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ALSO INSIDE

A PAIR OF DOCS IN A **PARADOX! OUT OF TIME 2: THE GATES OF HELL** DAVID & PETER'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE



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AN ELEMENTARY **RETURN** THE GAME IS AFOOT ONCE MORE...

SHERLOCK HOLMES

is coming back for two new cases with Nicholas Briggs and Richard Earl reprising their roles as Sherlock Holmes and Dr John Watson. Arthur Conan Doyle's beloved pair will go head-to-head with new and old villains alike, using their wits to solve the unsolvable.

The Seamstress of Peckham Rye (out for release in July), and The Fiends of New York City (to be released next year), have both been written by Jonathan Barnes.

Producer Emma Haigh tells Vortex: "Bringing the world of Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson back to the audio audience is a real joy – Jonathan has created two wonderful new stories with pitch-perfect scripts which have been brought to life so brilliantly by the incomparable Nicholas Briggs and Richard Earl."

Nicholas Briggs adds: "It's a real conspiracy-based couple of stories, of things that connect to the government and things that connect to a new force in the underworld of London. There's an awful lot of 'what you think you see is not what you see', though in an audio sense! Jonathan is very wise in leaving lots of question marks lying around!" YOFTEX

SHERLOCK HOLMES

THE SEAMSTRESS OF PECKHAM RYE RELEASED: JULY 2021 FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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EDITORIAL

I'M RATHER buzzing at the moment, having just finished listening to the preview of June's release, **The War Doctor Begins** – *Forged in Fire*. I've loved the War Doctor ever since we first saw a glimpse of him on television at the end of *The Name of the Doctor* and that amazing cliffhanger, "Introducing John Hurt... as the Doctor." Then we got a few seconds of him in *The Night of the Doctor* and again in *The Day of the Doctor*. And wow!

Getting the great Sir John Hurt to play him was such a coup for the show, and I remember Nicholas Briggs telling me over dinner in the summer of 2015 that plans were afoot for him to record some Big Finish dramas.

With John's sad passing in 2017, I thought that we had heard the last of the War Doctor. But how things change. I remember watching a video on Twitter, a poem performed by soundalikes of the various Doctors, but it was the War Doctor performance that really blew me away. I texted Nick to ask if he'd heard it, and yes, he was more than aware.

And now, Jonathon Carley, the man behind that voice, is playing the part of the War Doctor for Big Finish. It's quite uncanny, having now spoken to Jonathon, just where he produces that gravelly John Hurt voice from. It's an incredible change and he more than does the part justice – I hope you love it as much as I do.

Another highlight due for release very soon is a second **Out of Time** meeting for the Tenth Doctor - this time with his fifth incarnation in **Out of Time** 2 - *The Gates of Hell*. I loved the Children in Need TV mini-episode, *Time Crash*, so just how this pair get on for a longer adventure is one that I cannot wait to hear. Oh, and it's got Cybermen in it too!



A GOOD MAN GOES TO (TIME) WAR AS WE LEARN HOW **THE WAR DOCTOR** ENTERED THE FRAY...

BACK IN 2015, Vortex asked executive producer Nicholas Briggs, who wrote all three tales in the first **The War Doctor** box set, Only the Monstrous, if he had any thoughts of picking up the War Doctor's adventures directly after the BBC Doctor Who mini-episode, The Night of the Doctor.

The Night of the Doctor was Sir John Hurt's first return to the role of the

War Doctor, and Nick told us: "On a practical note it wouldn't really be credible for John to play a younger version of himself. He has a beautiful, craggy voice that absolutely speaks of decades, perhaps centuries more experience than that."

The tragic passing of Sir John in 2017 brought the curtain down on the War Doctor's further adventures, but now his origin story is being told in **The War Doctor Begins**. The funloving, joyful Eighth Doctor, restored to life by the Sisterhood of Karn, has gone and in his place is a warrior, with no time for the frivolous.

Producer David Richardson admits: "We didn't approach the idea of revisiting **The War Doctor** lightly. The death of John was a huge loss – to so many he was an actor we've all admired and adored for years. And we had also lost Jacqueline Pearce – the glorious, warm-hearted and brilliant actress who played Ollistra. In

open book: a new chapter and a new era. We've free rein to explore this incarnation as he works out who he is and what he's capable of doing, now he's made the decision to join the war.

"It's pretty much the morning after 'Doctor No More' in this script. It's looking at what the War Doctor is rejecting and setting aside, and while everyone around him expects him to be the Doctor, how much of the Doctor does he keep with him, or does he reject everything?

"Having him on Karn with Ohila beside him, helping him through the regeneration, we get the Time Lords circling and wanting to recruit him. We've seen this before with Ollistra angling for the Eighth Doctor, to get him onside.

HOW MUCH OF THE DOCTOR DOES HE KEEP WITH HIM, OR DOES HE REJECT EVERYTHING?

Jonathon Carle

the shadow of such loss, how could we go back to the series?

"I don't like to think of **The War Doctor Begins** as going back, or a recast of John Hurt. It feels like a different era – the very start of the War Doctor's life. And in Jonathon Carley we have found an actor who has both captured the flavour of John Hurt's performance while making the role entirely his own. Two people can play the same iconic role: look at Ewan McGregor and Alec Guinness as Obi-Wan Kenobi in Star Wars. Or indeed Karen Gillan and Caitlin Blackwood as Amy Pond.

"With that in mind, we were emboldened to reconsider **The War Doctor** and I'm so glad we did because I love this series. I think this first box set, *Forged in Fire*, is remarkable. Jonathon acquits himself from his first line, Louise Jameson masterfully directs, and we have a new sound designer, Jack Townley, bringing the chaos of the Time War to life."

