical side of things as they record their audio."

Wars fever and loved everything space-oriented; there was a moodiness to the show that caught my interest then, an undercurrent of darkness that stuck with me.

"Years later when I was in high school I saw some of the episodes on cable and was again captivated by the show's tone. Martin Landau had a certain cerebral quality that was memorable to me, and that British aesthetic to sci-fi hit me even harder.

"It has always seemed to me that *Space: 1999* was a property that should be revisited so I was very excited when Big Finish announced they were making new stories in that universe. And to be invited to contribute music to this volume is really an honour, and a fantastic opportunity for me to be involved with another iconic part of my childhood."



(l-r): Mark Bonnar, Maria Teresa Creasey and an amusing prop

excellent, the audio you hear over Zoom while recording isn't good. So for *Death's Other Dominion* and *Goldilocks* we are using Cleanfeed. In that process, you can hear every aural and vocal nuance recorded across the internet. We also record at each actor's location so we have a belt and braces approach to capturing all the audio perfectly. Throughout all of it I really got the feeling that it was great for the cast to be back together after *Breakaway*. They all work well together and I make sure that there's plenty of time for humour and chatter.

WE ARE USING CLEANFEED. IN THAT PROCESS, YOU CAN HEAR EVERY AURAL AND VOCAL NUANCE RECORDED ACROSS THE INTERNET

NICHOLAS BRIGGS



Glen McCready

to score these stories was if I could work in that Gray style or if they were looking for something that was a departure from that, and I was delighted when they told me they definitely wanted me to honour and reflect Gray's work.

"Certain legal stipulations prevents Big Finish composers from directly quoting material from the original properties, so I spend a great deal of time early in the process absorbing the primary sources. I then then try and pay tribute to that in my scores without infringing on the intellectual property. For this set I hope to give the listener shades of Barry Gray without actually quoting his work directly."

"For me, it was great to see how much the actors had really taken possession of their characters. With *Breakaway* we were all feeling our way, and I think we came up with something special. I had expected that the cast would need reminding of their *Breakaway* achievements but I was quite taken aback when they arrived for the first of the new recordings with their characters totally in place. Much easier for directing and it meant we could concentrate on the subtle nuances which add more layers." **VORTEX**

The first TV series featured music by long-term Gerry Anderson collaborator Barry Gray – are there subtle nods to Barry Gray in the music?

Joe laughs: "My first question to Nick and David when I was asked

THIS SERIES was recorded in lockdown which posed its own challenges for Nick as director.

He says: "We started out recording *The Siren Call* using Zoom. And although the remote recording quality from each actor is

SPACE: 1999 VOLUME ONE

- RELEASED: FEBRUARY 2021
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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BOOK CLUB

DOCTOR WHO: MANY MASTERS!



AS WE celebrate 50 years since the first appearance of the Master, we turn back the clock to 2016 when the Master appeared in *Doctor Who – The Monthly Adventures*. In three exciting releases *And You Will Obey Me*, *Vampire of the Mind* and *The Two Masters*, we encounter two incarnations of the Master played by Geoffrey Beevers and Alex Macqueen, up against the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Doctors.

Script Editor for the three releases, Alan Barnes, himself wrote *And You Will Obey Me*. He says: “The Master often gets presented as a time meddler or chaotic force but actually I think his USP is that he’s a tempter, a Mephistophelean figure – he always offers his collaborators a bargain that he never actually intends to deliver on. I’d had the idea of a ‘seduction of the innocents’ story in my head for a while, playing around with the notion that the Master uses children or teenagers for his own ends. A kind of inversion of the film *Whistle Down the Wind* with Alan Bates as a convict who persuades a group of children (including the actor Alan Barnes!) that he’s actually Jesus.”

Justin Richards wrote *Vampire of the Mind* and says: “The brief I was given by Alan was fairly broad – the main thing I needed to include was something from the Master and the Doctor’s past. I don’t think Alan stipulated what sort of thing it had to be – just something that would ultimately act as a clue to the Doctor as to what was going on, and which implied the Master had been planning things for a while.



Or at least had picked up on some plan or scheme never brought to fruition in the past. Rather than a character or a device or returning alien menace, I decided on a place.”

