

THE **BIG FINISH** MAGAZINE

VORTEX



ISSUE 161
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THE CLASSIC GERRY
ANDERSON SHOW IS GIVEN
A BIG FINISH MAKEOVER...

ALSO INSIDE

THE NINTH DOCTOR

HE'S BEEN BACK TO EARTH AND NOW THE
NINTH DOCTOR IS OFF INTO THE STARS...





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THE WAR MASTER

ESCAPE FROM REALITY

TWO ICONIC Big Finish actors will meet later this year in *Escape from Reality*, the next **The War Master** box set from Big Finish. Sir Derek Jacobi reprises his role as the Time War incarnation of the Master who manages to escape from the Daleks – but it leads him to an encounter with the infamous Oscar Wilde.

Producer and director Scott Handcock says: “Years ago, we mooted a potential **Doctor Who** and **Dorian Gray** crossover where the Master became preoccupied with the idea of a portrait that could rejuvenate someone’s life force. It’s lovely to return to that idea as **The Confessions of Dorian Gray** marks its 10th anniversary with Big Finish.”

The Master of Dorian Gray written by David Llewellyn is the final story of the set and features actor Alexander Vlahos – who has played the titular character in the Big Finish original series **The Confessions of Dorian Gray** for more than a decade – as the ageless immortal.

Scott adds: “It’s an extra pleasure to unite Sir Derek Jacobi and Alexander Vlahos together on audio – probably the two leads I’ve worked most closely with over the years – they’ve created a lovely clash of charmingly amoral characters in Victorian London!” **VORTEX**

THE WAR MASTER

VOLUME 8: ESCAPE FROM REALITY

- RELEASED: DECEMBER 2022
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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EDITORIAL

SOMETIMES WITH *Vortex* I could really do with transcendental pages! This month’s issue just has so much packed into it! I’m particularly excited to hear the Big Finish version of Gerry Anderson’s first live action TV series, **UFO**. I was originally introduced to it in around 1992 by my friend (and Big Finish’s **Dark Shadows** cover designer) Alistair McGown, and within minutes of watching it, I was hooked.

The whole concept of it is first class – the Supreme Headquarters Alien Defence Organisation (SHADO), based within a film studio facility, monitors and deals with the threats from aliens from an unknown world. The mix of live action with the typically stunning model shots which you’d expect from an Anderson series is brilliant.

And those alien spacecraft are just amazing. They looked so different as they spun around with a distinctive sound effect of their own – one I would know straight away if I heard it again now. When you’ve got an effect like that, as iconic as the TARDIS materialising, you’re onto a winner.

The original show may seem dated now in some respects, but in others it’s just as fresh as ever. I can’t wait to hear how this new range sounds with the excellent actor Barnaby Kay playing Commander Straker.

We’ve also got more River Song, more Sixth Doctor, more Ninth Doctor, more **Classic Doctors, New Monsters** – and a new addition to the **Big Finish Classics** range. Told you – there’s lots packed in! **VORTEX**

Kenny

“MORE HISsing AND SHOUTing AND CALLing PEOPle ‘ANTHROPOID SCUM!’”

ANOTHER CLASSIC
GERRY ANDERSON
SHOW IS GIVEN
A BIG FINISH
MAKEOVER, WITH...



MOON STRAKER!

THE HUMAN race is under threat. But the public has no idea. It's a world of secrecy, paranoia, personal struggle and threats.

Alien ships are already attacking. And aliens are already here...

Big Finish brings us its latest reimagining of a classic television show, this time in the form of Gerry Anderson's live-action ITV series **UFO**, with the first of two box sets, *Destruct Positive!*, due for release in August. Originally launched in 1970 but set in the then 'futuristic' 1980, **UFO** is centred on the struggle between **SHADO**

(Supreme Headquarters Alien Defence Organisation) and the mysterious, alien would-be invaders. The three adventures in *Destruct Positive!* have been written by Andrew Lane, and script edited by Jamie Anderson (son of Gerry) and Big Finish executive producer Nicholas Briggs.

It contains three action-packed full-cast audio adventures, following Ed Straker (with actor Barnaby Kay succeeding Ed Bishop) as a US Air Force test pilot who gets sucked into the world of alien infiltration and human kind's fight for survival. It's a journey that will eventually

take him to the top job at **SHADO**. Nick says: "**UFO** has always been on my radar. I'd been in talks about it with Maggie Harris, formerly of ITV Studios, alongside chats about **Space: 1999**. And happily she came back to me with a combined licence for both franchises. Jamie came on board as script editor and was very keen to commission Andrew for the scripts. The pandemic unfortunately caused quite a delay on us finalising them so I did a lot of work on the scripts too.

"It's such a strong concept. Earth under threat from aliens. We don't know why they're coming to Earth, we



Above: Barnaby Kay

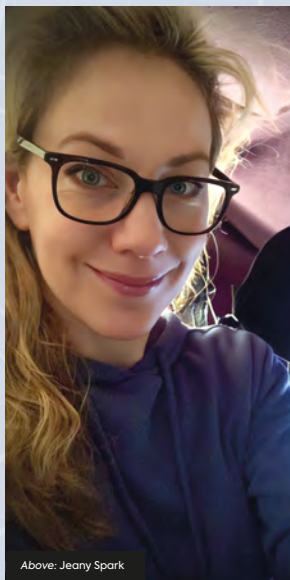
don't know what they want. And each alien incursion gives us tantalising pieces of the jigsaw, the final size and detail of which we can't guess at."

The three stories in this box set are *Destruct Positive!*, *Things We Lost in the Darkness* and *Full Fathom Five*.

Jamie says: "I worked closely with Andrew to create a new beginning for the show. But this audio series has all the essential DNA of Dad's original creation. What we have here now is an irresistible fusion of a 1970s view of a 1980s world and our own 'future' perspective on that. A kind of retro-futurism."

Producer Emma Haigh adds: "It's so exciting to be bringing **UFO** to audio. It is another iconic TV series from the Anderson world and it's wonderful to hear Ed Straker, Virginia Lake, Alec Freeman and the SHADO team and stories in this reimagining."

ANDREW TELLS *Vortex*: "I guess I first saw **UFO** when it originally aired on TV – I was 7 going on 8 when it came out. I remember reading the comic strips that were made at the



Above: Jeany Spark

time and knowing they were a part of a TV show that I was watching, so I definitely had contemporaneous memories. Given my age I was in the process of moving from uncritically watching colourful action-adventure stuff to wanting more character-led, darker, more complicated fare, probably matching the change from the Second to the Third Doctor in **Doctor Who** (and yes, I know that I can't refer to the Second Doctor's era as exactly 'colourful' given that it was transmitted in black and white, but work with me – I'm speaking figuratively!).