WITH THE Doctor gone, a warrior is reluctantly joining the Time War between the Daleks and the Time Lords – but just how far will he go to end this conflict? What lines will he cross? How much of himself will he sacrifice?

We see the new incarnation beginning to discover who he is in the opening adventure, *Light the Flame*, by series script editor Matt Fitton. Matt reveals: "The brilliant thing is we have a definite starting point from *The Night of the Doctor*, and we know there's an end point from *The Day of the Doctor*, as well as the stories Big Finish recorded with John. Otherwise it's kind of an "This new Doctor has to forge his own path, and there's a challenge straight away with Karn as to what the Time Lords have planned for it, as they don't want it and all the powers that the Sisterhood have to fall into the hands of the Daleks. His first challenge is what's he willing to do to keep a huge weapon from the Daleks."

IN THE second adventure of the set, there's a first Big Finish appearance of the Tharils from TV episode Warriors' Gate in the appropriately-named Lion Hearts by Lou Morgan.

Seeking out Gallifrey's new warrior, Commodore Tamasan finds that the War Doctor has invited himself on a secret mission. The time-sensitive Tharils are in danger, and an old friend of the Doctor is trapped. But Biroc knows better than to trust either side in this war.

Matt continues: "In the other stories there are different angles

this case, those of a junior Time Lord officer. We batted some ideas back and forth, and Matt mentioned he was keen to use the Tharils somewhere in the set. So we came up with the idea of the secret mission our second lieutenant was on involving the Tharils – and particularly Biroc – who already has history with the Doctor. As soon as that was in place everything started to click because there's immediately a tension around the question of who this Doctor *is*, and who can really claim to know him."

How difficult was it to write for a Doctor who wasn't the Doctor, when

IT'S DIFFICULT TO TALK ABOUT THE PLOT WITHOUT GIVING IT AWAY... IT'S VERY TIMEY-WIMEY! ANDREW SMITH

he's still working out who he is? Lou pauses: "You're very aware of the fact that the War Doctor isn't a straightforward Doctor. He's unpredictable because he has to be – and even more so when he's still finding his feet. But the uncertainty is also part of the fun. What will he do, what won't he do? Where does he draw his lines? Every Doctor has them, but by joining him at this point in his life we get to experience the War Doctor deciding where to put his.

"The other tricky aspect, of course, is that you can't think of the War Doctor without thinking of Sir John Hurt. Like so many people, I loved his performance and have a huge amount of affection and respect for his version of the Doctor. So trying to bring the spirit of that character to this War Doctor, and make him recognisable while still leaving room for a new performance and for him to grow ... that was a bit daunting. But Matt Fitton is brilliantly reassuring when you have questions like this as a writer, and you know that he's never going to

on the conflict. The second story with the Tharils has the Doctor coming in from the sidelines where he's been observing what his side is up to and what they are willing to do, and there's still some of the Doctor's natural instincts to protect those caught in the middle."

Lou says: "Writing for the War Doctor and his world was really exciting, partly because it's another window onto the Time War, and partly because we both know and don't know this version of the Doctor. I love Time War stories because even if the narrative itself is small or quiet, the scale of the backdrop is so huge... there isn't really anything quite like it. And the War Doctor is, by his very nature, at the heart of it.

"The brief was very open, which was lovely. I was keen to put the Doctor right into the middle of an ongoing battle, on an actual battlefield on the ground, but to see him through someone else's eyes – in

lohn Dorne

they try it, and find there's a good reason why they shouldn't do it. And as to who the Shadow Squad are... you'll need to listen to find out!

"The pitch for this was that it would be the War Doctor's first major battle with the Daleks, and to make it full on and epic, with high consequences. He finds the Dalek Time Strategist and another Dalek that is a significant enemy, which they are using to try to win the war.

"He wants to end the war so decides to take it to the top and destroy the Dalek Time Strategist. The gloves are off, but at the end

UNCERTAINTY **IS ALSO PART** OF THE FUN. WHAT WILL HE DO, WHAT WON'T HE DO? LOU MORGAN

of the day he's still the Doctor. Maybe the most unDoctor-like thing is that he knows where the Dalek Time Strategist is and wants to go there and kill him - that's not Doctor-like at all.

"How that pans out, it's very Doctorly. He takes charge, he's in your face, saying, 'You're going to do this, I don't care if you don't like it,' and imposing himself on the situation. He's very singleminded in what he wants to do. But he is still the Doctor at hearts, and you can never lose sight of that. It's a fun Doctor character to work with. It's lovely that the War Doctor is continuing as he's such an engaging and compelling incarnation." VORTEX

DOCTOR WHO: THE WAR DOCTOR BEGINS

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let you go wrong with something so important to the character."

Adèle Anderso

12101

THE SHADOW SQUAD by

Andrew Smith concludes the series, as Tamasan is unconvinced of the War Doctor's loyalties, though when their paths collide both agree that the destruction of the Dalek Time Strategist could be the best route to victory. Matt says: "For the third story, which I wanted Andrew to write, it's the War Doctor's first encounter with the Daleks. The starting point is trying to land a killer blow from the off as he goes after the Dalek Time Strategist, who dogged him as the Eighth Doctor and has been behind Dalek plots in the Time War.

"In becoming the War Doctor, there's his willingness to use weapons, which we see in The Day of the Doctor, and in some War Doctor stories he has taken

up arms against the Daleks. In the past he was reluctant to even pick up a gun, but now he will pick it up and pull a trigger, even though that's not what he wants to do. It's a fight between who he was and what he wants to be."

