

THE MAGAZINE OF
SPACE AND TIME

№156 FEBRUARY
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VORTEX

MAGAZINE

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**COLIN BAKER IN
MIND OF THE HODIAC!**

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STORY DETAILS: THE EIGHTH OF MARCH
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WINK

Big Finish's *The Tenth Doctor Adventures: Out of Time* series comes to a conclusion this summer in **Out of Time 3: Wink**.

SO FAR, David Tennant's Tenth Doctor has had encounters with Tom Baker's Fourth Doctor and Peter Davison's Fifth Doctor, encountering Daleks and Cybermen respectively.

Wink written by Lisa McMullin, will see the Tenth and Sixth Doctors facing the Weeping Angels on a distant planet where no one has the power of sight.

Of course, it's not the first time that Colin and David's paths have crossed as they previously encountered one another when recording *Medicinal Purposes* in **The Monthly Adventures** back in 2004. Here, the Sixth Doctor and Evelyn encountered bodysnatchers Burke and Hare in Edinburgh – with David playing Daft Jamie. *Wink* will be released in July. **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO: OUT OF TIME 3 WINK

- RELEASED: JULY 2022
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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EDITORIAL

GREAT CHUNKS of family nostalgia have been detaching themselves like melting icebergs this month and they've come together with Big Finish productions to form something rather special!

The Avengers was a television show that my mum loved in the 1960s and she was delighted when I discovered it in the 1990s and borrowed her videos. Big Finish's adaptations of the TV Comic strips continue with the release of Volume 6 of **The Comic Strip Adaptations**. Given that both my parents were keen on audiobooks and radio drama, I know that they would have approved of Julian Wadham and Olivia Poulet's *Steed and Mrs Peel*. And of course we've got **Doctor Who**, a show I discovered when sitting on my mum's knee in the mid-1970s when Tom Baker was the Fourth Doctor. His latest set of adventures are on the way.

The family links continue with the present generation. My daughter was born just weeks after David Tennant became the Doctor on TV in *The Christmas Invasion*, and she would often sit on my knee watching the Tenth Doctor in action (she cried when he regenerated). And talking of 21st century **Doctor Who**, I was absolutely delighted when just days after being announced as the showrunner again, Russell T Davies took time out of his busy schedule to have a chat with *Vortex* about *Mind of the Hodiak* – his Sixth Doctor **Lost Story** from the 1980s.

It's just wonderful to be able to experience the beauty of Big Finish time travel! **VORTEX**

Kerry

NEW STORY
DETAILS!



NEVER MIND THE HODIAC... HERE'S THE DOCTOR AND MEL

GET READY
FOR SOME NEW
DOCTOR WHO
FROM THE MIND
OF **RUSSELL
T DAVIES...**

THE COVID-19 lockdowns were a difficult time for many but out of the hardship came some good. Twitter proved a lifeline for lots of people who were stuck in their homes, unable to leave to see friends. And to keep us all entertained, Emily Cook organised Tweetalongs to television episodes of **Doctor Who** including several by Russell T Davies. Emily explains: "Russell was preparing for *The Runaway Bride*

Christmas Treetalong on Friday 18th December 2020 and in the process of looking through some old paperwork he discovered a lost Sixth Doctor script he'd written in the 1980s: *Mind of the Hodiac* – his first **Doctor Who** script! Russell WhatsApp'd me saying: 'I've found something so amazing... it's the rarest of rarities!' He teased a few extracts of the script on Twitter at the end of the Treetalong but kept the rest secret, in case anyone wanted to make it...!"

ON SPEC

Vortex asks Russell if he had written *Mind of the Hodiac* on spec but never sent it in? He says: "Actually I can't remember! I once sent in a submission and when the **Doctor Who** office closed in 1989, I got a letter from Andrew

Cartmel saying, 'Sorry I never got back to you but I like this one and kept it to one side in case the series continued... but it's over!'

"So was that this one? Or was it the idea that later, in a very different form, became *The Long Game*? I really don't know! Actually I never worked *The Long Game* into a script, and *Mind of the Hodiac* was a big, detailed, proper script! It was 1986/87 with no email, no records, no diary – so I've no paper trail."

Did Russell have much recollection of the story when he read the script? He confirms: "Yes, it all flooded back. I might struggle to remember names and dates but something you've written never leaves your head. I recognised practically every line, every beat. I hadn't thought about it for years, I genuinely thought it was lost. Actually, I didn't even think it was



Above: Bonnie Langford who plays companion Melanie Bush with Annette Badland who plays Mrs Chinn.

lost as I didn't think about it at all!

"I'd written a full script for the first adventure and a very detailed outline for the second. And they're 45 minute episodes. Had they just changed on BBC One to air those Colin Baker 45-minute episodes? Or did I think the two parts put together would display more of the story? I don't know!"

Did Russell enjoy reading it again? "Oh, yes, there's no bigger fan! Hah! I think you've got to love your own stuff because there's a genuine possibility that no one else will."

FIRM FRIENDS

Mind of the Hodiac was completed and adapted for audio by Scott Handcock. He says: "I think it was Emily who mentioned it to me in the first instance. I got to know her through Russell for the *Doctor Who* lockdown projects, and we made a short film last year and became firm friends. And then she mentioned that Russell had

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RUSSELL T DAVIES

found this unmade script and asked if I would like to co-write and direct it for Big Finish.

"Russell had written the entire first episode plus a scene breakdown for the second with loads of detail and even occasional snippets of dialogue so it was easy to see the tone and direction the story was heading in. It's a huge story,

spanning many times and places all deftly connected... but it would definitely have been a struggle to fit the 45-minute broadcast length on screen. In a way, it's great that its re-emergence now has allowed us to let the script breathe and run as originally written."

Did Scott liaise much with Russell during the scripting? Scott admits: "I was actually quite nervous going into this project! I've known Russell for about 15 years and he's a good friend and we chat a lot anyway. But strangely, because we know each other well, that made the pressure a bit harder. I think we both had a panic about what if episode two wasn't up to scratch? I've never been so nervous waiting for a response! Thankfully, however, he loved it. Most of my changes were minimal: cut that gag, clarify this, that sort of thing. And similarly, I was giving notes on the first episode to make it more audio friendly. The great thing about working with Russell is he's a collaborator so you're always going to have a healthy back-and-forth even when he's busy spinning 101 other plates!"