"What I loved about it then, and now, is that it veers much closer to horror than most science fiction. I could make a good argument for putting **UFO** right next to Ridley Scott's **Alien**, in that both of them have humans isolated in a dangerous universe filled with things they don't

IT VEERS MUCH CLOSER TO HORROR THAN MOST SCIENCE FICTION. I COULD MAKE A GOOD ARGUMENT FOR PUTTING **UFO** RIGHT NEXT TO RIDLEY SCOTT'S **ALIEN**... ANDREW LANE

understand. But then, I could say that about **Space: 1999** as well...

"Being offered the gig to write **UFO** – and not just one script but a whole load of them, was a dream come true. I'd known Jamie socially for a few years at that point, and I guess my enthusiasm for the series had transmitted itself to him moderated by many pints of beer and glasses of wine! He knew I could write, he knew I loved the series and he trusted me to get it right. I'm guessing that he wanted one voice telling the stories so there was a consistency of vision. I just feel so lucky that it was my voice he and Big Finish chose. What that has allowed me to do is to set things up in one episode that don't get payed off until a few episodes later."

ALTHOUGH THE original TV series featured female characters in tight costumes, one aspect where it was ahead of its time was in its presentation of women as strong characters

with Colonel Virginia Lake as one of its leads. Andrew says: "I suppose one could make an argument that the series had strong female characters taking command of

was wrong with the original?' You have to respect the DNA of the source whilst making enough genetic changes that it can survive and thrive in a different world to

the one it was created in and for."

The original series saw SHADO based at the most unlikely of locations as Andrew explains: "I'm really pleased to say that we have retained as much of the original as we could, including the concept of the Harlington-Straker film studios and more minor characters such as Doctor Schroeder.

"Where we've made changes, especially to the cast, it's more because audio drama has less scope for characters who just get a line or two, or who had quite a lot of screen time but didn't say anything at all."

ACTOR BARNABY Kay is playing SHADO's commander, Ed Straker – what led to his casting? Nick explains: "Barnaby has an incredible ability to give an impression of 'still waters run deep' in his performances, if you know what I mean? There's an intensity but it's contained, like a coiled spring. And you never know when it might suddenly leap into life or anger or passion. Barney's nothing like that as a person – he's very giggly and charming. But he has this wonderful ability to give us the feeling of a tortured soul.



THERE'S AN INTENSITY BUT IT'S CONTAINED, LIKE A COILED SPRING. NICHOLAS BRIGGS

Above: Samuel Clemens

situations, and men in string vests! It was, in many ways, a transitional series in its view of gender. I have, of course, ditched as much of that as I could while still making sure that it comes across as obviously UFO.

"It's a bit like being in a band and doing a cover version of a really well-known rock song. If you make it too much like the original then people will think, 'Well, why bother?' I'll just listen to the original version,' but if you make it too different then people will be put off, and ask 'Why have you changed it so much? What



Above: Lynsey Murrell

"And I think Straker is very much a man with a lot of internal struggles going on. The way Andrew's written the story shows Straker thrown into a situation where he has no choice but to sacrifice everything he holds dear in order to lead the fight against the aliens."

An array of familiar SHADO characters also feature including Colonel Alec Freeman (Samuel Clemens), Lieutenant Gay Ellis (Lynsey Murrell), General James Henderson (Harry Myers) and Lieutenant-Colonel Virginia Lake (Jeany Spark).

Barnaby was familiar with UFO as a series. He says: "In my slightly twisted memory, I thought I'd discovered it in the 70s and



Above: Victor Alli

I would have been closer to his vocal quality but now I'm vegan, teetotal and don't smoke!

"I did ask about how close to his voice Big Finish wanted me to be but I was told to bring it back to me. That's what a lot of people have said as I'm not an impressionist – it's me with Ed's intensity and frustration. Look at the script and play that but with a bit of that clipped Ed Bishop sound.

"With Ed Bishop being American, I did wonder if that was part of its success as he was from the outside, as a voice he seemed alien to us Brits in the 70s. I think that was partly why it struck home."

ANDREW CONTINUES: "The first episode is essentially the story of Straker finding out about the alien threat but rather than him just getting a briefing from

I'D LIKE TO THINK THERE'S A PARANOID X-FILES VIBE SOMEWHERE IN THE BACKGROUND...

ANDREW LANE

General Henderson he now has considerably more 'skin in the game' as it were. I'd like to think there's a paranoid **X-Files** vibe somewhere in the background of this episode.

After that I wanted to highlight different environments so we have an episode mostly focused on aliens on the ground, hiding in forests and laying siege to farmhouses; an episode set underwater; and an episode set on the Moon while Moonbase is still under construction.

"It's clear from the TV series, although never really explored, that not only do the aliens already have some kind of traitorous support network on Earth but also that they can do things like take

over the minds of animals and people. There's a lot more to them than might first be apparent."

Barney adds: "As far as the story's concerned, in the TV pilot Straker is quite quickly absorbed into the world but in our version the first episode takes its time to move him from test pilot to alien destroyer.

"It seemed a more realistic way to progress, but back then they wanted to crack on and introduce Moonbase and so on. We're not recreating the episodes, this is a different version.

"But all the characters are there – Gay Ellis is in the first scene, there's Virginia Lake and Alec Freeman, and they're all just wonderful."

ANDREW SAYS: "There are times in my career when writing has just been a slog and times when it has been a joy. Writing **UFO** has been a joy from the very start.

That doesn't mean it's been easy – trying to build a logical framework that supports everything we know from the original series has been a trial – but it has been fun!"

Nick concludes: "It's really exciting. I don't do favourites, really, because it always feels as though you're being disloyal to the other choices available, but **UFO** comes pretty close to being my favourite Anderson series. I'm delighted with it!" **VORTEX**

had found this series no one knew about. I felt I'd uncovered it and kept it a secret and was blown away by it! But I actually found it on video in the 90s!

"It feels really polished despite it being the first live-action Anderson show, and Ed Bishop is so convincing you buy into the whole conceit: his position and his frustrations. You buy it as a sci-fi classic.

"I was excited when I was offered it but daunted too because of Ed's incredible voice. When I drank whisky and smoked cigarettes,

UFO
DESTRUCT POSITIVE!



■ RELEASED: AUGUST 2022
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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THE MONSTERS ARE COMING!