Andrew, who wrote two scripts for Sir John Hurt as the War Doctor, said: "It's difficult to talk about the plot without giving it away... it's very timey-wimey! It was very hard to write as I kept having to come back to the logic of it, especially the denouement.

"This is really the starting point for the Doctor as he realises how he's going to take part in the Time War. You've got the Time Lords versus the Daleks, and since they both have time machines, why don't they just go back in time and kill each other, or pick off people who are significant before they come to the current day? The whole point of this story is to explain why that doesn't happen:

Vortex chats to the man behind the voice

Jonathon Carley is the WAR DOCTOR



THE LATE Sir John Hurt played the War Doctor for four box sets of adventures – Big Finish had planned to do more with him before his sad passing. Now, the clock has been turned back to the early days of this incarnation as a good man goes to war – with Jonathon Carley playing a younger version of John Hurt's War Doctor.

Big Finish creative director Nicholas Briggs tells us: "Jonathon is a real find. Many will be familiar with the uncanny accuracy of his War Doctor vocals from various online projects, but there's more to a good performance than just an impersonation. You need imagination, emotion, sensitivity... essentially, great acting!

"I worked really closely with John Hurt on our original **The War Doctor** releases, and although we only recorded together for a short time, such was his commitment, charm and openness that he allowed me to feel something of a connection

> When John Hurt appeared his voice was a gift, it has such texture.

JONATHON CARLE

with him. And I can confidently say that what Jonathon is doing here will be a fitting tribute to John, in honour of his great work in the role."

VORTEX SPEAKS to

Jonathon about the experience, and is surprised by how unlike John Hurt he sounds in his own voice – young, polite and genuinely humbled by the whole experience. He reveals: "T've been doing voices since I was a kid, and as you get older you get more structured in general and put some method to the madness creating something between a party trick and an impression!

"I skipped doing Matt Smith when Jacob Dudman came along, and then there was Peter Capaldi so I had a try at him. But when John Hurt appeared his voice was a gift, it has such texture. I gave him a go after the 50th anniversary episode. You have to make a slightly more exaggerated noise like the grandpa from **The Simpsons** with a strained raspy voice, and then you change the rhythm of it. You can find the character behind the voice if you listen to old recordings.

"When Nick first got in touch I thought it was a joke, I was saying, 'This can't be Nick Briggs from Big Finish' but it was legit – we set up a Skype call and there was Nick on my computer! In my head I was thinking, 'What could this be about, he must be looking for a guest voice actor', but what Nick suggested went beyond any reasonable expectation I had!

"Nick got me in for an acting audition to see how I got on. I met Tom Baker, John Leeson and Louise Jameson, and I would have taken that experience on its own and died happy! But when the prospect of more acting arose – and you always dream of pushing your luck – when Big Finish said they'd like me to play the War Doctor, it was amazing.

"I had a workshop with Louise, and I will take lessons from that

War audiobook and how he had created the voice of the War Doctor and the Daleks, and by the end of it his throat left him with nothing!

"You have to find a way to create a voice that's also sustainable, which was why Nick was keen for me to make John's voice younger and embrace my youthfulness. It took a bit of work but I feel better for it, and it's more truthful to John. I can sustain it for hours on end now, which I couldn't do before."

Jonathon is a **Doctor Who** fan so knows how important his taking

Just before midday, my phone went berserk! And I thought, 'Okay, it's real now!'

on the part of the War Doctor is. He reveals: "When we were recording the first adventure I had a chat with David Richardson about what the plans were for announcing it. It was going to be revealed in *Doctor Who Magazine*. I'm a subscriber, and I was wondering what would happen if someone got it early and tweeted it, so I was braced for that.

"I knew when the announcement was coming out. It was a Wednesday, 9am and... nothing happened. 10am... nothing's happened. 11am... still nothing's happened. Then, just before midday, my phone went berserk! And I thought, 'Okay, it's real now!' The way it was announced was a stroke of genius as there was the print announcement and then the first audio scene dropped half an hour later. I imagine my reaction was the same as a lot of others... sold!

"If anyone had any uncertainties I would not have blamed them as I know how important **Doctor Who** is, you hope everyone else will treat it with the same care and courtesy that you would. The trailer seems to have been the clincher for so many people – it was a masterstroke." YORTEX

workshop into every job I do in future. Having someone you've admired for years putting time in and building you up was amazing, there were surreal touchstone moments in that session which I will never forget."

Jonathon Carley

WORKING WITH experienced voice actors Louise and Nick has given Jonathon the chance to develop his vocalisation of John Hurt. He explains: "In the first chat I had with Nick he told me about his recording of *The Engines of*

She is the boss of you now!

Yvonne heads to the north-east of England...

Y VONNE IN THE MIDDLE

IT'S EASY to think of Torchwood as being an organisation that's either based in Cardiff or in London, plus let's not forget the Glasgow office in Scotland... However, just because large UK cities are often the locations of missions for Torchwood, that's not to say they don't head off the beaten track every now and again. And The Five People You Kill in Middlesbrough is very much case in point, as we head to the north-east of England.

Tracy-Ann Oberman is back as Torchwood head Yvonne Hartman. with the actress herself having a huge amount of creative input into this new adventure. Producer and script editor James Goss said: "This is a very special release. Tracy-Ann came to us with the inspired idea of 'Yvonne Hartman saves the nation'. When a spaceship crashes on Middlesbrough would we really be better off with Torchwood in charge? It's a sort of Kind Hearts and Coronets black comedy with Yvonne Hartman, as she encounters a series of human obstacles and has to get them out of her way. It was brilliant working with Tracy-Ann on this."