The Two Masters by John Dorney brought the Masters together. Alan recalls: “*The Two Masters* story was an idea that had been suggested a lot but I wasn’t sure how the drama would work: it had to be more than just competing to kill the Doctor, or collaborating for the sake of it. Then one day I thought, what if the emaciated Master snatched the body of his later self? And suddenly there was a reason to draw them into conflict, and there was something to build towards dramatically across the course of the Master trilogy – i.e. the reveal that there’d been a witcheroo.”

Writer John concludes: “It was an exciting adventure to be given. I was very aware when I got the brief that I should give the audience what they wanted from a multiple-Master story. Alan was very keen on the body swap thing with the Masters at the heart of the story, but I still wanted there to be plenty of scenes where the Masters are talking and he is meeting himself, just as we would want when the Doctors meet. I was trying to get them back to being themselves as soon as I possibly could. It was a fun one to be given.” **VORTEX**

AND YOU WILL OBEY ME

■ RELEASED: APRIL 2016

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/obey

VAMPIRE OF THE MIND

■ RELEASED: MAY 2016

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/dominus

THE TWO MASTERS

■ RELEASED: JUNE 2016

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/gorlans



LEELA, ROMANA, BRAXIATEL AND NARVIN
ARE BACK ON GALLIFREY – AND NOW THEY'RE...

OUT OF TIME

IRONICALLY FOR a race who are the lords of time, the clock has been ticking for the people of Gallifrey! Slowly but surely they've been dragged into a temporal conflict with the Daleks, and the former great and good of the planet have been split up and dispersed through all places and all whens.

Gone are the days of the petty squabbles and power plays to become Lord President – Rassilon has been resurrected to lead his people once more.

February 2021 sees the release of **Gallifrey: Time War Volume Four**. For those who are unfamiliar with recent events, producer Scott Handcock explains: "We're still in the relatively early days of the Last Great Time War and drawing this particular iteration of **Gallifrey** to a close. Over the last twelve episodes we've seen our heroes put through the wringer

both personally and politically. Leela was lost and only recently recovered and meanwhile Romana and Narvin are exiles, with Romana sacrificing her own safety to allow her friends to escape the Dalek forces.

"In this new set, we pick up from the end of *Volume Three* and are immediately thrust into brand new conspiracies as Narvin and Leela find themselves fighting against both the Daleks and Rassilon's forces. A lot's been happening in their absence and, while their faces are welcome to some, there are others who would happily see them dead. As Leela tackles the present, Narvin finds himself confronted with his past – and even Romana and Braxiatel feature in an otherworldly realm. Then, we face the future with Rassilon coming head to head with the Dalek Emperor! They're four great stories individually but also a satisfying conclusion to the four

volume saga. And so much of that is down to Matt Fitton who's been a brilliant script editor and really kept the plates spinning since *Volume One!*"

This fourth box set in the Time War saga sees the casting of a new Rassilon, with Richard Armitage becoming the greatest of all Time Lords. Scott says: "Obviously we knew Rassilon would have to feature, and we'd decided very early on to resurrect him for a temporary incarnation back in the second volume where he was played magnificently by Terrence Hardiman. Terrence brought a wonderfully ancient menace to it and, while it would have been great to have heard more from that incarnation, we knew we wanted a younger, more headstrong figure for our finale.

"You have to think about who can deliver that kind of role and do justice to the lore that comes with it. Richard Armitage is not

Richard Armitage
(Rassilon)

only an incredible actor, he's also a brilliantly nuanced audio performer, and brought everything I could have wanted to the character. And obviously, he's no stranger to big film and television franchises so he instantly understood Rassilon's place in the **Doctor Who** universe and the significance that comes with it."

DECEPTION, BY Lisa

McMullin, opens the set. She says: "I've picked up directly from the end of the previous box set. I read the script of the last adventure, and I knew where it was ultimately going. I had to bring Leela back into the fray and get her and Narvin ready to return to Gallifrey by the end of the episode.