IT'S THE RETURN OF THE ULTIMATE DOCTOR WHO MASH-UP SERIES...

CLASSIC DOCTORS, New Monsters features our favourite Classic Doctors with monsters from the new series of **Doctor Who**. The third series is out for release this month with a quartet of tales in **Classic Doctors, New Monsters: The Stuff of Nightmares**.

Tom Baker (the Fourth Doctor), Colin Baker (the Sixth Doctor), Tim Treloar (the Third Doctor) and Paul McGann (the Eighth Doctor) will face the cowardly Tivolians that first featured in the television episode *The God Complex*; The Hoxx of Balhoon – brother of the Moxxx glimpsed in *The End of the World*; and the brain-eating Dream Crabs from *Last Christmas*.

Script editor Matt Fitton says: "It's always interesting to delve into post-2005 **Doctor Who** to find more monsters to face our Doctors – half the fun is working out which Doctor/monster pairings work best to bring out the full potential of both Time Lord and foe!"

IN THE first adventure of the set, *The House That Hoxx Built* by Tim Foley, the Third Doctor and Sarah journey far into the future of Earth. *Vortex* asks Tim if this is the strangest Big Finish commission he's had yet? Tim confirms: "Yes! But of course I leapt at the chance to write it. I actually write very few stories for returning monsters – I tend to shy away from a subject if I don't think I can put my own stamp on it.

"I laughed when Big Finish asked me: it was quite a special request. I

have really happy memories from school after watching *The End of the World* on TV, where people were asking me the names of all the monsters and I knew thanks to *DWM!* It was such a colourful adventure – so I decided to flip it and write an almost black and white tale. *The House That Hoxx Built* is heavily inspired by the horror film *The Old Dark House*, a great setting to put the Third Doctor and Sarah in. I also wanted to draw on Russell T Davies's ideas of Earth's future so there are lots of nods to concepts and themes we've seen in the likes of *New Earth* and *Gridlock*.

"The Doctor and Sarah arrive at the end of the world and find a house that shouldn't be there with a host that's afraid. Something haunts the corridors of the manor and it may require digging deep into its foundations. There are

bumps in the night, wine and cheese. And a talking lamb..."

THE TIVOLIAN *Who Knew Too Much* by Robert Valentine sees the Fourth Doctor and Leela taking an Italian holiday – and meeting another tourist who is very far from home.

Rob says: "When Matt invited me to write a Fourth Doctor and Leela story for this **Classic**

and a strong line in righteous indignation. I enjoyed writing for his voice – it's an interesting contrast to the more colloquial style of the new series Doctors.

"I took a close look at *Last Christmas* and tried to gather all the hints about the Dream Crabs and think about where to take them next. I also made a trip to the library to browse books about dreaming and theories of sleep – and that's

are the Dream Crabs..."

John was delighted to work on this story idea from Jac: "Over the years, I've always loved Jac's stuff from *The Marian Conspiracy* at the start of Big Finish to the legendary *Doctor Who* and *The Pirates*. And, of course, she was my script editor when I wrote my first **Companion Chronicle**. She is incredibly good at her job.

"Jac began work on the story and



Above (l-r): Tim Treloar and Ozioma Whenu

WITH A FLAIR FOR THE THEATRICAL AND A STRONG LINE IN RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION.

ROY GILL

I was given what was somewhere between a synopsis and an outline, which was very detailed and had pretty much the plot for the entire thing. It was all there in the right order, it's really hard to describe how much there was!

"For the Dream Crabs, I rewatched *Last Christmas* which was, fortunately, in the run-up to Christmas so exactly the right time to be seeing it! I am very excited to be bringing them back." **VORTEX**

Doctors, New Monsters release, I was delighted. But when he told me the monsters I was getting were the Tivolians, I initially had no idea what to do with them.

"However, the thing about Tivolians is their timidity and so-called cowardice, and the idea of the Doctor and Leela having a big adventure with a perpetually terrified Tivolian sidekick seemed like the perfect story. It's basically a 1970s spy thriller set in Rome, and possibly the most fun I've ever had writing a **Doctor Who** script."

TOGETHER IN *Eclectic Dreams* by Roy Gill sees the Sixth Doctor take companion Mari to the Archipelago of High Dream to try and stop the nightmares she's having.

Roy says: "Colin's Doctor is erudite, charming and spiky by turns, with a flair for the theatrical

how I decided this story would be set in a sleep research institute which has, of course, attracted the attention of the Kantrofarri!

"It's a fun and spooky fantasy adventure in which the Sixth Doctor and Mari Yoshida run-up against an unscrupulous musician and the things that lurk in the dark. The Lethe Foundation has uninvited guests..."

Roy adds his highlight was: "Getting to add to the Sixth Doctor mythology a little with his travelling companion, Mari. She's a student studying journalism, determined, irreverent and inquisitive – and she plays a big part in bringing out an unexpected side to the Doctor's personality..."

IF I SHOULD *Die Before I Wake* by John Dorney, from a story by Jacqueline Rayner, concludes the set. The Eighth Doctor and Charley are lost in a labyrinth of monsters. And so

DOCTOR WHO CLASSIC DOCTORS, NEW MONSTERS: THE STUFF OF NIGHTMARES



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RIVER IS GOING WITH THE FLOW ONCE MORE...

A SONG OF FIRE

RIVER SONG'S adventures in space and time continue in the tenth box set of **The Diary of River Song** containing four more flirtations with death and destruction in *Two Rivers* and a *Firewall*.

Producer David Richardson says: "I think this box set plays with the sheer flexibility of the **River Song** format. We go up and down her timeline meeting enemies old and new, and travel to familiar places and previously unvisited territories."

The set begins with a script by Tim Foley. For his first time writing for River, the adventure is called, ironically, *The Two Rivers*. Tim says: "I am the biggest fan of this character and this range. I love River – there are so many avenues to explore with her. Plus actor Alex Kingston is divine."

"For me the challenge was about making sure I wasn't putting River in a story where I could just sub-in the Doctor. It needed to be

uniquely River. And this one is so unique that there's two of them!

"I've tried to be my very Moffat-iest here, so it's a bit hard to explain, but River finds her tomb! Only who lies inside? What are the Karla-Gard? And who is married to who? Writing for Alex Kingston is a dream come true! And this commission led to a special something with her that I can't talk about yet – spoilers!"

THE SECOND adventure, *Beauty on the Inside* is written by Lizzie Hopley, who says: "I always jump at writing for River. I feel like the gloves are off with her a bit as she breaks rules and it's always fun creating them for her."