Tracy-Ann, well-known for her role as Chrissie Watts in **EastEnders**, helped recruit some of the story's guest cast including Denis Lawson and her former Walford co-star Kacey Ainsworth. Director Scott Handcock says: "Denis was a great suggestion from Tracy-Ann. They're old pals and have worked together a few times before. They just happen to be neighbours too, so Tracy was able to sound Denis out directly and ask if he fancied joining us for an hour and he said yes!

"Tracy-Ann also suggested Kacey. Obviously we all know her as Little Mo from **EastEnders** – her storyline made such an impact – and she and Tracy worked together at that time. Kacey had a day free from filming **Grantchester** so Tracy popped the question on our behalf and we invited her in."

Kacey plays dithering Leader of the Opposition, jill Kerr, while Denis is political bogeyman and superforcaster, Casper Beacham, as a spaceship crashes on Middlesbrough. Writer Tim Foley says: "This was a group effort. Yvonne marched into the office with an idea to save the world, and we set to work! We started to craft a story that looked at modern problems with a, 'What would Yvonne do?' approach, to reflect both recent events and her unique style of leadership. She had the entire Torchwood staff on the writing project. We also had a weevil initially doing the edits, but it kept trying to eat the laptop...

"My hometown is Middlesbrough, and the North East seems cruelly overlooked in the Whoniverse, so I piped up with the suggestion. Yvonne laughed, since she'd been to a conference there during a Bandril incursion, and she knew the area well – she'd taken shelter in the Dundas Shopping Mall."

Scott concludes: "The recording session went remarkably smoothly – remote recordings can be a bit hit and miss. The script for *The Five People You Kill in Middlesbrough* allowed us to record in very specific blocks with each actor, but that in turn meant we had less wriggle-room if anything went awry. Thankfully it didn't and it was quite refreshing welcoming a new cast member every hour or so." YORTEX

TORCHWOOD THE FIVE PEOPLE YOU

KILL IN MIDDLESBROUGH

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BOOK CLUB

TORCHWOOD FORGOTTEN LIVES gwen cooper and rhys williams are on the road again...

IT'S BEEN four years since Torchwood encountered the Miracle, and Gwen and Rhys's lives have gone back to normal while they raise their daughter Anwen. Captain Jack Harkness has been out of their lives for a long time – until one night they receive a phone call summoning them to an isolated part of north Wales.

Emma Reeves, writer of the BAFTA-nominated **The Demon Headmaster** and the recent critically acclaimed **Tracey Beaker Returns**, is the scribe behind *Forgotten Lives*. Producer James Goss provided Emma with an outline for the story, headed 'GWEN & RHYS STORY NOTES (read, then eat this email)'.

Emma says: "I had a lot of freedom in this script. My first draft included more references to the events of the **Torchwood** television episode, *Miracle Day*. And a lot more swears – James asked me to cut the swearing down by half as **Torchwood** was growing up! In general, I was asked to try to find the tone of the third series of **Torchwood** – *Children of Earth*, rather than series one or two."

Emma was particularly pleased to get the chance to write for Gwen and Rhys. She admits she was: "Absolutely ecstatic. I think I was the only one of the commissions at the time who got to write for two of the main **Torchwood** characters. Three really, if you count Jack, which I do. Or four if you also count Anwen! For me, Gwen is up there with Rose as one of Russell T Davies's finest female characters. I know that they both have their naysayers, but I love their humanity, their tempers and jealousy and occasional pettiness – the very real flaws of the characters makes their resilience and bravery even more air-punchingly impressive.

"I do really adore Gwen! Yes, it's the RTD writing, but it's also Eve Myles's performance. I love Eve in everything she does – she's always so raw and unexpected. I was fortunate enough to once write an episode of the Welsh soap, **Belonging**, in which Eve Myles starred. I'm in awe that she always finds a new, surprising way to play a scene or line.

"I was also delighted that I'd been asked to set the story post-*Miracle Day*. As a huge **Torchwood** fan, I really wanted to see the characters progressing and living their lives in the present."

The story also features a surprise twist – which *Vortex* won't reveal here for those who've not yet heard it. Was Emma happy with the finished product?

Emma confirms: "Yes, I was very pleased. It was written to a tight deadline and I suffered terrible stage fright trying to write for characters and a world that I love so much. I am incredibly grateful to have been given the chance to write this story, and I threw a lot at it, emotionally." YONER

TORCHWOOD FORGOTTEN LIVES RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2015

FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD



PETER & DAVID'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

THE FIFTH AND TENTH DOCTORS ARE A PAIR OF DOCS WITH A PARADOX...

THINK OF the Fifth Doctor's main foes on television and the chances are you'll think of the Cybermen – even though he only faced them twice. Peter Davison's incarnation of the Doctor has also crossed their path several times on audio, with another encounter due for imminent release. Except this time he's battling them with a familiar face at his side.

The **Out of Time** series began last year with David Tennant's Tenth Doctor meeting his fourth self, played by Tom Baker. The series continues with a second adventure, *The Gates of Hell*, as the Tenth Doctor crosses time streams with his fifth incarnation and this time David stars alongside his father-in-law, Peter.

Producer David Richardson says: "We've chatted about doing a multi-Doctor story with David Tennant and Peter Davison's Doctors for some years as the idea was irresistible. And then in 2020 events conspired to make it happen – David and Peter were both available in the early days of lockdown, and so we pounced! It was a great recording day – the ease of working with two people who not only know their characters inside out but also know each other very well, being family.

"And I must say that this is really lovely stuff. A smashing script from David Llewellyn that shows these two Doctors at their very best, saving the universe together while facing one of their oldest foes. If Children in Need's *Time Crash* left you wanting more, then here it is!"