Russell tells *Vortex*: "I adore Scott and I'm not just being nice! I think he's a diamond, a force for good, a gentleman and a truly decent person in this world. I absolutely love what he's done with *The War Master* and *Torchwood* and with the *Dark Season* project. If he whistles, I'm there.

"It's funny to think that Scott started on TV *Doctor Who* as a boy runner in, what, 2006? I was probably quite rude to him as I swanned past! And now he's a brilliant colleague and proper mate, I'd trust him with anything. I wanted specifically for him to write part two because I knew he'd be brilliant."

SEE EMILY PRODUCE

Having played a part in the re-discovery of *Mind of the Hodiac*, Emily was delighted to produce it for Big Finish. She says: "I actually offered to produce it. The same evening that Russell rediscovered this lost piece of *Doctor Who* history, I emailed Jason Haigh-Ellery and Nicholas Briggs and said, 'I'm sure you've already seen this on Twitter but Russell's found his first ever *Doctor Who* script. This is a



Above (l-r): Laura Riseborough, Bonnie Langford, Lorraine Harrison, T’Nia Miller, Annette Badland and Sutara Gayle
 Below left (l-r) T’Nia Miller and Emily Cook • Below right (l-r): Lu Corfield, Wilf Scolding and Raj Ghatak

IT WAS MY FIRST, PROPER, IN-STUDIO BIG FINISH RECORDING AND WHAT A PRODUCTION TO START WITH! EMILY COOK

special thing, can we make it?’ I was determined that it should get made and Big Finish was the obvious outlet.”

And with Scott in the director’s chair the script was brought to life some thirty-five years after it was first written. Emily says: “The recording sessions went brilliantly. We recorded over a couple of days in the summer with everyone in studio apart from Colin Baker who was working remotely. It was so exciting hearing our fabulous cast perform, they were a joy to work with. There was such a



warm, positive atmosphere and a strong sense that we all knew we were working on something very special. It was my first, proper, in-studio Big Finish recording and what a production to start with!”

Scott continues: “The recording was an enormous amount of fun but actually really quite intense due to the sheer number of characters involved. The schedule was quite a jigsaw and we didn’t really have much wriggle-room. For that reason we elected to record almost everyone in studio because



we couldn’t risk losing time to technical issues: we were up to the wire. And with COVID-19 in mind I was carefully scheduling characters in blocks to ensure people didn’t need to hang around when they weren’t acting.

“All those practicalities aside,



however, it was an absolute dream. The cast were enthusiastic and really responded brilliantly to the material. There was almost an end of term vibe to it all. Halfway through one morning, T'Nia Miller stepped out into the control room and quietly said, "Thank you so much for asking

me. I didn't expect I'd be having this much fun.' And we really, really did."

Scott was particularly delighted to have Colin and Bonnie Langford involved. He explains: "It was a proper thrill, actually. I was still quite young when **Doctor Who** was off air but I avidly collected the VHS tapes and vividly remember getting *The Trial of a Time Lord* for Christmas in 1993 so the Sixth Doctor and Mel have been imprinted on my mind for a good while.

"I've worked with Colin quite a lot at Big Finish and I absolutely adore his attitude and work ethic. He's such a gentleman but also meticulous behind a microphone. I'd never worked with Bonnie before but have admired her for years in so many different things, and getting the opportunity to actually work with her was a delight. And they work so well together too. Mel really is the perfect companion for the Sixth Doctor in many ways. She grounds him, makes him a lot calmer and I think she appreciates him for taking her out of her comfort zone. What a dream team!"

DELIGHTED DOCTOR

Colin was delighted to be involved in *Mind of the Hodiac*. He says: "When I heard Russell had found a script he'd written in the eighties and that it was going to be released by Big Finish, I honestly didn't think it was going to be for me – but it was! Bonnie and I were playing our parts on TV when he wrote it so it was a genuine honour to know that I was the first Doctor he had written a script for.

"Russell is one of the most generous people in this business with his time, friendships and his talent – everything. I met him when he was filming with David Tennant in Cardiff on the TV episode *Voyage of the Damned* as I was in a play at the New Theatre in Cardiff. I got a message saying to come and join them. I thought New **Who** was a bit tentative about Old **Who** but I couldn't have been more wrong.

"Kylie Minogue came across and introduced herself and David was lovely. Russell asked if I wanted to stay and watch filming for the night and he even asked my opinion a couple of times which

was a wonderful experience.

"*Mind of the Hodiac* is a jolly good adventure considering Russell wrote the ideas some thirty-five years ago. It was also interesting as in the script you can see the germs of the writer he would become. It's a very simple but clever construction with ordinary people and extraordinary things."

Russell admits he's looking forward to hearing his story at long last: "Oh, very! I couldn't get to the studio so I'm very excited to hear it. I had a publicity Zoom with Colin and Bonnie which was an absolute hoot. What an amazing team, the energy, the laughter! How lucky am I, to get to work with them?"

Emily adds: "It's thrilling to be bringing this lost piece of Russell T Davies **Doctor Who** to life. Not only is it significant for being his first-ever **Doctor Who** script but it's really exciting – and totally unique – to have a **Doctor Who** story which feels so very 1980s and classic but also so very Russell.

"It's such an interesting blend of different iterations of the show and it's produced a fantastic new adventure for the Sixth Doctor and Mel. I'm delighted fans will finally be able to encounter the Hodiac after all these years. Beware the Hodiac!"

VORTEX



DOCTOR WHO MIND OF THE HODIAC

■ RELEASED: MARCH 2022
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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Big Finish celebrates International Women's Day with its second special Doctor Who release...

MARCHING ON

TUESDAY 8TH March is International Women's Day. Having marked the occasion in previous years with releases such as *ATA Girl*, *The Eighth of March* and *ATA Girl 2*, this year Big Finish will be commemorating the occasion with the release of **The Eighth of March 2 – Protectors of Time**.