"I guess it's all about doing River justice, making sure she's witty and fast-paced but always with depth. It's easy to get the character wrong and write a lot of flashy stuff that doesn't carry weight."

"There are a lot of elements in this one. It's essentially about an

untouchable royal family who are keeping themselves relevant by doing anything to stay young. It's inspired by all sorts of things. I liked the idea of a mysterious painting belying time itself but the main theme is how quickly a society can change if an entire generation is wiped out or disconnected for some reason and the wrong things get put in their place. I was very inspired by Leela's Sevateem backstory – scientists regressing to savages – although in my story, it happens far quicker.

"I loved inventing the Intergalactic Space Auction at the beginning and I want to return to that at some point. In my mind it's like the **Star Wars** Cantina but with gavels."

BLACK FRIDAY is the second Big Finish script written by Lauren Mooney and Stewart Pringle, following their terrifying **Torchwood** tale *The Grey Mare*.

Stewart says: "I'm kind of obsessed with old shopping centres as I



Above: Alex Kingston

grew up near the Metro Centre in Gateshead which was like a paradise when I was a kid..."

Lauren – who married Stewart in May – interjects: "You should hear how Stew's family talk about it. The reverential love with which they describe the Metro Centre is amazing! It's like the way some families talk about dead relatives..."

Stewart continues: "It was just brilliant! It had a theme park and there was an idea that shopping centres weren't just to go shopping in but they were a whole experience like a wonderland – you could go along and have a full family day out but never buy a thing! So I thought it would be interesting to send River Song to one of those. I also wanted to take a gentle look at the death of the high street and the move into online shopping.

"We wanted River to meet the Autons as there hasn't really been a River/Auton moment yet. We had fun playing around with the kind of retro future world we wanted to build."

Lauren concludes: "There's a throwaway joke that River makes in the television show that was really funny



Above: Mimi M. Khayisa

—that she had dated an Auton with swappable heads. We thought it would be really amusing to create a romance, something like the film *Speed*, so they have the adventure and they've got the sexual tension, but it's just a fun thing."

THE SET concludes with *Firewall* by Barnaby Kay. David says: "This is the first script for Big Finish by Barnaby Kay. Barney is a brilliant actor, writer and director – a man with a diverse

range of top-level skills and we're so lucky to have him." Barney reveals: "During my research I discovered the TV episodes *Silence in the Library* and *Forest of the Dead*. Since the hard drive in the core of the Library appeared to be River's final resting place, and she, her team and Charlotte Abigail Lux remain conscious and aware, I wondered, 'What happens next?'"

"I knew I really wanted to resurrect Proper Dave so before I wrote a word I contacted Harry Peacock to check he'd be up for revisiting that character, and thankfully he was. *Firewall* was great fun to write and I loved the challenge of using Charlotte as a central character – although she sounds like a little girl she harbours all the knowledge of the Universe."

I KNEW I REALLY WANTED TO RESURRECT PROPER DAVE... BARNABY KAY

Summing up the adventure, Barney says: "Sometime after being saved by the Tenth Doctor, River is living a happy family life in the virtual world of CAL. She has no memory of her previous existence and spends her days in blissful ignorance. But when a malignant virus is uploaded into the hard drive by a disruptive hacker, that utopia is shattered. And the last remnants of River Song could be erased forever..." **VORTEX**

THE DIARY OF RIVER SONG TWO RIVERS AND A FIREWALL



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He's been Back to Earth and now the Ninth Doctor is off on a...

STAR TREK

THE NINTH Doctor was on Earth in his most recent Big Finish box set, so it only seems right that he heads back *Into the Stars* for the next adventure! And on his journeys, this incarnation of the Doctor is going to have his first encounter with an old foe – the Sontarans.

Producer David Richardson says: “We’re all about variety in **The Ninth Doctor Adventures** range. Where the previous volume was an emotional rollercoaster ride, *Into the Stars* explores some different tones.

“There’s an outright comedy that is very, very funny, a colourful space adventure; and a scary, dark and cold horror story in outer space.

“The recordings were, as ever, huge fun and I think Christopher Eccleston relished the fact that each day his Doctor got to turn

up in a different place and time – and a whole different genre!”

SALVATION NINE by Timothy X Atack opens this set with the Sontarans facing their sworn enemy. He says: “We were looking for stories where the Doctor helps people to find the best in themselves but he isn’t necessarily the big superhero who solves every single problem. I love this variety of **Who** story, where the Doctor becomes as invested in people’s flaws as in, say, their innocence or their moral cause.

“I pitched something that really went for broke on that count and I pushed it as far as I dared – by having him confront a moral quandary he really doesn’t see coming, a real anomaly. And that anomaly involves his old enemies the Sontarans.

“I’d recently rewatched Akira Kurosawa’s **Seven Samurai**, and thought it would be good to have the Doctor employed by a small village to help defend them from a Sontaran raiding party. And then I gave it a twist.

“The Doctor is trying to find a nice spot for a picnic and stumbles across a massive intergalactic death fleet converging on a tiny nondescript moon called Salvation Nine. He lands on this forest world to see what all the fuss is about, expecting to find either some dreadful threat or terribly outnumbered innocents. Weirdly he’s right and wrong on both counts, and the adventure kicks off from there...”

This wasn’t Tim’s first time writing for Chris’s Doctor, after penning *Planet of the End* in **The Ninth Doctor Adventures: Respond to All Calls**. He continues: “I gave the Doctor a



Above (l-r): Maureen O'Brien and Christopher Eccleston

THE SECOND adventure, *Last of the Zetacene* by James Kettle, keeps the Doctor on his travels and features a guest star of note – Maureen O'Brien – who played Vicki alongside William Hartnell's First Doctor. James, writer of previous Ninth Doctor **Lost Warriors** tale *The Hunting Season*, says: "As I recall the brief for this was very straightforward – more please! I guess with the first season everyone was anxiously waiting to find out what was loved most and the feeling coming out of the recordings for *The Hunting Season* were very positive. Script editor, Matt Fitton asked me what ideas I had for the next run – if there was to be a next run – and this ticked everyone's boxes. I'm trying to think what else was in the mix? I seem to remember a spoof of *Sunset Boulevard* and something about the Khmer Rouge... neither of those will be reappearing in the near future!"