Of working with his fatherin-law again, David comments: "It's been rather nice, actually it's lovely. We first met each



other in a work environment so it's been fun to revisit that."

The guest cast features Mark Gatiss, a friend of both actors. Peter adds: "The recording was slightly intimidating! What with David and Mark in the story, I felt like I had to up my game."

THE TARDIS materialises in France – twice – in **Out of Time** 2: The Gates of Hell, set for release this June. Paris, 1809. The Fifth Doctor takes a tour of the Catacombs and meets a sassy Time Agent doing the same... Paris, 1944. The Tenth Doctor misses his target and lands in occupied France. He hides from the Nazis – in the Catacombs. A collision of two Doctors' timelines triggers a temporal catastrophe, granting the Cybermen dominion over the Earth. Now, the Doctors must travel back in time to find the source of the Cyberinvasion and close the Gates of Hell...

Script editor Matt Fitton tells Vortex: "David Llewellyn touches on the fact that these Doctors have met before in *Time Crash*, so we have a hint of their relationship. We have them stumble across each other's



adventures and then have to work together to correct a mistake.

"Something has gone wrong on their travels because of both Doctors being there, and it's opened a door for the Cybermen to conquer the Earth. And now they are desperately trying to put things right.

"You do get a little bit of bickering but there's also mutual respect when they are working alongside one another. These two Doctors have a

THE RECORDING WAS **SLIGHTLY INTIMIDATING!** WHAT WITH DAVID AND MARK IN THE STORY, **I FELT LIKE I HAD TO UP MY GAME.** PETER DAVISON

tendency to rush in breathlessly, make changes and act against the enemy, but here they have to track back and work out the consequences of what they have done.

"I've worked with David Llewellyn a lot on the **Gallifrey** series, as well as **The War Doctor**. There's always an intelligent humour and really clever plotting to the things he writes, and his dialogue with these Doctors together is wonderful."

> WRITER DAVID admits that he was delighted when he was asked to pen this tale. He smiles: "It's probably a bit of a cliché, but this was 'dream come true' stuff. One of my earliest TV



memories is Peter Davison pushing a Dalek out of a first floor window on Shad Thames, so he always felt like my Doctor, and I welled up a bit when the Tenth Doctor said the same thing in *Time Crash.*"

David's brief was simple: "Just the basic ingredients, and they were all amazing. Fifth Doctor, Tenth Doctor, Cybermen. I mean, really. It was like Christmas!"

"The Gates of Hell waswas inspired by a trip to Paris back in 2018 with my partner, Dan, and his mum. While we were there we visited the Paris catacombs, where they've used disinterred bones from overcrowded cemeteries to strengthen the walls of old mining tunnels beneath the city, and then opened it as a tourist attraction!



THE ENTRANCE TO THE CATACOMBS IS IN A PLACE CALLED **THE GATES OF HELL**. IT'S THE KIND OF THING THAT SITS IN YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS... DAVID LLEWELLYN

"As if this wasn't already the most Goth thing that ever happened, the entrance to the catacombs is in a place called the Gates of Hell. It's the



kind of thing that sits in your subconscious till an opportunity to use it comes along!"

With the Fifth and Tenth Doctors having previously met, how many times did David watch Time Crash to get a feel for their dynamic? He concedes: "I only watched it once. It was quite easy to imagine the dynamic because there's a natural off-screen chemistry there, more so now than when they recorded Time Crash. One of the things I found interesting is that the dynamic is twisted by the Tenth Doctor being centuries older than the Fifth Doctor but still treating him like his grandfather. But the Fifth Doctor thinks of the Tenth Doctor as some young whippersnapper,

if you can get your head around that – it's all very timey-wimey!"

David was also given the task of writing for the Cybermen. He tells Vortex: "They are surprisingly difficult. It's easy to slip into dialogue that's too chatty, especially if everyone else is speaking that way. But they're Cybermen, if anything they're less expressive than the Daleks!"

KEN BENTLEY directed the tale. He says: "The casting alone made the script leap out at me when I first opened it! I've no idea why but I found this an unexpected combination of Doctors at first. I guess Peter and David are both such busy actors it hadn't occurred to me that we'd get them in the same room at the same time.

"I shouldn't have preferences when it comes to a script but I have to admit I really like the historicals. It's probably just because we have a familiarity with the past so there's a responsibility to bring the story to life in a way that feels recognisable to listeners. It's a challenge I enjoy. Futuristic stories come with a freedom to invent that's fun, but there's a discipline to historicals even when you're mixing it up with sci-fi or futuristic elements. I also enjoy the mix of voices and accents that historicals often impose. You rarely get that mix in a purely futuristic story."

Writer David is particularly looking forward to hearing the finished adventure. He concludes:

> PETER AND DAVID ARE BOTH SUCH BUSY ACTORS IT HADN'T OCCURRED TO ME THAT WE'D GET THEM IN THE SAME ROOM AT THE SAME TIME.

"I can't wait. There was talk of potential casting while I was writing *The Gates of Hell*, but it wasn't till I got a message from Matt saying, 'We're recording one of yours,' that I realised Mark Gatiss was also going to be in it. And in the current age of Zoom I didn't get the full Moat Studios (Toby's lunch) experience, so I have no idea yet

DOCTOR WHO

OUT OF TIME 2: THE GATES OF HELL

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THE FRACT OF FICTION

BOX

OVER THE last year or so, the Time Lord Victorious arc has encompassed many forms – audio adventures, novels, comics and short stories to name but four – and now another is about to be released. Doctor Who: Time Fracture is an immersive theatrical adventure which plunges the audience into the universe of the Time Lord. Producer Immersive Everywhere, the team behind London's longest running immersive theatre production, The Great Gatsby, is preparing to welcome its first UNIT recruits.