"Leela is investigating a new hideous weapon that's been discovered, like landmines in the space-time vortex, so there are pockets of poisoned vortex that you can stray into. It makes you believe that all of your worst nightmares are attacking you. I started writing it just after we marked the centenary of the

(l-r): Pippa Bennett-Warner (Livva)
and Sean Carlsen (Narvin)

end of the First World War so I had things like post-traumatic stress in mind, and I wanted to create a Time Lord version of that. Leela is trying to rescue people from these traps and is wondering who's created such a horrendous weapon in the first place. Is it the Daleks? There are plenty of double-crosses, with everyone turning on each other, and no one knows who's on which side any more.

"We had a new Rassilon to play with as well but I didn't know it would be Richard Armitage when I started writing. I had an older voice in my head, more gravelly, and when I heard it was Richard, I was really excited - he's so good.

Narvin is front and centre in *Dissolution* by Lou Morgan. She says: "The idea came out of an email conversation with script editor Matt. He was keen for the opening episodes to essentially be a pair: two stories that start at the same point then

I WAS MORE
THAN HAPPY
TO WRITE AN
EPISODE WITH
NARVIN AT
THE HEART
OF IT. LOU MORGAN

diverge to follow different characters over the same time. Lisa would take the first one and I took the second. Other than the set-up we had pretty free rein with where we took the individual stories. Luckily Lisa was keen to write a story for Leela and I was more than happy to write an episode with Narvin at the heart of it. After everything that happened on *Unity*, the opportunity to explore

a different side of his character – with Rayo in tow – was too good to miss. Does he have a more paternal side? What does that look like? And how will he process and cope with everything he's been through... and what might he still have to face?

Lou particularly enjoyed writing for Seán Carlsen's part: "I have a huge amount of affection for Narvin, and one of the best things about him as a character is his journey. Whenever you talk about 'a journey', there's always a risk of it sounding like a cliché, but in Narvin's case it's absolutely true. He has changed as a direct result of his experiences and the influence of others around him. So this was a chance to put him front and centre and dig into that development, forcing him into a position where he has to confront it. I love the way Gary Russell's *Erasure* contrasts younger and more mature versions of Narvin, so I was trying to nod towards that a little in the mix as well. From a writer's perspective too,



I LIKED THE IDEA OF ROMANA AS DANTE, JOURNEYING INTO A KIND OF HELLISH UNDERWORLD...

DAVID LLEWELLYN

there's something lovely about the challenge of coming up with lines for Narvin that Seán can (hopefully!) have fun with."

Seán adds: "It's always great to have the band back – we're a bit like an intergalactic Fleetwood Mac! People come and go but when we're all together it feels really special.

"It's really lovely to see everyone but in the last recording block it was just Lalla Ward, myself and guest actors. In all the years that we've worked together and seen each other at conventions, this was the first time Lalla and I have really had a chance to sit and talk

– all week. We chatted about all sorts including personal things which we shared. She's wonderful.

"And Louise Jameson has also been fantastic over the years. I've not seen as much of her of late due to the recording schedules, but she's such an incredible actress. She brings so much heart to everything, and is great company too. Our characters have all gone off on various journeys and now, here we are, back together again."

ROMANA MAKES

a return in *Beyond* by David Llewellyn, who says of his brief: "I knew it would be the story that brought Romana back into the fold after the events of *Unity*, and I knew it would feature Irving Braxiatel, but other than that the brief was fairly open. I hit on the idea of *Beyond* while re-reading bits of *Dante*. I liked the idea of Romana as Dante, journeying into a kind of hellish underworld with Brax as her Virgil.



(l-r): Steven Flynn (Fillius), Louise Jameson (Leela), Debbie Korley (Castine) and Samuel Gosrani (Eris)

“Romana and Brax journey into a dimension where moments and events destroyed in the Time War replay themselves on endless loops, like an entire universe of groundhog days. Braxiatel is searching for the Parallax, the one thing that could end the war – but what is it? And can they find it before an ancient threat catches up with them? You will, of course, have to listen to it to find out!”

“The good thing about writing a script featuring longstanding characters is that you already have their voices in mind as you’re working on it. There’s a history there so the chemistry between, say, Romana and Brax, doesn’t need as much work as it already exists.”