"There's a high stakes game between galactic plutocrats taking place on a grim space station – and the prize is a very rare alien beast. There are a lot of different ingredients

proper hero's journey in my last story for Chris, and I sensed that being the questing actor he is, he'd be up for the Doctor having a slightly different role this time round. So here our Time Lord is often baffled and exasperated, forever trying to figure out what to do next. In the studio Chris described it as a 'straight man' role to this story's companions. It's wonderful, writing for someone who will just roll with these flights of fancy. Chris has this amazing thing of being very precise and really responsive at the same time – listening to him work I don't quite know how he does it.

"I did pull his leg when he was wrestling with one of my unpronounceable Sontaran names, though. I think I might have been sailing a bit close to the wind there and I hope he's forgiven me!"

What was Tim's favourite part of the script? Tim replies: "My highlight? Writing for the Sontarans – what else! Thanks to where this story goes I got to write two kinds of Sontarans into the bargain, both the modern and classic varieties. It's an absolute joy to conjure up those 1970s/80s eggheads, the really disdainful and

IT'S WONDERFUL, WRITING FOR SOMEONE WHO WILL JUST ROLL WITH THESE FLIGHTS OF FANCY.

TIMOTHY X ATTACK



Above: Thalissa Teixeira

callous ones, and have them interact with their boisterous and belligerent nu-Who successors. It's a bit like writing a multi-Doctor story but with more hissing and shouting and calling people 'anthropoid scum!'"

going into this. I was drawing on *Casino Royale*, *The Riot Club*, *120 Days of Sodom*, *Showgirls*, *Halo Jones* volume one and (you might spot this) *I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue*. Not necessarily things that naturally go together but doesn't that often make for the most enjoyable dishes?"

JAMES IS especially delighted that Maureen is in the cast. He agrees: "Oh gosh. I guess the first time I ever watched Maureen would have been *The Time Meddler* rerun when I was nine – so that's a long time for her to have been part of my frame of reference! Sometimes you get tipped off in advance about a juicy piece of casting (like Sanjeev Bhaskar for the recent *The Difference Office* in **Doctor of War: Genesis**) – Maureen I only found out about on the day of recording. It's a chance for her to play a much colder



Above (l-r): Helen Goldwyn, Simon Shepherd, Thalissa Teixeira, Pip Torrens, Christopher Eccleston and Amy Manson

IT'S DOCTOR WHO VS JACK FROST! HORROR, ACTION, TINSEL. TIM FOLEY

character than Vicki, and she did it brilliantly. I think everyone involved would attest to how much thought and engagement she puts in. She struck me as a formidably bright and insightful person and I'd love to have seen her sparring verbally with William Hartnell back in the day!

"I've found it fascinating to observe Chris's process in these recordings. I'm sure this is a point many people have made but for someone who has a reputation for being more serious and reserved, he's such a playful and upbeat presence as a leading man, full of great stories and coming to things with a real sense of fun – as well as a clear appreciation of the efforts of all involved."

BREAK THE Ice by Tim Foley concludes the set – and as we listen in summer, prepare for some real chills! Tim says: "It was a very open brief and so I pitched some cheeky ideas. Matt liked the New Year special one (which

became *Auld Lang Syne* in **Back to Earth**) and the Christmas special idea too. Chris sort-of got a seasonal story with the television episode *The Unquiet Dead* but this time I thought I'd go all-out and write a big action-packed festive thriller.

"We're on a space station orbiting Venus where scientists are trying to crack cryogenics for a long-haul flight. But 'tis the season for an ancient presence to emerge aboard the ship... and there's only one man who can stand in its way. It's Doctor Who vs Jack Frost! Horror, action, tinsel."

Did Tim learn anything about writing for this Doctor from listening to his previous **Respond to All Calls** script *Fright Motif*?

He says: "That's an interesting question! I always try to do something different to what came before. *Fright Motif* had the Doctor facing an inarticulate force but for this one I really wanted to give him a villain to play against. We think of the best Ninth Doctor moments and they're

often him shouting down a Dalek or an idiot. Here with Jack Frost I wanted to make him face a powerful god – his own Sutekh or devil.

"It was great fun listening to the recording. Chris and the cast really got the pace of the story – and our Jack Frost is a delightful menace!" **VORTEX**

THE NINTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES INTO THE STARS



■ RELEASED: AUGUST 2022
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BOOK CLUB



DAVID TENNANT and UNIT are a combination that go way back – indeed it started several years before their encounter on television in *The Sontaran Stratagem*. Big Finish's first UNIT series began in 2004, comprising an introductory download adventure followed by four single release CDs – all collected in a download set in 2020.

Creating a series around members of the United Nations Intelligence Taskforce, in the days before it was unified, was something that Big Finish had been thinking about for a while.

Featuring cameos from Nicholas Courtney as Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart, UNIT was led by Siri O'Neal as Colonel Emily Chaudhry and Nicholas Deal as Colonel Robert Dalton. Gary Russell, co-producer of the *Doctor Who* range at the time, said: "It was something I'd always thought was a good idea – but it always had to be modern **Battlefield**-era UNIT not 1970s UNIT."

Ian Farrington, who produced the series, said: "Gary Russell and executive producer Jason Haigh-Ellery

would talk about it as a project they wanted to do one day, but I don't know if any serious thought was put into it until about 2003. When they eventually decided to make it, Gary, who was down to produce it, was unbelievably busy with the *Doctor Who* main range and other projects. So, one day over lunch, I asked if I could do it instead.

"Gary was kind enough to suggest me to Jason and I was up and running. At that stage, it was going to be a one-off release. But a bit later the schedule changed and a four-release slot opened up so I suggested producing a full series of **UNIT** and everyone agreed."

THE COUP by Simon Guerrier featuring the Brig and Silurians opens the CD set and introduces Emily Chaudhry, followed by *Time Heals* written by Iain McLaughlin and Claire Bartlett.

Ian says: "I always thought of *Time Heals* as our Gerry Anderson story. I don't know whether anyone else thought this but to me it feels like a modern-day episode of **Captain Scarlet**

or **UFO**. It has that kind of action-driven story and quasi-sci-fi tone.

"The next adventure, *Snake Head* by Jonathan Clements, is our **Ultraviolet** story. It's about vampires, for a start! There's also quite a bit of **The X-Files** in there, especially as it's our two leads out investigating a weird situation.

"Then *The Longest Night* by Joseph Lidster is clearly our most **24** or **Spooks**-like story. It's deliberately set in a very real-feeling modern-day London. It has pubs and the Underground and busy streets. It has lots of plot twists, shocks and mini-cliffhangers."