This second commemorative box set features female characters from **Doctor Who** in adventures written, produced and directed by women. Nina Millns has written *The Turn of the Tides* featuring Jo, Rani Chandra and Jac from UNIT. *Prism* by Abigail Burdess features Jenny and Lady Christina, and Lizbeth Miles has penned *Stolen Futures* featuring the second Romana.

Senior producer David Richardson says: "Emma Haigh, producer of this box set, has become one of our rising stars at Big Finish – she was nominated for Best Producer

at the Audio Production Awards last year alongside many leading lights in the industry, no less! It's always a joy to watch one of her projects as it develops.

"And this release is special: a celebration for International Women's Day with a focus on inspired women from the worlds of **Doctor Who**. There are some exciting firsts in here. Like everyone else, I can't wait to hear it."

The Turn of the Tides features the first appearance at Big Finish of Anjali Mohindra as Rani Chandra – the intelligent, fearless and tenacious protégé of Sarah Jane Smith. After their encounter in **The Sarah Jane Adventures**, Jo and Rani meet once again, this time with Jac.

Writer Nina tells *Vortex*: "I had the pleasure of working with the fantastic writer, script editor and prolifically creative legend that is Robert Valentine on the audio

version of my play *DELETE* for the wonderful Wireless Theatre. Rob has been working with Big Finish for a while and suggested I might be a good fit for some of their upcoming projects. He kindly put me in touch with script editor Matt Fitton and the rest of the Big Finish team and we were soon talking misunderstood colonising aliens, moon tremors and kick-ass female Earth-savers!

"I was delighted to learn that three legendary characters in the **Doctor Who** world would be coming together for the first time and I was going to write that moment. It was a joy and a huge responsibility to get it right, knowing how much these characters mean to people. The real pleasure was the opportunity to write for such brilliant actors and that trumped any nerves I may have felt!"

As a Big Finish newcomer, Nina had some catching up to do. She explains: "I did a lot of research,

although the worlds of **Doctor Who** (and especially the Big Finish legacy) is endless and fathomless! I started watching the television show from the beginning as well as **The Sarah Jane Adventures** and the specials and I also delved into the incredible online resources that are full of facts and character descriptions. But I soon realised this was not sustainable, so when I felt I had familiarised myself with the voices of the main

women and learning to hone them so that they rang true. I thoroughly enjoyed creating the storyline and the aliens, and also learning the discipline and expertise it takes to hold all the strands of the **Doctor Who** world in a tight, strictly-structured script that makes the most of the audio medium. I learned so much and the Big Finish gang were incredibly generous and supportive as I found my feet in this world."

during David's tenancy. I've always loved both the characters' origin episodes on TV: *Planet of the Dead* is amazing with such fantastic actors. Daniel Kaluuya, Ellen Thomas and Lee Evans all give brilliant performances, as well as the wonderful Michelle Ryan.

"And who can forget *The Doctor's Daughter* – that moment when you realise the war whose origins are lost in the mists of time is actually seven days old? Genius! And Georgia Tennant is so good with comedy. The only trouble was having too much talent to work with and trying to give both characters their due.

"I got the commission when I was chatting with my colleague Lisa McMullin, who I'd been with on the BBC TV drama writers' programme 2018, and discovered she was writing for Big Finish. I told her I was a huge **Doctor Who** fan and she put me in touch with the very talented Matt. He read some of my scripts and gave me the job. I have a file on my computer called, 'If I ever get to write **Doctor Who**,' so I was ready!

"As far as research goes I obviously had to do lots of important top-level watching back-to-back episodes. Although, having said that, at one point I did a deep dive into



Above: Georgia Tennant

I HAVE A FILE ON MY COMPUTER CALLED, 'IF I EVER GET TO WRITE DOCTOR WHO,' SO I WAS READY!

ABIGAIL BURDESS

characters, I allowed myself to stop researching and start writing.

"Matt suggested an eco-thriller with the characters all looking for the same thing without realising it, until they bump into each other! Big Finish is great at giving writers lots of space to be creative and own our adventures, while at the same time honouring the rules, values, style and slick structure of the episodes.

"I absolutely loved getting into the voices of these remarkable

PRISM BY Abigail Burdess brings together cat-burglar/socialite Lady Christina de Souza and Jenny, the Doctor's Daughter. Abigail tells *Vortex*: "I wasn't allowed to watch **Doctor**

Who when I was a kid because my mum thought it would give me nightmares. So I only started watching as an adult and David Tennant is 'my' Doctor. It was, of course, insanely exciting to write for these two iconic characters born

all the metals in the Whoniverse for one joke. I actually wrote the script during the first lockdown when real life took on a sci-fi aspect, so some of the fears I was writing about felt pretty close – breathing down my neck, really.

"As the episode is for International Women's Day, it needed to bring together these two female heroes against, as in any Big Finish story, a really scary villain. For me, the best episodes are those which explore universal fears – and I hope I've achieved that. I also wanted to make sure the obstacles our heroes

faced were not each other. There are too many stories in popular culture (**The Real Housewives** I'm looking at you!) about women competing with each other and not enough stories about women working together to defeat evil.

"Writing this was genuinely a dream come true – my first science fiction. I've loved sci-fi forever. High concept stories and vast metaphors are my favourite thing. And Matt could not have been a better script editor. My, 'If I ever get to write **Doctor Who**' file has now been re-named just '**Doctor Who** ideas', which means a lot to me."

I WATCHED WARRIORS' GATE AN EXCESSIVE NUMBER OF TIMES WHILE WRITING THIS. THANK GOODNESS IT'S SUCH A BRILLIANT STORY! LIZBETH MYLES



Above (l-r): Louise Jameson, Lalla Ward, John Leeson, John Dorney, Sadie Shimmin, David Warwick and Nimmy March
Below: Michelle Ryan

STOLEN FUTURES is written by established Big Finish writer, Lizbeth Myles. Her adventure is set after the events of the TV episode *Warriors' Gate* and features Romana with K9 and Biroc the Tharil, in territory which Big Finish has never previously mined. Lizbeth says: "It was awfully exciting to get to write for these characters at an unexplored point in their lives where it's very much Romana as she was onscreen dependent on her own skills and judgement. I watched *Warriors' Gate* an excessive number of times while writing this. Thank goodness it's such a brilliant story!