Homecoming by series script editor Matt concludes the volume, and Scott says: “It’s never easy writing the story that has to wrap up loose ends for a box set – let alone one that has to wrap up a

IT’S ALWAYS GREAT TO HAVE THE BAND BACK – WE’RE A BIT LIKE AN INTERGALACTIC FLEETWOOD MAC!

SEÁN CARLSEN

sixteen-part story arc – but Matt has done a fantastic job. It helps that he’s been across every episode since the first **Time War** volume (and many other **Time War** ranges at Big Finish) so he really understands the characters and their significance in the bigger picture. Obviously plotting is a huge element of it, but Matt’s also great at getting under a character’s skin and working out what makes them tick, so the final episode really pushes everyone to their limits. Some fates are exactly what you’d hope for, while others are more surprising.”

Scott also directed the dramas. He laughs: “It’s hard to talk about studio days because there were a LOT of them! We were lucky to grab most of our regulars before the pandemic but scheduling everyone meant things were even more out of order than they usually are, and Seán Carlsen especially was leaping around all over the place! I think Lalla’s contribution was written two years ago and recorded eighteen months ahead of release as we knew she wouldn’t be easily available but still wanted her to be included in the finale. It’s fair to say, it’s a box set that’s had a lot of planning!”

POST-PRODUCTION has been handled by the usual **Gallifrey** team of Ioan Morris on music and Russell McGee on sound design.

Ioan admits: "It's a pleasure to work on **Gallifrey**. It feels like home base in a lot of ways. This will be the sixth set I've scored (two with Rhys Downing and four on my own) and to be able to establish and develop the sound of a series over that length of time has been wonderful. It's unlike anything else I've worked on in that respect.

"The biggest influence on my approach for **Gallifrey** has always been the *Blade Runner* score by Vangelis. I'll use a touch of Dudley Simpson-like organ here and there because it's obviously a sound people associate with the Time Lords, but in an



Lalla Ward (Romana)

last four years to make sure the details are correct for the listeners."

MY APPROACH FOR GALLIFREY HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE *BLADE RUNNER* SCORE BY VANGELIS.

IOAN MORRIS

otherwise synth-heavy score, I find it's best used sparingly.

"I think of **Gallifrey** more in terms of sounds and tone than any particular themes. It's grand but restrained and there's always tension bubbling away underneath. I try to treat every story as an individual adventure but there's certainly a continuity across sets and series, which is something I like and I hope is pleasing to long-term listeners."

Russell adds: "The biggest challenge on these sets has been a combination of things. One, quite a few actors were needed in order to wrap up all of the storylines which meant that Scott was juggling multiple recording sessions to accommodate them all. That larger cast meant more work in post production as I cut together the dialogue edits to make it sound like the actors were in the room together. Scott even went so far as



to provide me with a copy of his studio schedule to help organize the post-production process.

Honestly, this is understating the complexity it took everyone – the actors, Scott, studio engineers and myself – to bring it all to life.

"And two, given I had created so many sound effects through the course of the first three volumes, it meant that at times I was digging back through all three sets to make sure I kept the continuity of sound consistent for the entire series. From small things like re-using the door sound effects from the Septima Gallifreyan war ship in *Volume Three* to bringing back Brax's scanner from *Volume One*. I have been opening old projects from the

IS THIS the end of **Gallifrey** as a Big Finish series? Scott says: "It's certainly my final end for **Gallifrey**! I'm not sure if Big Finish are planning more but I've been around for ten different series now. I first started with

Gallifrey back in 2011 so it feels like this is a natural point to bid farewell. We're drawing a line under this particular instalment of the **Gallifrey** saga, and saying goodbye to a lot of the characters we've followed (in one form or another), so it feels right for me to stop as well. We've been careful not to write anyone into a corner though, just in case, and I'll be crossing my fingers as much as anyone for more to come!"

Russell adds: "I'd like to take a moment to just thank Scott. Honestly, he has been the best part of working on this range for the last four years. I love the man, his caring attention to detail, and the respect and freedom he gives any artist that works with him from the actors to the sound designers to the musicians." **VORTEX**

GALLIFREY: TIME WAR 4

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THE EMPIRE STRIKING BACK

In 2016 you did a **Cyberman** box set covering all the episodes of that series. You have just released two **Dalek Empire** box sets that are similar to the **Cyberman** one but they are digital only. Because a lot of **Dalek Empire** is now out of print, would it be possible to make these two new box sets available as a limited physical release? I only started listening to Big Finish with the **Torchwood**

releases in 2015, so my collection has some holes for those out of print things, and whilst I have some of **Dalek Empire** physically, I'd happily pay for two box sets in order to have it on CDs. Thanks for the digital box sets at least.