"*The Wasting* was our big-budget movie. It's full of action and soldiers and car chases and zombies! I love it. And, of course, it's when we bring the Brigadier into the main action for the first time since *The Coup*."

The Wasting features David Tennant as Colonel Ross Brimmicombe-Wood, a part he'd first played in **Doctor Who Unbound: Sympathy for the Devil**.

Ian continues: "David Tennant was superb on the day we did *The Wasting* and although we didn't know it, he'd been cast as the Doctor by then. I remember chatting to him in the green room and asking what he had lined up next and he was really non-committal! It seemed strange as he'd been so busy all year, but I didn't put two and two together."

David Tennant admitted: "I honestly can't remember the timing of it all. Possibly. I certainly don't think it was public knowledge by then but I may have been nursing a Cardiff-shaped secret!" **VORTEX**

UNIT
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The Sixth Doctor, Mel and their new friend Hebe continue their adventures...

DOWN PAT

EARLIER THIS year we were introduced to Hebe Harrison, a new friend of the Doctor and Mel. Played by Ruth Madeley, her debut in **The Sixth Doctor Adventures** *Water Worlds* was well received by listeners, and very soon she returns as a second box set, *Purity Undreamed*, is out for release in August.

Script editor Robert Valentine says: "The second box set of **The Sixth Doctor Adventures** opens with *The Mindless Ones* by Paul Magrs. The Doctor and Mel return with Hebe to modern-day Sheffield following a distress call by Hebe's best mate, Elise (played by Cherylee Houston).

"Joining forces with anthropologist Professor Patricia McBride (Imogen Stubbs), they investigate a mysterious new addition to

the campus of Sheffield Hallam University that promises to make you 'better'... – the Mindless Facility!"

Paul is no stranger to this Doctor and Mel having written for them in *The Wishing Beast* and *The Vanity Box* adventures released in July 2007. *Vortex* asks what it was like coming back to this pairing after some 15 years?

Paul explains: "Well, that was a very long time ago! But what you find – as someone who's written for **Doctor Who** professionally for 25 years now – is that all these characters, in all their many combinations, go on living inside your imagination the whole time. I know what they all sound like because they never stop chattering!"

How did Paul find writing for a new companion in the form of Hebe? He replies: "It was lovely adding a

new voice to the mix. She's much more like I am in the way she talks and thinks so it was fun to write her interactions with the others.

"And the setting is a university department, which is all very familiar to me. Having the Doctor and Mel pitch up in that world was great. Hebe is our point-of-view character, really, watching in amazement as chaos breaks out on campus."

Paul also gets to introduce another new character in the form of Patricia. He says: "I loved writing for her too. She's sarcastic and superior and very badly behaved. And she gets to have all the best lines in all the best scenes!"

Summing up the adventure, Paul says: "It's a warning not to fall for the easy inspirational feel-good nonsense that I think is taking over the world. Be difficult, clever, annoyed,



Above (l-r): Bonnie Langford and Colin Baker

THAT'S THE MESSAGE BEHIND ALL OF DOCTOR WHO, REALLY, AND IT'S A THEME I LOVE TO TACKLE. BE MORE DOCTOR!

PAUL MAGRS

cantankerous and always question everything. Make up your own mind and don't let others do it for you. For me, that's the message behind all of **Doctor Who**, really, and it's a theme I love to tackle. **BE MORE DOCTOR!**

SCRIPT EDITOR Rob continues: "In their next adventure, *Reverse Engineering* by Jonathan Morris, Patricia summons the Doctor, Mel and Hebe to her aid when an old rival invites her to his gene-therapy clinic in the mountains of Sweden. There's something very strange happening with time at the Emit

Institute, and only the Doctor and his friends can stop it."

Jonny says his brief was: "To tell an exciting two-part story for the Doctor, Mel, Hebe and Professor Patricia McBride (introduced in *The Mindless Ones*). When *Reverse Engineering* begins, the Doctor, Mel and Hebe have been living on Earth for three months, on and off, and Patricia has started to notice that they keep inexplicably disappearing..."

"*Reverse Engineering* is an adventure based around the Emit Institute that offers its wealthy clients the one thing they desire most. Patricia is invited there to be sounded out on a potential research post, but she quickly begins to suspect that something very strange and sinister is going on... Well it's a **Doctor Who** story, so of course something very strange and sinister is going on!"

How much did Jonny know about Patricia in advance? He says: "Producer Jacqueline Rayner prepared about a page on Patricia's character and background, and I read *The Mindless Ones* so I was up to speed with how Paul had written her and how she worked with the Doctor, Mel and Hebe. I had various things I needed to establish or bring out in *Reverse Engineering* to lead into the next story. The main thing to remember is that by this point the Doctor, Mel and Hebe have become a close-knit TARDIS team and Patricia is seeing them from the outside. She knows they're keeping something secret and wants to know what it is."

JONNY PREVIOUSLY

wrote *Maelstrom* for this TARDIS team – the third adventure in *Water Worlds* – and admits: "I found *Reverse Engineering* flowed really easily because the story is about them working as a team, going on a sort of undercover mission. The Doctor is posing as a reclusive millionaire, Hebe is posing as his secretary and Mel is posing as a, well, a computer programmer. They're all getting to play at being James or Jane Bond!"

Jonny had a distinct highlight in this tale. He confirms: "Because the villain in this is so humourless, the Doctor can't help sending him up to undermine him, which means it ends up quite funny even though the story is fundamentally about something very serious."

"But the main highlight for me was that it was based on an idea I'd submitted on spec, and then when Jac wanted a story the idea not only fitted the brief but added a whole extra layer with an additional theme. It's such a lovely feeling when the bits of a plot click together;



Above (l-r): Bonnie Langford and Imogen Stubbs

it makes me look clever even though it usually happens quite by accident!”

CHRONOMANCER, THE final story in this set, is written by script editor Rob. He says:

“The Doctor, Mel and Hebe are taking Patricia on her very first trip in the TARDIS when they experience a mid-Vortex collision with Tannus Vallon, the eponymous chronomancer, who is hunting down his sworn enemy, a Dronnidian

**IT'S SUCH A
LOVELY FEELING
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BY ACCIDENT!**

JONATHAN MORRIS

time criminal called Khavûl. Khavûl is attempting to free his acolytes from their dimensional prison and over the course of a single night in Sheffield, a terrible threat to history is about to begin.

“When Jac came to me with the character of Hebe, I knew she was something special and I was really excited to get to write for her myself. But the key to the character was reading *The Rotting Deep*, the first adventure in *Water Worlds* where Jac introduced her.”