"The brief – from about three years ago – was Romana, K9 and Biroc in E-space just after *Warriors' Gate*, freeing the Tharils. It's Romana putting into practice all the skills and knowledge of the universe she's picked up from her experiences with the Doctor to fight for a cause of her own.



"The highlight was getting to write for one of my most beloved companions. I utterly adore Romana." **VORTEX**

THE EIGHTH OF MARCH



PROTECTORS OF TIME

- RELEASED: MARCH 2022
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SPACE: 1999 – BREAKAWAY



FRESH FROM the success of the Big Finish reimagining of **The Prisoner**, Nicholas Briggs tackled another famous property from ITV – **Space: 1999**. The original television series was created by Gerry Anderson and ran for two seasons in the 1970s. The show followed the adventures of the people stranded in Moonbase Alpha after the Moon was blown out of Earth's orbit.

For the audio adaptation, Nick tells *Vortex*: “The central concept of the Moon heading off on its own odyssey is the same but we’ve tweaked the science behind the cause of it very slightly. And I suppose I’ve aimed to give it a bit more emotional literacy and explore exactly what the conflicts and frustrations between the characters are in this high risk scenario. It’s a story of things going wrong, beyond human control, and how some good and not so good people struggle to understand and cope as events escalate.

“Obviously there’s a new cast and the script is very different, but it’s essentially the same story. I had

already watched the original series countless times and naturally I rewatched it a few times again for this. I audio recorded it back in the day and the sound of it and the lines were firmly lodged in my head. I don’t think I used any of the original lines – consciously or not. I would liken it to my reimagining of **The Prisoner**.

“There’s a lot that’s the same and the feel is similar but it’s all been reimagined from the ground up by someone who loves and respects the original. So it has a lot in common with the original but there’s enough that’s new in it to make it interesting and engaging for all fans. And it’ll also work for anyone who knows nothing about **Space: 1999**.”

Breakaway has an Anderson family connection as Gerry’s son Jamie script edited the adventures.

Nick explains: “Jamie and I talked this through from the start. He’s credited as script editor but his involvement has been far greater. Jamie accessed expert advice to help me with the scientific aspects and his encouragement as a friend and colleague has been vital to the

project. He’s been fully supportive of my enthusiasm for it all. And naturally, Jamie’s talked about his dad’s work on the production.”

Jamie tells *Vortex*: “Nick and I had been talking about **Space: 1999** and its potential for a Big Finish reimagining for some time so when the licence finally became available it all became rather exciting!

“Nick asked me to script edit on this series and from the outset he wanted to make it more human and begin exploration of some of the show’s themes early on. And I think he’s done that beautifully. We worked closely on a number of issues and story points from minor things, such as how to effectively describe the partition between Gorsky’s office and Main Mission on audio, through to how the disastrous events around Moonbase Alpha unfold and the cause of the Moon being torn away from Earth and hurled into space.

“The whole thing has been a great pleasure and I just know Dad would have been thrilled with this reimagining.” **VORTEX**

SPACE: 1999



BREAKAWAY

- RELEASED: SEPTEMBER 2019
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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THE FOURTH DOCTOR IS ON HIS OWN IN THIS MONTH'S BOX SET OF ADVENTURES...

MAN SOLO

THE FOURTH DOCTOR is back in the TARDIS this March and is travelling alone in two brand new adventures. His travels take him to a Gallifreyan moon to study a book that could alter time itself, and he runs into new friend Margaret Hopwood in a haunted English village where residents are terrorised by an ominous figure in **The Fourth Doctor Adventures: Solo**.

Producer David Richardson says: "It was an irresistible prospect to tell stories set between *The Deadly Assassin* and *The Face of Evil* television episodes where the Doctor is travelling alone having bid farewell to Sarah Jane. It's given us the opportunity to explore a different side to the Doctor – who is he when he's not

accompanied by one of his best friends? And we've also been able to bring in some one-off 'companions', individuals who are paired with the Doctor for just one story thus giving us a run in which every tale has a different chemistry among the cast.

"Of course we didn't know it at the time but both the character of Margaret Hopwood in the second episode, *The Ravencliff Witch*, and actor Nerys Hughes herself, fitted into the range like a glove. When we finished recording on that episode, I said to Nicholas Briggs, 'I love Margaret and Nerys, can we keep them?!' And Nick of course said yes. And there we had our foundation for the next box set where Margaret will return alongside the Doctor and Leela."

THE FIRST adventure of the set is *Blood of the Time Lords* by Timothy X Atack where the Doctor finds The Dischord Grimoire, an incredibly powerful tome, in the TARDIS and decides to take it to an old friend in The Recusary – a monastery-like retreat on a moon of Gallifrey. Tim says: "Writing for Tom Baker on his own was an obscene amount of fun and I'll happily admit I made a few highly indulgent choices along the way. There's the oft-cited story of Tom, after *The Deadly Assassin*, suggesting that he didn't need a companion, that he could just talk to himself – so I decided to try out that tactic for a moment. It could've been worse – I very briefly wondered about investigating Tom's other suggestion of a sentient cabbage as a companion!



Above (l-r): Jane Slavin and Tom Baker

"Tom solo has another bonus. There's a great joy, perhaps more than in any other incarnation, in the way that the Fourth Doctor meets new people. I can't quite put my finger on it but I think he generally assumes people are going to like him and he's going to like them, unless proven wrong. I love writing him just saying, 'Hello!'

"I didn't see the classic series on TV when I was growing up but I had a treasured cassette tape recording of *Genesis of the Daleks* so those distinctive Fourth Doctor cadences were something I relished writing. But I discovered it was actually quite unwise to try and pre-empt Tom's turns of phrase on the page. The man's his own boss, he brings that spark and verve to the dialogue on his own terms.

"I pitched several ideas and the one that David and script editor John Dorney felt had most promise was the one that I thought was taking the most liberty: effectively a direct

sequel to *The Deadly Assassin*. In the end what I wrote was more of a variation on the theme. It shares a lot with Robert Holmes's classic tale, sometimes in very obvious ways, showing parts of Time Lord society we haven't seen yet – a conspiracy, a lurking evil, the Doctor as prime suspect, all that. But I can never resist including a kind of Douglas Adams-ish irreverence, so that plays a part too.