1940 – at the height of the Blitz. A weapon of unknown origin destroys a small corner of Mayfair, and simultaneously opens a rift in space and time. For decades, UNIT have fought undetected to protect the people of Earth from the dangers it poses. Weakened and beaten back as the fracture's multiplied out of control, they're close to defeat.

Time Fracture has been written by Daniel Dingsdale, who says: "I had a phone call almost two years ago from the producers saying they had the licence to mount an immersive **Doctor Who** experience, and if I was interested I'd be working with Tom Maller as director. We've worked together for a number of years, and so I jumped at the chance.

"For immersive theatre you can't ask for a better setting than **Doctor Who**. The whole point of this type of theatre is to create living worlds for someone to step into. I can't think of another property where you can literally go anywhere, visiting locations that would normally have no logical reason to be linked together. You want to explore these new places and help the characters you come across.

"There are the lovely tone shifts too – it's very earnest but it's also tongue in cheek. It's high-concept but it's also accessible. It's fun for all the family but there are also moments where you want to hide behind the sofa! **Doctor Who** is a lovely match for an immersive world.

"But then came the realisation of how daunting this was going to be with nearly 60 years of canon, monsters, characters and locations – and I've got only two hours available! And then, of course, everyone has their own favourite Doctors, eras and villains, and you want to make sure you include something that will appeal to everyone. You want to respect and acknowledge everything without collapsing under the history. Thank goodness for streaming services so I could watch **Doctor Who** episodes, take lots of notes and catch a flavour of it al."

With the majority of the British public being aware of **Doctor Who** and its central concept, did it make Daniel's job easier? He explains: "The core tenets everyone understands, and each **Doctor Who** world has a high concept sci-fi scenario, or indeed a trope from a different kind of narrative.

"Within our story, we have a transdimensional rift which has been christened the Time Fracture, and that's when it all coalesces together... UNIT's diagnostics people tried to send one of their soldiers inside the fracture on reconnaissance but he is now lost in space and time, so they have constructed a Portal Stabilisation Gateway which will allow human beings to step inside the fracture relatively safely.

"UNIT is on a mission to find out what's causing anomalies in reality. They've not been able to contact the Doctor but the private line of communication to UNIT has come online with a list of names who are essential to saving the universe – and they just happen to be the audience members of each particular show! They will enter the Time Fracture to find out what's causing it, and as it's a vehicle to go through all of space and time they have the chance to step up, be a hero and save the universe!

"We're keeping a lot of other things secret but there's plenty included for fans of all eras of **Doctor Who**."

> DIRECTOR, TOM Maller has worked with Immersive Everywhere on other experiences, including The Great Gatsby. He tells Vortex: "I was in China working on a James Bond

production when I got a call asking if I would be interested in directing this. **Doctor Who** is so iconic and has such devoted fans. The whole production is a love letter to **Doctor Who**. We've got props, sets and costumes, and we're working in close collaboration with the BBC in terms of the talent from the show – and we're very excited to have fans step in.

"In Cardiff, the Doctor Who Experience was more of a passive thing, but here the fans can play a part in their own episode of **Doctor Who**. We have 42 in the cast with the audience in central roles going on high octane adventures. Space, mystery, horror... we've tried to bring

I WAS IN CHINA WORKING ON A JAMES BOND PRODUCTION WHEN I GOT A CALL ASKING IF I WOULD BE INTERESTED IN DIRECTING THIS. TOM MALLER



in all the aspects that make **Doctor Who** so successful into our show.

"Even if you're not a fan, you will still feel how exciting and unique it all is when you're in the moment, standing in a special set or having characters passing you by – you will be able to feel it in the air.

"Each audience member gets given a character. They can dress up if they want to and take part in the narrative on this two-hour journey. They can engage with the cast or they can just go along with the adventure.

"We want people to be able to escape from the real world for an evening. We can put on three shows of 90 people a night so you can be confident that you are in a COVID-safe environment, and will be socially distanced. We are protecting our crew and our cast, our technicians and our audience – we want everyone to really enjoy their evening."

DESIGNER REBECCA Brower. speaking to Vortex from the location, tells us: "My background is in theatre design and also events and outdoor ceremony design, but I've never had a challenge like this before! This is my first immersive theatre production, and you literally combine everything you've ever learned in your entire career into one! But it's a massive treat too - it's not just one play that may have a couple of sets needed. Here, I've designed a military base, an Elizabethan court room, and worlds that are 3,000 years in the future – you can let your imagination go wherever it can.

"Last year when I got the job I went back to the **Doctor Who** episodes from 1963 and watched as many as I could, picking up on designs from the 60s and how elements of that were modernised. I wanted to keep that in *Time Fracture*.

"Some of my favourite set designs in the modern era are the tombs of the Cybermen which mirror the ones in the 60s, and I made a conscious decision to evolve those for our production.

"Something that's been really good fun is including Easter Eggs, little things hidden within a design. For example, there are scenes in our military base which is covered in graffiti, and if you look carefully you might spot 'Bad Wolf' written in there. They're things not everyone will notice, but it's so worth it for those who do!" **VOFTEX**

Doctor Who: Time Fracture is playing from 26th May 2021 at IMMERSIVE | LDN immersivedoctorwho.com LIV CHENKA'S ADVENTURES CONTINUE IN A FOURTH BOX SET IN HER YEAR OFF FROM HER TRAVELS WITH THE DOCTOR AND HELEN...

WHEN BIG Finish originally announced the release of The Robots, the range was planned as a series of four box sets. However, as production was underway it became clear that there were more stories to tell and The Robots has now been expanded with an additional six adventures over two more box sets.