How did Rob find writing for Hebe having script edited the other stories? He says: “By the time I got to write for Hebe I had a pretty good handle of what she was like, and with the character of Elise it was fun to include some affectionate bickering and teasing between them, and to put her in situations where I didn’t know how she’d react until she was there.

“The highlight of writing for Hebe – and of script editing her adventures in general – was getting to help develop her growth as a character and as a member of this TARDIS team. By the time you’re reading this we’ll have already recorded her first set of adventures with the Doctor and Mel, and she’s certainly got an amazing journey ahead of her.”

Rob was delighted to write for the new recurring characters in this set too. He tells *Vortex*: “Jac has pulled off several major casting coups on **The Sixth Doctor Adventures**.

Not only have we Ruth Madeley as Hebe but also Cherylee Houston as Elise, Toby Hadoke as Ron and Imogen Stubbs as Patricia. I’ve been a fan of Imogen ever since I saw her in **Erik the Viking**, and I couldn’t believe it when Jac told me she was playing the part.” **VORTEX**

THE SIXTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES
PURITY UNDREAMED



■ RELEASED: AUGUST 2022
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VORTEX MAIL



SECOND DOCTOR, FIRST CLASS

I'm just listening to *The Annihilators* and wanted to express what an excellent job Michael Troughton has done of evoking the Second Doctor's voice! Frazer has always done well with Patrick's voice and his verbal tics and coughs, etc., but it's often too easy to hear Frazer's own voice behind it which can be detrimental to imagining the scenes as they play out. Michael not only has those tics but just sounds so much like his father. Actors often try to evoke the original character rather than imitate but Michael manages to imitate Patrick so well. I am hopeful that you'll be employing him for many more Big Finish stories, it's almost as if Patrick was back with us.

Andy Cull

Nick: Thanks, Andy. We love Frazer's Second Doctor voice, and I'm sure it will continue to pop up from time to time, but I wanted us to have a fresh start in the new range with Michael. And naturally I agree with

you that he's doing a brilliant job. I don't feel he is imitating his father, though, more that he's embodying the characterisation that his father played, if that makes sense.

COULD IT BE MAGIC?

Just picked up the surviving season of *Ace of Wands* after years of recommendation and loved it, only to discover the first two seasons were wiped long ago! Is there any chance of doing audio reconstructions along the lines of *The Avengers: The Lost Episodes*? After all, the show's creators wanted to make a 'junior *Avengers*'. Granted the magic tricks may be a bit difficult on audio, but don't half the magicians describe what they're doing anyway?

Simon Darley

Nick: I would love to do this, Simon. Ace of Wands has been on my wish list for many years but these things are always a question of rights issues and whether or not there would be a big enough audience for them.

CD OR NOT CD?

I want to thank you for everything you do. Your output is amazing from the *Doctor Who* range to *Space: 1999* and now *UFO*. Unfortunately though, I'm not into digital downloads and wanted to ask you why *Emancipation of the Daleks* can't have a CD release? I just find these things difficult to master (pardon the pun!). That's why I prefer CDs.

Peter Thomas

Nick: Hi Peter, Emancipation of the Daleks is part of an audio novels range that was designed as download-only. CD production is ever more costly — in fact with Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic (and now the war in Ukraine) the price of the process has really skyrocketed. Also, the market trend is away from physical media. There are a few exceptions like the surge in

vinyl interest but even that is very niche — and again incredibly costly to produce/manufacture. We're keeping CD production up on the vast majority of our releases for as long as there's the demand. And it may be that there's always enough demand for us to continue that. But I think it's fair to say that those who want physical media are in an ever-shrinking minority. We do our best to cater for everyone's preference but sometimes it's just not financially viable, which I think is a great shame, but it is the reality we live in.




ROARING FOR RORY

As a big fan of Rory Williams, I was more than delighted with the two *The Lone Centurion* sets you guys produced with Arthur Darvill. I'd love to know if there are more plans for the box set range because I love the comfy feel the two sets bring and I could do with more of that.

Jude McAuley-Smincak

Nick: Jude, we'll see what we can do.

VORTEX



There's a new addition to the **Big Finish Classics** range on the way...

Hyde and Seek

THE GOTHIC *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is joining the **Big Finish Classics** range this summer in an eagerly-awaited adaptation.

Dr Henry Jekyll believes that there are two distinct sides to men – one good, one evil. Intent on separating the two, he succeeds in his experiments. However, in doing so he unleashes Hyde, a monstrous and uncontrollable alter ego.

Originally published in 1886, Robert Louis Stevenson's classic has become a part of modern culture as it highlights the entirely different facets of personality that one individual can demonstrate, often within moments of each other.

The script has been adapted from Big Finish's executive producer and creative director (and Audie Awards plus BBC Audio Drama Awards-winner) Nicholas Briggs's

successful UK theatre touring production, *Jekyll and Hyde*.

Nick says: "I was commissioned by the Theatre Royal Nottingham back in 2016 to write a stage adaptation of *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. And happily it was a great success. And then it went out on national tour the following year – I directed both productions.

"We all think we know the story of Jekyll and Hyde. It's a story that



John Heffernan: Doctor Jekyll/Mr Hyde

investigates the darkness in every human being. It's a shocking tale and it's not the story everyone expects.

"The book is very different from all of the movie and television adaptations – this audio drama is much closer to the book. It's not about bubbling potions and transformations. At its heart, it poses the terrifying question of what would happen if the evil in a person could be distilled – and the consequences are horrifying."

Vortex wonders how faithful this adaptation is in adhering to the original story. Nick replies: "Really closely, in that the original novella is more about the lawyer, Gabriel Utterson, discovering the truth about his dear friend Dr Jekyll. Many other adaptations take a different route, often concentrating on the final chapter and ignoring the bulk of the rest of it.

"Because I was originally commissioned to write this for the 'Thriller' season in Nottingham, I decided to slightly skew the plot in the direction of a period police procedural story. The novella features one mention of an Inspector Newcomen, so I took that role and expanded it.

IT'S A SHOCKING TALE AND IT'S NOT THE STORY THAT EVERYONE EXPECTS.

NICHOLAS BRIGGS

"The novella features a lot of Utterson's internal struggles with what he is searching to uncover. As all this is first-person angst, I needed some reason for Utterson to share his thoughts. By having Newcomen investigating the reason for the death of Hyde's first victim, Utterson is drawn into the crime and is forced to tell his story."