"Because we're talking about the 'gothic fusion' period of the show here, I asked myself what big gothic tropes hadn't yet been used and thought about *The Name of the Rose*, Umberto Eco's medieval whodunnit novel set in a monastery.

"There'd also been a line in one of the more recent TV episodes, *The Magician's Apprentice*, that fleetingly mentioned what Time Lords are supposed to do when their end is near and this sparked my imagination in a big way. So I decided to set the story on a moon

of Gallifrey where the oldest Time Lords go to meet their death in quiet seclusion surrounded by an infinite library. And of course the Doctor turns up and suddenly things aren't so peaceful.

"There is an unexpected bit of IMDb trivia to all this too. When I mentioned the Umberto Eco inspiration to Tom before one of the studio recordings, he told me he'd auditioned for the lead in the 1986 film adaptation of **The Name of the Rose...**"

Tim adds: "I've sneaked in an extremely subtle reference to *The Tom Baker Years* VHS compilation, which effectively means at one point that the Doctor is quoting Tom Baker. See if you can hear it..."

I VERY BRIEFLY WONDERED ABOUT INVESTIGATING TOM'S OTHER SUGGESTION OF A SENTIENT CABBAGE AS A COMPANION!

TIMOTHY X ATTACK

THE RAVENCLIFF *Witch* by David Llewellyn opens the set.

The TARDIS lands in Ravencliff, a small town on the English coast that sits in the shade of a newly built power station and just happens to be haunted. Every now and then a spectral figure is glimpsed on the beach – the Ravencliff witch. The Doctor has to solve the mystery of her appearances if he wants to prevent a catastrophe. But he won't have to do it alone as he has the help of Margaret Hopwood, a renowned sculptor destined to play a big part in his life.

Writer David says: "A brief is often quite open and for this one I was just asked to pitch ideas for another contemporary-set Fourth Doctor story, having previously written *The Crowmarsh Experiment*."

How did David enjoy mixing mythology with a witch and science?

He tells *Vortex*: "It was super fun. Once I had the nuclear power station it felt like an opportunity to tap into my inner Nigel Kneale. Without knowing his name, I've been a fan of his since childhood, watching



I LOVED HOW HER LARGE BRONZE SCULPTURES HAD A BIT OF A SCI-FI VIBE. SO THERE'S A BIT OF THAT IN IT... DAVID LLEWELLYN

Above (l-r): David Richardson, Paul Midcalf, Deli Segal, Nicholas Briggs, Tom Baker, Trevor Cooper, Nerys Hughes, Richard Earl and Lucy Pickles



Above (l-r): Deli Segal, Tom Baker and Lucy Pickles

– and loving – the film version of **Quatermass and the Pit**, and the brilliantly bonkers **Halloween III**, though I now know he wasn't very pleased with the latter. In both films I loved the combination of science and folklore, so I guess that's something that's stayed with me.

"This script is an example of me wearing my influences on my sleeve. I was thinking about the pitch during a trip to St Ives with my partner and our friends and their daughter. I'm an early riser so often got up before

everyone else and used the time to scribble down ideas. One day we went to the Barbara Hepworth studio and garden, and I loved how her large bronze sculptures had a bit of a sci-fi vibe. So there's a bit of that in it, and there's also some Derek Jarman in there with Ravencliff very much modelled on Dungeness."

This story introduces us to Margaret, who we now know will become a companion of the Doctor in the future. How does David feel about having (unintentionally)

created a new companion?

David replies: "It's quite an honour, really. But I'm not at all precious about her being my creation, and when they told me they'd cast Nerys Hughes I was over the moon. I'd already written for her in **Torchwood: Visiting Hours** (in which Brenda is the only character to drop an F-bomb!), and she's an actress I grew up with from watching **The District Nurse** and repeats of **The Liver Birds** with my mum." **VORTEX**

THE FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES



VOLUME 11: SOLO

- RELEASED: MARCH 2022
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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COMPANION PIECE

I generally buy CDs rather than downloads as I love the artwork, photography and writers' notes. I also look forward to listening to the fascinating behind-the-scenes interviews. With this in mind, isn't it about time you released another coffee table book looking back at all your stories, monsters and companions (old and new) filled with lots of behind-the-scenes photos and stories? There is now so much material to draw from! Keep up the good work.

Steve Wallace

Nick: Steve, that's a brilliant idea and there is something rather buried

in the works at the moment. Suffice it to say we all agree with you, it's just about finding the time.

FIRST CLASS

I'm a huge fan of **The First Doctor Adventures** range starring David Bradley and the other cast of *An Adventure in Space and Time*. Will there be more stories with this TARDIS team in the near future? I love the way your writers capture this era.

Edward Royle

Nick: Spoiler alert, Edward, the new First Doctor range will feature an actor new to the role of the Doctor and he is, I assure you, amazing!

That said, we definitely want to feature adventures with David Bradley and his TARDIS team too.

THE OTHER SURVIVORS

I'd never heard of **Survivors** until a year-and-a-half ago when I discovered the 2000s remake series during the early days of COVID-19. My wife and I absolutely loved it and were really upset to discover that it was cancelled after the second series which ended with a massive cliffhanger that's never been resolved. I was hoping that Big Finish might be able to do at least one box set to at least resolve the cliffhanger and give the series some closure.

Ethan Muse

Nick: Glad you got the Survivors bug, Ethan, so to speak. Although the remake is based on the original, the storyline is different. And our licence is for the original 1970s series not the remake – so I don't think it would really fit.

IN PRINT

I am reaching out in reference to *Vortex*. As a man who enjoys physical media, is the physical *Vortex* magazine only obtainable through ordering 'X' items/s from the Big Finish website or is there a subscription method that allows for monthly instalment deliveries? I greatly enjoy all the media within the magazine and what it advertises.

Daniel Straw

Nick: Glad you are enjoying Vortex, Daniel. It is currently only available with physical orders. I'll raise the query about a subscription at our next team meeting though. **VORTEX**



UNIT is back and so is the Eleven – now get ready for some classic Doctor Who villains and monsters to make their Big Finish debut...