Louise Wade

Nick: I wouldn't rule out a limited CD repackaging and re-press of Dalek Empire, Louise, but we're not currently planning it. We're trying to reduce our CD stock for environmental and storage reasons.

SHARING THE CARE

I feel that this letter is long overdue. A year ago I began suffering severe migraines which impeded my ability to do much but put my head in a pillow. Around then was the time I discovered you through a Christmas gift of **The Diary of River Song Series One** and a download of **The Chimes of**

Midnight. Since then I've been in love with you, and currently have a collection of about a hundred CDs including the limited **The Legacy of Time**, and since lockdown you've become more important to me in my life than ever. I humbly thank you for your continual care for all **Doctor Who** fans. **'Plum Pudding'**

Nick: We are sincerely honoured to have become so important in your life. And you are very important to us too, Plum Pudding. Thanks so much for sharing your love with us.

23RD CENTURY EARTH ALLIANCE

I'm a long time follower/listener of Big Finish since your very first **Bernice** releases. I'm not much of an emailer (perhaps I should be). Have you ever tried to acquire the rights to do the late, great 90s SF show **Babylon 5**? Thanks for all the years of entertainment.

Daniel

Nick: There has occasionally been talk about this, but no deal has ever emerged yet, Daniel.

DOCTORS 4, COMPANIONS 5

I was wondering, will **The Four Doctors** and **The Five Companions** be available to purchase individually once **The Monthly Adventures** range ends or will they still be subscriber exclusives?

Joshua Duffy

*Nick: We made a commitment, Joshua, to always associate these releases with their corresponding **The Monthly Adventures** subscription. But when those subscriptions are no longer in operation, other options for releasing them will become available to us. We'll be looking into the best course of action.*

UPGRADE REQUEST

I was wondering, will you do a series three of **Cyberman**. I enjoyed series one and two and I'm hoping to see it make a return. **Finlay Kidd**

*Nick: There are no plans at the moment but it's something I'd love to do one day, Finlay. **VORTEX***

THERE'S SO MUCH BIG FINISH APPRECIATION ON THE INTERNET, IT'S JUST...

FAN-TASTIC!

WE TALK TO SOME OF BIG FINISH'S MOST ARDENT LISTENERS ABOUT WHAT THEY LOOK FOR IN AN AUDIO ADVENTURE AND HOW THEY GO ABOUT COMMUNICATING THEIR REVIEWS TO A WIDER AUDIENCE.

HAVE WE discovered a new classic tale? Are we alone in our views? Did others enjoy the bits that we did?

One way to answer those questions is via the internet.

There are plenty of review sites and podcasts to choose from, one of which is the Tin Dog Podcast started by Michael Gilroy-Sinclair.

Michael has been listening to Big Finish since its early years and tells *Vortex*: "My first Big Finish was *The Marian Conspiracy*. It was released on tape... remember those? And it was a free gift in a goodie bag at the first *SFX* magazine convention in Blackpool. Not long after that Paul McGann was announced as coming to Big Finish and I asked for his first release, *Storm Warning*, as a birthday gift. After hearing him and India Fisher playing Charlotte Pollard, I was hooked. I would borrow the CDs from my mate Andy – he left me some lovely signed CDs in his will.

"I started the podcast in 2006 and was amongst the first wave along with Podshock, about a month behind Radio Free Skaro, but my shows were short and only hosted by me – a unique thing at the time. My wife suggested the name as it covered both the old and new

series of *Doctor Who*, and K9 was my favourite companion when I was small so it was a no brainer."

If you prefer reading reviews, IndieMacUser has been carrying them online for a while. They have several reviewers, one of whom is Jacob Licklider.



Jacob says: "I have been listening to Big Finish since 2014 and I write reviews for both IndieMacUser and my own personal blog where I pride myself on honest constructive critique. I've always found that listening to audio is best whenever I'm doing something else as well – I don't like silence and I have to be doing something with my hands!"