Script editor John Dorney says: "Around Volume Three we realised the scope of **The Robots** was expanding as we were writing it – other threads were developing which we could look into quite significantly, rather than having to curtail them. It's a series about consequences and each box picks up from the previous set."

Producer David Richardson confirms: "Volume Four was, of course. where this mini-series was supposed to end... except when we were working on Volume Three we realised we had too many ideas, too much to do, too many great characters to play with and too much story still to tell! So I went cap in hand to executive producers, Jason Haigh-Ellery and Nicholas Briggs, and told them of our embarrassment of riches. And based on the success and excellent feedback of the range so far, they kindly granted six more episodes over two box sets. That was a huge relief because I feel if we'd had to start wrapping up the story in Volume Three we would be doing it a disservice. Volume Three contains some of my favourite moments and

WHY. ROBOT

most loved scenes in the range so far. Storylines start to come together: Liv digs deeper into the mystery of the Sons of Kaldor; Toos and Poul excavate their past; and there are some stunning scenes with Tula. Nicola and Claire are just extraordinary. If you hadn't gathered, this range is one of my very favourite things!"

THIS JUNE sees the release of The Robots Volume Four where Liv Chenka (Nicola Walker), her sister Tula (Claire Rushbrook), Toos (Pamela Salem) and Poul (the late David Collings) learn of buried secrets, escape under the cover of darkness and discover a deception that could spell the end... or the start of something new. (I-r): David Collings, V12 and Pamela Salem

Closed Loop by Guy Adams opens the set as Toos needs Poul's help on a mission so sensitive she won't even tell him where they're going but he finds more ghosts waiting for him at their destination. The adventure sees Gregory de Polnay return to voice D84, last seen in 1977's **Doctor Who** television episode, *The Robots of Death*.

John says: "We bring back D84 which is very exciting. He died in *The Robots of Death* so we had to go about it in a slightly clever way. When I was at drama school, Gregory de Polney was one of my voice tutors so I suggested that we look at asking if he might be interested in playing D84 again. Gregory had largely quit acting but we were able to track him down and he agreed to reprise his role against David and Pamela, which was a bit of a thrill for everyone.

"The idea to include D84 came to me fairly early on when we were planning all of the Poul and Toos stuff in one big batch together. The character is iconic and it was worth YOU CAN'T JUST SAY THAT HE'S **SCARED** OF ROBOTS, IT'S DEEPER THAN THAT, MORE RICH THAN THAT... GUY ADAMS

seeing if there was a way to bring him back or find another use for him. It was always part of the plan to introduce D84 later in the day, it's an extra boost at the end for listeners!

"Closed Loop brings the story of Poul and Toos to a head in a rather claustrophobic adventure dealing with a lot of Poul's issues that have been bubbling away under the surface. We're coming to the culmination of some of their earlier threads, leading to the next phase of their story. It's also the last full story we got to record with David Collings."

Guy adds: "Here we look at the state of Poul's brain, dealing with PTSD and trauma in general. You can't just say that he's scared of robots, it's deeper than that, more rich than that, and exploring the psychology and how it drives him, that was really fun for me to work around. With the great actors we're dealing with here, they can really embed themselves into it.

"A Matter of Conscience, the last story of Volume Three, set up a number of details that were too rich and fun not to come back to for a follow-up – and we dig even deeper this time.

"David Collings is a proper hero of mine, one of my favourite voices – it was a huge thing for me to be able to write for him, and it's a proper loss that he's gone. I pitched the story idea and John suggested that Gregory de Polnay could be involved, and it went from having Poul haunted by A robot to THE robot. It's a very specific ghost from his past – it's kill or cure, coming face to plastic once more. Or not... you'll find out by the end of it all!"

DOCTOR WHO THE ROBOTS

WHEN A Supervoc is found on the streets claiming responsibility for a recent explosion, it's clear to Liv and Tula that the Sons of Kaldor (an armed resistance group that first features in the Fourth Doctor adventure, *The Sons of Kaldor*) are attempting to frame robots for their murderous attacks. *Off Grid*, the second story of the set, is written by Sarah Grochala.

John reveals: "With Off Grid, we were looking at doing some standalone ideas and what would happen to a technological society if the technology broke, which Sarah leaned into beautifully. It's nudging the storylines further along to a point where they are going to intersect, as the different characters start to weave together a little bit more. The culmination of Liv's quest is reaching its end, and other things are beginning to pick up."

Sarah continues: "I was given a few options to choose from but the one that really excited me was the idea of all technology halting on Kaldor.



WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO A TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY IF ALL THE **TECHNOLOGY BROKE**? JOHN DORNEY

I had to investigate a few different ways that could happen to come up with a feasible idea for the script. I was really fascinated by the thought of what suddenly having no access to technology would mean for the characters and how they would manage without having it to rely on. It's such an interesting question in relation to Kaldor as it's such a technologically-dependent world.

"Off Grid also brings together some of the strands in previous episodes of **The Robots**, for example, the discovery that Liv makes in the warehouse in *The Mystery of Sector 13* and the terrorist attacks in *A Matter of Conscience*. It also takes us to some places that we've been before. We get out of the city to Poul's habitat and the forests around it, and we also go back to the shopping centre that features in *Escape From Kaldor*. Tula finds



Nicola Walker

herself trapped with Skellen (played by Robert Whitelock) in a difficult situation, while Liv has to go on a mission that takes her out of Kaldor City and into unknown territory."