QUARK ATTACK!

UNIT NEMESIS: *Agents of the Vulpreen* picks up a few weeks after the events of **UNIT: Nemesis – Between Two Worlds**,” says new **UNIT** producer Heather Challands. “The Arch is now broken, the Eleven is in custody and UNIT are aware of the secondary threats on the other side of the Arch because Jacqui is there, and they are working furiously to get her back.”

Kate Stewart and Osgood with Sergeant Josh Carter and journalist Jacqui McGee, made their return to audio late last year when they found the Eleven on the other side of a mysterious Arch under the sea off the Scottish coast. During the course of the *Between Two Worlds* box set, we discovered an un-aged Harry Sullivan in Australia in the current day with his colleague Naomi Cross.

Heather continues: “We’ve got Mark Bonnar back as the Eleven. Harry and Naomi are still with us and we do get Jacqui back from the

other side of the Arch but she has been through rather a large ordeal.

“We are finally introduced to the Vulpreen and in Lizzie Hopley’s episode, *The War Factory*, Brigadier Bambera makes an appearance. There are all sorts of time shenanigans, because, in an attempt to get the Arch working again, the Eleven causes havoc with time and Josh and Kate have to go through it to the 1990s.

“We pick up from the first volume laid down by David Richardson and Emily Cook keeping the pace going with Time Lords and time travel. *Ten Minutes in Hell*, the fourth episode, is a real highlight as the concept is simple but the execution is complex. It’s set over three time zones with three narrative strands, one taking months to happen, one taking hours and one taking minutes. It really pushes them all and Kate is more vulnerable than she ever has been.”

Series script editor and writer Andrew Smith reveals there’s a new regular for

the series too. He explains: “We have a new character in Lieutenant Jimmy Tan who is a Londoner of Chinese ethnicity. He’s introduced in this box set but when we meet him he’s not yet a member of UNIT, he’s part of the regular military and a liaison officer with the Ministry of Defence. He becomes embroiled in UNIT’s latest adventures, acquires himself well and things lead on from there. You’ll be hearing more of Jimmy, who’s played by Chris Lew Kum Hoi, as we go forward with *Nemesis*.”

THE SET opens with *The Man from Gallifrey* by Andrew who says: “We get right into the action straight away. There are elements in the first *Nemesis* box set, *Between Two Worlds*, that were left deliberately unexplained. What is the Arch and who built it? What are the creatures on the other side of the Arch? What was the Eleven doing there?

“We learn the answers to these questions early on. And as the title

of the box set might suggest, the creatures are called the Vulpreen. We will also find out what that world is and why it's there.

"The Vulpreen are an animalistic race in appearance but very advanced technologically which is quite key to what we're doing with them. They are led by Lord Varliss and

in the episode and it had obviously invoked my restless night's sleep!

"The television episode, *The Dominators*, has its critics and I can see that point of view, but for me it invokes strong memories of my childhood and how much I loved this story as a wee boy. And I still think the Dominators and especially the Quarks are great.



Above: Angela Bruce as Brigadier Bambera

are fairly cruel – you wouldn't want to be captured by one."

The second story of the set, *Power of the Dominators* by Kenneth Grant, sees the first Big Finish appearance of the Dominators and their robotic servants, the Quarks. A delighted Andrew says: "The Dominators are back – and so are the Quarks! I'm so pleased we're giving them their Big Finish debut in **UNIT**.

"I just love the Quarks, they are among my earliest memories of **Doctor Who**. I remember watching it when I was six years old and then having a nightmare about the Quarks appearing on a cliff edge. When the VHS came out, I was delighted to find that was actually

"It was fantastic to script edit a story that they are in and put them up against our UNIT heroes. I have an Eagleless Quark figurine by my computer – I loved them in the comics back in the day too."

THE WAR Factory by Lizzie

Hopley sees things getting a bit timey-wimey, for want of a better word. Andrew explains: "This adventure is great. Lizzie came up with an outline after I gave her something fairly broad, with her idea based around Woolwich and the Woolwich Arsenal.

"It's incredibly clever and Brigadier Winifred Bambera is back. UNIT face

an anachronistic event in the modern day with Bambera facing another anachronistic event in her day with Tudor warships on the Thames.

"And then we have a couple of characters going forward in time to see the outcome of things. It's all interlaced with modern day and recent past in the one story, and Kate and Winifred teaming up. It's a lovely mix and what Lizzie has done is amazing."

Lizzie says: "It was quite daunting being asked to write for **UNIT** – I knew very little about new **UNIT** apart from what I'd seen in the TV series. What attracted me mostly was being offered Bambera. Angela Bruce is a massive heroine of mine since watching *Angels* as a kid – she's the kind of actress I wanted to be. I had few role models in the profession growing up – Angela and Glenda Jackson were

WHAT ATTRACTED ME MOSTLY WAS BEING OFFERED BAMBERA. ANGELA BRUCE IS A MASSIVE HEROINE OF MINE... LIZZIE HOPLEY

my two – they were complex and had qualities I hadn't seen elsewhere. I just thought they were cool.

"The Eleven was another great enticement. I've written for him a couple of times before and I love what Mark Bonnar does with the character. What an amazing villain! You've got that regenerative dissonance so it took a while to get to know his voices and how to use them, but as Mark interprets them so well I quickly took to who he was.

"Going back to the late 1980s with Bambera was fun. The concept for the story, strangely enough, came about from where I live now in Woolwich Arsenal – the home of the Royal Arsenal – which I had always wanted to use in some way for a **Doctor Who** knowing it had been a garrison for the Royal Engineers.

The character Private Huff is a tribute to my husband who was a Sapper!

"To put UNIT and Bambera here was just a gift: once I worked out how to use it, it was great fun. I had to do a lot of cramming to get my head round this story arc and out of everything I did in that year, this was the most difficult script to plan. Andrew helped enormously during redrafting. I kind of knew vaguely what I wanted to do with it, with buildings being used for different things, but he was good at reminding me of other people's storylines as I also had all of UNIT with Kate, Osgood and Josh – and Jacqui as well – needing to be kept front and foremost.