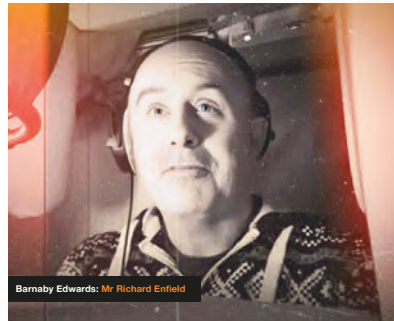
ACTOR JOHN Heffernan – well-known to Big Finish listeners as kleptomaniac Time Lord the Nine – stars in both title roles. Jekyll's friend and lawyer, Gabriel Utterson, is haunted by

the presence of Mr Hyde, and is compelled to discover the truth. 'If he be Mr Hyde, then I shall be Mr Seek'.

BARNABY KAY (Commander Straker in Big Finish's **UFO** series) plays Utterson and also joining the cast are Olivier Award-winner Nicholas Asbury as Dr Hastie Lanyon and Robert Portal as Inspector Newcomen. Big Finish regular Barnaby Edwards appears in other multiple roles, and BBC Audio Drama Award-winner Clare Corbett completes the cast.

Vortex asks Nick if John's casting was inspired by his performance as the Nine, having shown he could switch personalities so effortlessly?

Nick replies: "Oddly, that wasn't the reason. I just wanted a really good actor with whom I was very familiar. I worked with John on **The Prisoner**, and love how he can convey a sense of menace but also delicate doubt. He is a very precise and thoughtful performer. He and I had a lot of chats about



Barnaby Edwards: Mr Richard Enfield

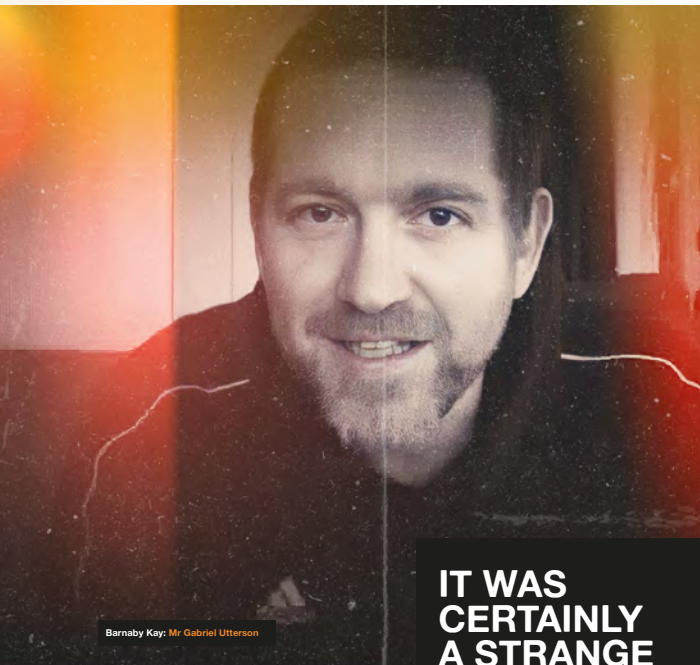
how he should approach these roles. I was delighted that he really loved the script, so that was a great starting point."

John adds: "It's a thrilling read and it'll be a thrilling listen. It's unexpected. You follow all sorts of twists and turns. It's got a very dark, twisted sense of humour at its heart. It's a tale of hubris. The two characters become an embodiment of the two sides of everybody's nature."

Nick is delighted with the cast, concluding: "I got all the actors I had hoped for. They were amazing and more or less ran the recording sessions for themselves, they had

such a passion for it. I love it when dedicated actors take control.

“And, of course, there’s the sound design and music stage, which I’m only just entering. I’ve already composed the theme and Benji Clifford is doing some brilliant work creating soundscapes that will frighten the life out of you.”



Barnaby Kay: Mr Gabriel Utterson

AS NICK has mentioned, Benji Clifford is responsible for bringing the story completely to life. His involvement with the new production is something of a personal joy. Benji says: “I’ve always been fascinated by the story of Jekyll and Hyde, I adore its dark gothic nature, so I was thrilled when I was asked to provide sound design for Nick’s adaptation. The script is dripping with atmosphere and the story really captures the twisted nature of the original.

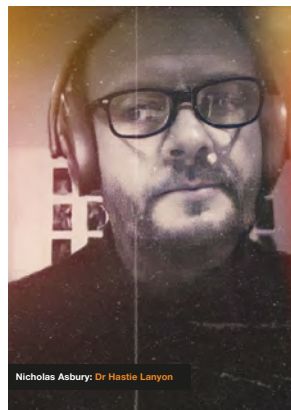
“One of the biggest challenges whenever you’re working on a period piece is building up the atmosphere to make sure it sounds authentic: you really have to pay attention to detail. Victorian England is a

thematically atmospheric place so when making a story like this, it is really important to play upon that and then the listener can sit back and picture the foggy streets and dark alleyways of London at that time.

“Thankfully no large problems were encountered in the production side of things. One constant thing to

sit and listen to make sure there aren’t any modern sounds such as the faint rumblings of a car or someone picking up a cell phone.”

Benji believes that the story’s special tone will make it entertaining but also a creepier listen than the usual Big Finish releases. He confirms: “Yes, this is a much



Nicholas Asbury: Dr Hastie Lanyon

IT WAS CERTAINLY A STRANGE SENSATION TO BE ABLE TO GET MY HANDS ON THE MORE HORRIFIC AND GRISLY ASPECTS...

BENJI CLIFFORD

darker and scarier story than is typically released at Big Finish. So whilst not necessarily a highlight, it was certainly a strange sensation to be able to get my hands on the more horrific and grisly aspects of storytelling. The opening scene is absolutely brutal, it involved a wealth of layering of sounds, lots of crashing, banging, squelching and cracking. Lovely stuff!” **VORTEX**

be vigilant about is putting together background sounds. A lot of the sounds used for big crowd stuff and general outdoor soundscapes are pre-recorded – you have to

BIG FINISH CLASSICS
JEKYLL AND HYDE



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THE **BIG FINISH** MAGAZINE

VORTEX



ISSUE 161
JULY 2022
BIG FINISH FOR THE LOVE OF STORIES

CLASSIC DOCTORS NEW MONSTERS

IT'S THE RETURN OF THE
ULTIMATE **DOCTOR WHO**
MASH-UP SERIES...

ALSO INSIDE

THE NINTH DOCTOR

HE'S BEEN BACK TO EARTH AND NOW THE
NINTH DOCTOR IS OFF **INTO THE STARS...**