Sarah particularly enjoyed writing for Liv and Tula. She confirms: "I love Liv's passion and determination to get to the bottom of everything. She seems pessimistic at times but fundamentally I think she's an optimist because whenever she finds herself surrounded by problems, she's relentless in her pursuit of the right solution for them. Tula's fascinating because she's deeply committed to her work but is having to come to terms with some of the Company's more dubious practices. She's a scientist, but she's also an

that I go down the route of exploring future tech and social media use, which is what I like doing best. Everything else including the major plot lines I was allowed to invent myself and I had a lot of fun piecing the bits together for this one.

"I can tell you that we find Tula in serious trouble with the Company. As an audience we naturally side with her, but as the evidence begins to pile up against her, we realise that it's not so clear cut and we may even begin to entertain the notion that she could be guilty. Liv has a difficult ride in this story. Her usual pragmatism actually does more harm than good, which is a risky angle to take with the heroine of a series, but personally I like that. The story itself lands very much in the futuristic thriller/whodunnit genres."

Rob, who is also an actor in **The Robots**, adds: "Writing for Liv and Tula is pure joy. I know Nicola and Claire well from acting with them, and now when writing for them I can hear their character's voices really clearly in my head

AS A FEMALE WRITER, IT'S REALLY EXCITING TO BE PART OF A SERIES THAT IS **SO FEMALE-LED**.

Pamela Salem

artist in terms of her approach and commitment to the robots she creates.

"As a female writer, it's really exciting to be part of a series that is so female-led, particularly one that is thinking about technology as people tend to think of it as a male dominated field. Which actually isn't correct when you think about the number of women who have contributed to the development of the technology that surrounds us today, like Grace Hopper or Hedy Lamarr."

> **THE FINAL** adventure, *The Janus Deception* by Robert Whitelock, sees Tula under investigation by the Company for fraud, industrial espionage and conspiracy. Liv, meanwhile, is

nearing the finishing line of her trail, a meeting with the survivors of Storm Mine 4 in person.

John tells Vortex: "The Janus Deception is a thriller where Tula is in trouble and needs a way out and uses some of Liv's skills to help her. This is where a lot of the threads we've been building come towards their conclusion and we finally get the meeting of our four leads, which takes us into the next two box sets. The sad loss of David Collings meant it had to be rejigged slightly, but I think we've given him a worthy send-off."

Writer Rob says: "I got a very flexible brief with only two provisos: one I can't mention because it's a massive spoiler, but the second was that producer David was very keen as I create the dialogue. I'd love to write a two-hander for them one day (on or off cannon) where the differences in their value systems and characters can really grate against each other. I think two intelligent women can have such a great chemistry and banter between them, that even watching it as an observer can be very enjoyable. The only difference in what happens on mic and off mic between Claire and Nicola is that the stuff we actually record is scripted!" VORTEX

DOCTOR WHO: THE ROBOTS VOLUME FOUR

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MASTERFUL

I'd just like to say how in my time listening to Big Finish (a little over a month at the time of writing), the stories you have produced have provided me with an incredible amount of joy in such difficult times. From the darkness of Night Thoughts and Red, to the incredible characters such as the War Master and The Eleven, every moment of it has left a smile on my faceI I was particularly blown away by the new release **Master!**, with that set of stories completely transforming my view of Eric Roberts's incarnation of the character. **CAYDEN SANDS**

Nick: Many thanks, Cayden, really good to have you on board! We're all really proud of our many and varied releases, and we hope you'll find our upcoming releases just as enjoyable.

PREVIOUSLY ON BIG FINISH...

I have been listening and enjoying your **Doctor Who** output since day one. I particularly like the Eighth Doctor stories and I've become a massive fan of Paul McGann. When a new box set comes out I'm eager to hear it but sometimes haven't had the time to listen to the previous one in the series. Would there be any chance to put a "Previously on..." section at the start of disc one just to cover the main points in the arc? Might be easier to get straight back in, rather than in my case remembering bits at a time. **KEITH ROTHERO** *Nick*: I'll have a word, Keith, but we don't mind you waiting to catch up!

NOVEL APPROACH

I have just seen the announcement for the audio novels. What a superb idea! I am certain they will be brilliantly produced to your always exceptional standards. I was slightly disappointed that they are to be download only, though. This email is meant to demonstrate my interest in a physical release in the hope that should you receive other similar correspondence, you might consider perhaps a limited release that's strictly pre-order only, for example. I am aware of the additional costs involved and I do appreciate that. The BBC releases run to 6–7 hours and retail at £25. I would be more than happy to pay the same if it were to be economically viable for you. **BICHAPD JACKSON**

Nick: Hi Richard. We do appreciate that a significant number of listeners still favour CDs but the fact of the matter is that it's a dwindling number and the result of this is that we're now holding too many CDs in our warehouse. So we have to make very careful calculations about which productions we release on CD. The audio novels range was created in response to the general market shift towards non-physical releases, so at the moment it feels as though assigning CD releases to this and other audiobook releases would be a step in the wrong direction.

LEGENDARY

Do you and Paizo have any plans to continue making new **Pathfinder Legends** audio plays? I absolutely love them and I continue to listen to them over and over to this day. MASTER MAGOO

Nick: Glad you are enjoying them, Master Magoo, however there aren't any current plans at the moment.

TRIPPING OUT

From 2002 to 2009 Big Finish published a series of prose **Short Trips** which are no longer available, neither in physical or digital forms. In light of recent audiobooks and eBook versions of early Bernice Summerfield books being made available, are there plans for giving these two ranges a similar treatment? **GUILHERME GUSMÃO**

Nick: There aren't any plans for this yet, Guilherme, but it's always a possibility. It's something I've considered often. There is, for example, a free audio version of my Short Trips One Small Step. VORTER

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"Air-cushioned soles. I bought them on the Portobello Road on a Saturday."

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