"I can't wait to hear it. I already know which is going to be my



Above: Ingrid Oliver

IT'S A BIT CHRISTOPHER NOLAN-INSPIRED WITH DIFFERENT TIMEFRAMES GOING ON

JOHN DORNEY

favourite moment (it's one with Kate and Bambera)! I can see the Royal Arsenal from my window – I know the individual buildings, the courtyard, what Belmarsh prison looks like and how long it takes to get from one building to the next, and I know its past from all the photos on site. They made gunpowder here, they designed the atomic bomb here. It is the perfect location for a time travel story – it really was a war factory!"

TEN MINUTES in Hell by John Dorney is the concluding tale of the release and Andrew says: "What an episode! John has given UNIT a rescue mission and Osgood has ten minutes to carry it out. I remember reading the first draft and thinking it was brilliant, it was so good... and I can reveal that it's longer than ten minutes! I don't want to say any more than that, other than it's a wonderful way to finish the set and I know all the work John put into it, playing around with so many ideas, until he came up with this."

John takes up the story: "I struggled to find something that was a hook for me at first, being caught on the

cup of a weird moral point which I couldn't quite resolve in my head.

"By way of explanation, my girlfriend was obsessed with thinking that **The Avengers** were terribly irresponsible by travelling back in time to stop Thanos because they might just kill loads of other people in the process – basically, you've lost so get over it. In my story it's a question of loyalty in effect where UNIT is trying to save their friends – but with the whole world at stake shouldn't you just let them go? "That was the dilemma I was presented with and I took a long time to find an answer to it. I was getting to about half a page into one storyline, which then didn't work and I had to scrap it. So I asked myself a few fundamental questions about the nature of the series and once I had that answer, the writing just flew.

"It was complicated to write on the basis that, because it's a bit Christopher Nolan-inspired with different timeframes going on, there were different storylines

tracking alongside each other, but you couldn't cut away automatically unless it worked in the overall timing. I had to make sure everything fitted in relation to each other, as well as in themselves." **VORTEX**

UNIT: NEMESIS



AGENTS OF THE VULPREEN

■ RELEASED: MARCH 2022
■ FORMAT: CD / DOWNLOAD

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Luckily, the Doctor has come to save him. Unluckily, the Doctor's TARDIS has vanished. With the ship collapsing around them, can these arch-enemies put their rivalry aside long enough to survive?

Death Will Not Part Us by Alfie Shaw performed by Adèle Anderson. On the 14th of August 3097, everything is fine on the world of Gernica. Except, on the same day, the planet is being destroyed. Also, on the 14th of August 3097, no one in the universe has heard of Gernica. The planet's only chance to survive the horrors of the Time War lies with Viola Wintersmith. For Viola has a weapon

TRIPS OF A LIFETIME

MORE BITE-SIZED Doctor

Who stories will be released this month in **Short Trips Volume 11**. **Short Trips** are short stories read by a host of favourite Big Finish actors, and they are back with a bang in the form of six sensational short slices of story encompassing adventures set during the eras of both the 20th and 21st century incarnations of **Doctor Who**.

Producer Alfie Shaw says: "There's something for everyone in this new box set. We've got a couple of short-form dramas, there's first-person monologues and then the more traditional third-person stories. We're digging into the psychology of classic villains, monsters and companions, exploring the devastating effects of the Time War and taking a terrifying flight with the Tenth Doctor!"

"We've taken a similar route with all our fabulous performers, pulling from actors who were part of the original television show and those who have joined the wonderful world of **Doctor Who** through Big Finish's audio adventures. It's a privilege listening to these fantastic actors at work and I hope everyone enjoys the stories."

The episodes in **Volume 11** are:

Rearguard by Alfie Shaw performed by Dan Starkey and Jacob Dudman.

Trooper Stron has been given a great honour by Sontar. He's been chosen as the rearguard on Ubreus, protecting that world against anyone who would try to pry it from Sontaran control. The problem is, no one's coming to claim Ubreus, and that means there's no one for Stron to fight...

Messages from the Dead by Rochana Patel performed by Matthew Waterhouse.

Adric wants to help the Doctor. The Doctor doesn't want Adric's help. Banished to updating the TARDIS logbook, Adric has to record the tale of the Hermes, a doomed freighter they found in E-Space. With Romana gone, and only the past as a guide, Adric needs to work out how to make this new dynamic work before it's too late for both him and the Doctor.

The Threshold by Felicia Barker performed by Jon Culshaw. *After a collision in the vortex, the Master is trapped in his TARDIS.*

that can destroy anything that stands in her way. A weapon that requires a unique form of ammunition. Her past.

Fear of Flying by Paul F Verhoeven performed by Ayesha Antoine. *Hawa Hassan is terrified of flying. However, to make the most important audition in her life, Hawa's braving boarding an aeroplane. After all, it's just one flight. What could possibly go wrong?*

Inside Story by Ben Tedds performed by Sophie Aldred. *Helen Howard wishes to make it known that the plot, all names, characters, and incidents portrayed in this story are fictitious. No identification with actual persons or time travellers should be inferred.* **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS VOLUME 11

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THE CORRECT WAY TO THRILL

STEED AND MRS PEEL ARE BACK TO FACE MORE DIABOLICAL MASTERMINDS

THE AVENGERS – *The Comic Strip Adaptations* continues with a sixth set of three adventures, as Big Finish offers an escape to the 1960s. In **The Comic Strip Adaptations Volume Six**, Julian Wadham reprises his role as John Steed and Olivia Poullet continues to play Emma Peel. With seven deadly assassins, highwaymen on the roads, and dinosaurs in the countryside – only Steed and Mrs Peel can save the day!

Producer/director Samuel Clemens, son of Brian Clemens who produced the television series during the Diana Rigg and Linda Thorson years, tells *Vortex*: “It was a thrill to be in one of **The Avengers Lost Episodes** story as an actor: I felt like I’d ticked a box

as *Brought to Book* was one of the episodes that Dad wrote. Then when I was asked to direct on this range it was very humbling as I hadn’t even considered that I might be in the running for it. Senior producer David Richardson asked if I’d be up for it, and of course I said yes.