IF YOU'RE interested in hearing more from the people involved at Big Finish, the Australian *The Sirens of Audio* podcast could be your thing.

Co-host Dwayne Bunney says: "I've been listening to Big Finish productions since 2002–3. My first, and still my favourite story, is *The*

MY INTENTION WAS ALWAYS TO HAVE A CO-PRESENTER BUT FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER THAT DIDN'T HAPPEN UNTIL EPISODE 15...

DWAYNE BUNNEY

Chimes of Midnight. I wanted to do a *Doctor Who* related podcast but there are so many around I needed to have a point of difference. I enjoy the adventures from Big Finish far more than the television series so with that in mind I decided to produce a podcast that puts a spotlight on the *audio* universe of *Doctor Who*.



Michael Gilroy-Sinclair

"My intention was always to have a co-presenter but for one reason or another that didn't happen until episode 15 when Philip Edney came on board – and now we are having a ball. Philip and I both share the Big Finish mantra, 'We Love Stories', so we are usually very positive about the adventures we talk about. We both have our own individual takes on how we look at the stories and what we get out of them.

"We've been privileged to have quite a few guests on the podcast including Stephen Wyatt, Helen Goldwyn, Joe Lidster, John Ainsworth, Chris Chapman, Adam Richard, Nicholas Briggs, Rob Valentine, Louise Jameson, Scott Handcock, Katharine Armitage, Nabil Shaban, Dominic Glynn, John Dorney, Jane Slavin, Paul Morris and Janet Fielding. We also like to bring on fellow podcasters to talk about their audio favourites, or we attempt to convert them to audio drama if they are yet to take the plunge."



Jacob Licklider

While 2020 was a difficult year due to the Coronavirus pandemic, Big Finish continued to function and plenty of releases were enjoyed by the podcasters. Michael says: "I love **Torchwood Soho** and **The Paternoster Gang: Heritage**, but then again I've been drawn to the

brilliant **The Robots** and **Star Cops** before coming back to a release I've listened to a few times since it came out. I am, after all, a **Doctor Who** fan and *The Lovecraft Invasion* really was a highlight for me this year."

Jacob adds: "My favourite release of 2020 is kind of a tie between **Gallifrey: Time War 3** and **The Eighth Doctor: Time War 4** as both hit at an emotional level. What really draws me in about audio drama, and especially what Big Finish does, is the absolute freedom to tell practically any story. There isn't the restriction of a visual medium, meaning that the

WHAT REALLY DRAMS ME IN ABOUT AUDIO DRAMA, AND ESPECIALLY WHAT BIG FINISH DOES, IS THE ABSOLUTE FREEDOM TO TELL PRACTICALLY ANY STORY. JACOB LICKLIDER

listener can easily be tricked by a plot into thinking a story is going one way while it's actually going in a completely different direction. There's also just a different type of acting that audio drama employs as the performer only has their voice to convey so much more than is written in the script."

Dwayne tells us that his favourite Big Finish is: "*Cry of the Vulturis*. The alien soundscape in this one blew me away and I adore this particular crew consisting of the Sixth Doctor, Constance and Flip." **VORTEX**

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BAPS



DRIVING FOR COFFEE

TORCHWOOD IS 15 YEARS OLD IN 2021 – AND BIG FINISH IS CELEBRATING!

THE TORCHWOOD team return for another year of danger, drama and darkness in 2021. There are plenty of surprises yet to be unveiled, but the producer of Big Finish's **Torchwood** range, James Goss tell us: "2021 is **Torchwood's** fifteenth year and our fiftieth regular monthly release comes out.

"We've got a lot of joys planned starting with our January release, *Coffee*, which celebrates the first three series of **Torchwood** from the point-of-view of the owners of a cafe in Cardiff Bay.

"We've wanted to do *Coffee* for ages. There's a brilliant Mike Mignola comic set in the middle of an alien invasion about some people in a coffee shop and I was inspired by that as a starting point for an outsider's view of Torchwood – the people who live down the Bay and how they feel about this insane and magnificent institution.