“And now being the producer is a real honour. After helping with the 60th anniversary event in January last year I felt very passionate about keeping this wonderful series alive for another generation. **The Avengers** are still very much needed!”

“This range of releases are all adapted from *TV Comic* strips. The adventures are such enormous fun and really capture the spirit of **The Avengers**. Some are more

outlandish than others, but they all lend themselves wonderfully to the audio format. You can easily imagine them as televised episodes too as they would work tremendously well on screen.”

SEVEN DEADLY ... *Assassins* by Roland Moore kicks off the set in a story akin to the movie **Seven** as Steed and Mrs Peel are on a ship guarding a jewel, trapped with seven killers who are after the gem... or are they? Roland says: “This one came from the *TV Comic Holiday Special 1966* so it was a bit unusual in that it was a single strip with no cliff-hangers – unlike most comic strips for **The Avengers**. It tells the story of Steed



Above (l-r): Olivia Poulet and Julian Wadham

I REALLY ENJOYED THINKING UP THE SET PIECES FOR EACH OF THE CONFRONTATIONS. THAT AND THINKING UP ALL THE NAUTICAL PUNS! ROLAND MOORE

and Mrs Peel who are on a cruise and a gang wanting vengeance has also come aboard. There are seven in the gang and each has a disk with a number on.

"I expanded that idea and thought, 'Why not seven deadly sins as codenames?'. It amused me that a gang would argue over which of them was assigned the different sins as no one would want to be gluttony or sloth! A bit like *Reservoir Dogs* when they all want to be Mr Black.

"I also made more of the reason that Steed and Mrs Peel are on the ship coming up with the idea that they are guarding a rare gem. I thought a ship – especially an advanced one that they might not fully understand – makes a great claustrophobic environment. Steed and Mrs Peel can't escape and they know they are being hunted. That angle gave me a lot of potential for tension and drama.

"I really enjoyed thinking up the set pieces for each of the confrontations. That and thinking up all the nautical puns!"

Speaking of the guest cast, Sam adds: "We have Grant Masters, an actor I've worked with before – we both trained at the same drama school but many years apart. He plays an East End villain called Emmett Shand and also one of the seven sins.

"Lara Lemon, who has done quite a few Big Finishes, plays a devilishly posh villain. We also have the remarkable Harry Myers who has an incredible range of voices. He plays Captain Benjamin Crow and a variety of the seven sins."

THE SECOND story of the set is *Stand and Deliver* by Sarah Grochala in which Steed and Mrs Peel face a group of highwaymen. Sam says: "Sarah did an amazing job last time on the episode *Mother's Day* with Linda Thorson. I thought it was such a fun, wacky episode that she should write an Emma Peel one and of course she hasn't disappointed, it's a wonderful script."

Sarah says: "Emma Peel was my first 'Avengeress' so she has a very special place in my heart – but I adore Tara too! When I think of Mrs Peel, I always picture her in the black cat suit which I later found out Diana Rigg hated – so that's kind of ironic!"

"This comic strip starts off with Steed and Mrs Peel being held up by a highwayman looking for a microfilm and being imprisoned in a windmill. But then after a couple of pages the highwayman theme is dropped. My favourite **The Avengers** episodes are the ones where the story is set in a slightly bizarre everyday

world. For example, where Steed and Mrs Peel or Tara are battling unusual goings on with milkmen or kids at a strange boarding school or a marriage bureau or funeral directors. That kind of crazy version of the everyday world that I think is unique to **The Avengers**.

“So rather than abandoning the highwayman theme, I kept the idea, ran with it and developed it across the whole story. I also reordered some of the events in the original comic strip so the sequences with the highwayman and the windmill that begin the original strip are actually in the

**THAT KIND OF CRAZY
VERSION OF THE
EVERYDAY WORLD
THAT I THINK IS
UNIQUE TO THE
AVENGERS.** SARAH GROCHALA

final part of the audio version. I also kept the idea of agents competing to find the microfilm from the original strip but altered it a little to flesh out the story. There's not a huge amount of the original dialogue from the comic strip in this one – it had to be rearranged for the audio version.”

Sam tells *Vortex* more about the rest of the cast: “We've Jonny Weldon, who is famous on the Twitter-sphere for doing videos about being an actor which are painfully brilliant and true. I've watched them all and experienced them all – and I always look forward to his new videos dropping. I thought he would be great in the Avengerworld so he plays Lord Jimmy De Montfort, a nuclear scientist.

“Pilar Pollen, his Cuban counterpart and fiancée is played by Lucy Heath. Lucy grew up in Spain and so she really brought authenticity to the part. And lastly, we have the commanding Alisdair Hankinson as Conrad Talbot, an agent from internal affairs.”



Above: Julian Wadham

YOU WON'T *Believe Your Eyes* by John Dorney concludes this set where in the English countryside, strange things are afoot as dinosaurs, polar bears and lions have been spotted!

And the story features an appearance by the actor/writer too. John tells *Vortex*: “Steed and Mrs Peel are on the track of a potential weapon that might be under development from a scientist.

“Sam was pleased with how well I knew **The Avengers** and so asked me to be in this one. It was a treat being asked to play the part of Johnson – I hope I engaged with the right tone and got it to go quite well with Steed and Mrs Peel.

Sam adds: “John appears in *You Won't Believe Your Eyes* and having written a tremendous amount of **The Avengers** and being the script editor I felt it was time he

should appear in one. And he's done an incredibly fine job!

“We also have audio stalwart and **Captain Scarlet**, Wayne Forester. I've directed him several times in the new Anderson Entertainment box sets of **Thunderbirds** and **Stingray**, and I thought he'd be a perfect fit. Plus we've the wonderfully versatile actress Zora Bishop joining us who's just marvellous and a welcome addition to **The Avengers**.” **VORTEX**

**THE AVENGERS: THE COMIC
STRIP ADAPTATIONS**
VOLUME SIX: STEED & MRS PEEL

■ RELEASED: MARCH 2022
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 Executive Producer:
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"I paint the walls with treacle,
 pour honey on my phone."

BIG FINISH

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