"It's not all been plain sailing this year because of the pandemic with bits of the world coming into and out of lockdown at random, but it did mean I was able to work on writing *Coffee*. We managed to go from outline to studio-ready draft in just seven days which was a lot down to Tim Foley script editing and Scott Handcock casting it as we went.

"That it sounds so lovely is immensely down to the actors that Scott assembled – hopefully you'll

fall in love with the staff in the cafe just as much as you do with Gareth's immaculate portrayal of all the facets of Ianto. Fans of Ianto's accent should listen carefully to the changes."

Scott adds: "This is an idea James has had in the back of his head for quite some time – it's certainly something that's cropped up in conversation every now and again. I'm wary of giving too much away because it's a typical James character piece that seems quite straightforward on the surface but has plenty of little twists and surprises. At its core it's the story of three Cardiff residents who come to know one another through their appreciation of coffee. But most importantly it's the story of Ianto Jones, and all the humour, horror and heartbreak that comes with it. It really is a

charming exploration of one of Torchwood's favourite characters."

FEBRUARY'S RELEASE is

Drive by David Llewellyn who tells us: "James Goss suggested we do something a little like the Michael Mann film *Collateral*, in which a taxi driver (Jamie Foxx) takes an assassin (Tom Cruise) around Los Angeles as he picks off various targets. In our version, a Cardiff cabby drives somebody from Torchwood around the city while they work on a case.

"I think much of the fun comes from the differences between our characters, Tosh and Fawzia. Tosh is a relative newcomer to the city, Fawzia was born and bred there. Tosh is a technological whizkid, Fawzia is old school but knows the city like

NICHOLAS BRIGGS SENT ME AN EMAIL TO ASK IF I MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN PRODUCING SOMETHING FOR BIG FINISH. I SAID YES, OF COURSE!

EMILY COOK

the back of her hand. They're both experts at what they do. Taxi drivers get to see every side of a city, from hen parties and stag dos to the seamy, criminal underworld, so it was fun seeing how Tosh reacts to that."

David admits his highlight was: "Being able to write a warts-and-all Cardiff story that is also absolutely **Torchwood**. We've done it before with *Dead Man's Switch* and particularly Mali Ann Rees's character Zoe. Her and Fawzia and some of the supporting characters in *Drive* represent the Cardiff I know, in different ways."

Joining the production team on this is Emily Cook. She explains: "It was in June, shortly after all of the **Doctor Who** lockdown stuff I'd been doing, that Nicholas Briggs sent me an email to ask if I might be



Above: Gareth David-Lloyd
Inset: Burn Gorman

interested in producing something for Big Finish. I said yes, of course!

"There are various stages to the Big Finish production process, sometimes over quite a long period of time, so I've been piecing together the workflow by working on several projects at once. The way I see it, the producer is the superglue of the production. It's the producer's job to hold everything together and to ensure that everyone is suitably equipped to do their job as brilliantly as they can. Good organisation and communication is certainly required. Lots of emails to agents and actors. Lots of reading fantastic scripts. It's a very creative and collaborative process, which I love!

"I've not got much to compare it to yet, but so far things have gone well. It's really rewarding to see your hours of organising and the hard work of many talented people come together as an audio drama comes to life before your very ears. Of the productions I've worked on, **Torchwood: Drive** is the first one I'll hear as a finished release and I can't wait! It's a great story with a great cast and part of



a great range. I was too young to watch **Torchwood** when it first came out on television. I remember being annoyed that my parents wouldn't let me see this exciting **Doctor Who** spin-off – so I'm making up for that now. All these years later, I'm thrilled to be involved in the production of a new **Torchwood** adventure!"

MARCH'S STORY is *Lease of Life* by Aaron Lamont, who previously worked with James on the **Dark Shadows** range. He says: "The brief was a combination of very loose and extremely specific – they know what they're looking for and if they spot it, they'll develop it.

The biggest thing (repeated throughout the brief) was 'no bants' and I struggled initially to figure out what that actually meant! [*Bants/banter – conversation or behaviour that is funny and not serious*]. But **Torchwood's** all about tension when it comes down to it – a bad situation gets worse and worse until there's

THE BIGGEST THING WAS 'NO BANTS' AND I STRUGGLED INITIALLY TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THAT ACTUALLY MEANT!

AARON LAMONT

seemingly no way out of it. So I fed that into the plot's structure. Everybody in *Lease of Life* is having the worst day ever.

"It's the most awful house share in the world! I'm sure most people have lived in places that are truly, utterly grotty – mould creeping up the walls, bad plumbing, etc, but for me, it goes beyond the building and more about the people. Specifically it's about living in shared accommodation. That can be quite dehumanising – living with people you don't really know, who you might not speak or interact with much, if at all. *Lease of Life* is set in the middle of a housing crisis so a lot of people are living like this at the moment. And what nobody in those circumstances wants is for the **Torchwood** team to arrive on their doorstep to tell them they're all going to die... **VORTEX**


TORCHWOOD: COFFEE

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TORCHWOOD: DRIVE

■ RELEASED: FEBRUARY 2021 • CD/DL

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TORCHWOOD: LEASE OF LIFE

■ RELEASED: MARCH 2021 • CD/DL

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COLONY OF FEAR**

(273, SIXTH DOCTOR AND CONSTANCE)

**DW | THE FOURTH DOCTOR
ADVENTURES:**

Series Ten: Volume One (BOX SET)

**DW | THE FOURTH DOCTOR
ADVENTURES:**

The World Traders (10.1) **DLO**

**DW | THE FOURTH DOCTOR
ADVENTURES:**

The Day of the Comet (10.2) **DLO**

DW | MASTERFUL:

Limited Edition (BOX SET)

Standard Edition (BOX SET)

DW | THE DIARY OF RIVER SONG:

Series Eight (BOX SET)

TORCHWOOD: Coffee (46)

**BERNICE SUMMERFIELD:
The Big Hunt** (AUDIOBOOK) **DLO**

FEBRUARY 2021

DW | THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES:

The Blazing Hour
(274, FIFTH DOCTOR AND TURLOUGH)

**DW | THE FOURTH DOCTOR
ADVENTURES:**

Series Ten: Volume Two (BOX SET)

**DW | THE FOURTH DOCTOR
ADVENTURES:**

The Tribulations of Thadeus Nook
(10.3) **DLO**

**DW | THE FOURTH DOCTOR
ADVENTURES:**

The Primeval Design (10.4) **DLO**

DW | TIME LORD VICTORIOUS:

Echoes of Extinction
(EIGHTH AND TENTH DOCTORS) **DLO**

DW | GALLIFREY: Time War 4 (BOX SET)

TORCHWOOD: Drive (47)

BERNICE SUMMERFIELD:

The Tree of Life (AUDIOBOOK) **DLO**

SPACE: 1999: Volume 1 (BOX SET)

MARCH 2021

DW | THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES:

The End of the Beginning
(275, FIFTH, SIXTH, SEVENTH, EIGHTH DOCTOR)

**DW | THE EIGHTH DOCTOR
ADVENTURES: Stranded 2** (BOX SET)

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(6.1, THE FOURTH DOCTOR)

DW | THE LOST STORIES:

The Doomsday Contract
(6.2, THE FOURTH DOCTOR)

DW | SPECIAL RELEASES:

Master! (BOX SET)

TORCHWOOD: Lease of Life (48)

BLAKE'S 7:

Lucifer: Genesis (AUDIOBOOK) **DLO**

APRIL 2021

**DW | THE TENTH DOCTOR
ADVENTURES: Dalek Universe 1**
(BOX SET)

**DW | THE TENTH DOCTOR
ADVENTURES: Dalek Universe 1**
(LIMITED VINYL EDITION)

**DW | THE FOURTH DOCTOR
ADVENTURES:**

Dalek Universe: The Dalek Protocol
(6.1, THE FOURTH DOCTOR)

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ADVENTURES: Volume 5** (BOX SET)

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THE **BIG FINISH** MAGAZINE

VORTEX

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**ARE THE LORDS OF TIME
RUNNING OUT OF TIME?**

ALSO INSIDE • SPACE: 1999

ONE SMALL STEP FOR MAN, ONE GIANT
WORMHOLE FOR **MOONBASE ALPHA!**

ISSUE 143
JANUARY 2021
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