

THE **BIG FINISH** MAGAZINE

VORTEX



WHAT LIES INSIDE?

TRAVELLING ONCE AGAIN IN THE UNIVERSE OF SPACE AND TIME...

ALSO INSIDE

THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S 7
AFTER THE WAR: WHAT LIES IN THE
AFTERMATH OF THE GALACTIC WAR?



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THE AVENGERS

THE COMIC STRIP ADAPTATIONS

BIG FINISH IS MAKING A DREAM COME TRUE FOR BRITISH NATIONAL TREASURE PAUL O'GRADY!

THE AVENGERS superfan is joining Julian Wadham and Emily Woodward in the latest volume of audio adventures based on TV Comic's original strips.

The set features John Steed and Tara King in three adventures, *The Fabulous Sky Beam Dilemma* by Nigel Fairs, *A Tale in Tartan* by Robert Khan and Tom Salinsky, and *This Train Terminates Here* by John Dorney.

In the final story, presenter and comedian Paul guest stars as Septimus Crump – a vengeful station master with an axe to grind.

Paul says: "I'm playing the villain who's a complete maniac and a diabolical mastermind. He's a typical **Avengers** villain. He wants revenge as they always do! He ends up tying Steed and Tara to the railway track which is fantastic! It's really good fun to play.

"I've been a fan of **The Avengers** from day one: I still watch the old series and also listen to the audios of them, and I know all of the lines! It's fantastic that I can actually say that I've been in **The Avengers** – which of course makes me very happy." **VORTEX**

THE AVENGERS

THE COMIC STRIP ADAPTATIONS
VOLUME SEVEN

- RELEASED: MARCH 2023
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EDITORIAL

IF YOU'RE anything like me, when a new Big Finish series launches you'll be keen to hear what the theme tune for it sounds like.

The theme can really set the tone for the series. I've mentioned before how much I absolutely love the War Master theme composed by Ioan Morris, capturing the feel of the **Doctor Who** original but with intentionally added 'bad', a corrupted version of something you recognise. It's familiar but different, and the brilliant arrangement encapsulates everything about the Master – dark, brooding and untrustworthy.

You can contrast that with the joyous theme created for the **Missy** series by Joe Kraemer. Again, it captures the nature of the character, playful and fun on the surface but with very mischievous undertones.

Another of Joe's creations is the brilliant **Jenny: The Doctor's Daughter** theme tune. It also echoes the **Doctor Who** theme but does its own thing, reflecting the character.

But why am I talking themes? As I write, I've just finished listening to **Gallifrey: War Room**, and what a theme. Howard Carter has crafted something that's so clever. Listen out for blasts of a staser and the alert siren on Gallifrey, and he's woven these into something that sounds so much like commercial electronic music. For me it's amazing, I half expect it to lead into a vocal from Neil Tennant as part of a Pet Shop Boys track!

So – what's your favourite Big Finish theme? Let us know on Twitter! **VORTEX**

"THERE'S MONSTERS UPON MONSTERS AMONG MONSTERS..."

Kenny



THE EIGHTH DOCTOR'S BACK WITH LIV AND HELEN, AS THEY LEAVE EARTH AND RESUME THEIR TRAVELS...

ON THE INSIDE

AFTER SPENDING some time stranded on Earth, the Eighth Doctor with companions Liv Chenka and Helen Sinclair, is back out in the universe, exploring space and time.

The TARDIS is fully functional and two brand-new adventures await the time-travelling trio, after an on-going series of epic 16-story box sets in *Dark Eyes*, *Doom Coalition*, *Ravenous* and *Stranded*.

Producer David Richardson says: "It's a new era for the Eighth Doctor, Liv and Helen. After nine years of ongoing stories, we're releasing some standalone adventures.

"The stories are as diverse in tone as they are in setting, and our lead actors embraced this new chapter for their characters. No pre-listening is required to leap aboard with *What Lies Inside?* as the three travellers get to launch themselves across

space and time, and visit strange places and encounter dangerous new foes. And Helen gets to meet Daleks for the first time!"

Script editor Matt Fitton continues: "This is the return of the Doctor, with Liv and Helen, in a brand-new series of adventures. They've got away from being stranded on Earth. The brief with these was just getting out and having fun in the universe again.

"We kick things off, just to show the Doctor's back in business, with a Dalek confrontation. *Paradox of the Daleks* comes from the twisty-turkey mind of John Dorney."

PARADOX OF *the Daleks* is a two-part story which takes the friends from 21st century London into an encounter with the Doctor's oldest foes.

When the TARDIS is drawn

to a space station running temporal experiments, the crew discover Daleks in control in the aftermath of an invasion. But these are no ordinary Daleks...

To stop his mortal enemies gaining control of the time technology, the Doctor must work out why these Daleks are here and where they came from.

A war fought through time has many fronts – and in this battle, the Doctor, Liv and Helen will face mortal danger in every time and place they find themselves.

John says: "The brief on this one was a sort of an early foray of the Time War in advance of the Time War – if that makes sense and you can have such a thing! So, there were new series Daleks, and that got me thinking that I'd like to do something involving time. I was led to that premise quite naturally and that was my route into asking, 'What's a kind of fun time travel thing to do?'"



Above: Paul McGann
Below: Joseph Millson

it's a threatening and dangerous situation, with the Daleks involved.

"We've had the stakes really high before, but here they're comparatively low compared to something like *Doom Coalition* or *Ravenous*, but at the same time slightly higher than they were with *Stranded!*"

"In many ways it's a traditional **Doctor Who** romp involving the Daleks, and I had an excuse to have fun with it.

"It was a joy, with this changed format, to be able to give the Doctor, Liv and Helen a story with a beginning, a middle and an end, though in this case it's not actually happening in that order!"

THE DALBY *Spook* by Lauren Mooney and Stewart Pringle is a one-part adventure, another script from the husband-and-wife partnership following their *Torchwood* tale *The Grey Mare* last December, and more recently *Black Friday* in the latest

WHEN I WAS YOUNGER, I REMEMBER BEING FASCINATED WITH THE 'TALKING MONGOOSE' GEF...

MATT FITTON

"I was also influenced by a couple of time travel movies I've watched that are slightly more obscure and that I like a little bit too much! I won't say what they are because it might slightly ruin *Paradox of the Daleks* if you did know!"

John was also the writer of the adventure set prior to this, *Best Year Ever*, which saw the TARDIS team depart Baker Street.

He tells *Vortex*: "I really like writing for this TARDIS team, which I've done a few times now. I don't really have to think too much about writing for them any more, they're always a delight. The actors are amazing and also lovely people to work with.

"It was, if anything, good fun to put them in a very different context with this story because



The Diary of River Song box set, *Two Rivers and a Firewall*.

After encountering *Harry Price*, the Doctor decides to solve an infamous case before the paranormal debunker can.

But *Liv and Helen* are more concerned for the girl at the centre of events. What is really going on at the remote Isle of Man farmhouse? And who is Gef, the talking mongoose?

Matt says: "As we're not using the over-arching box set format this time it changes the kind of stories we can tell and offers more opportunity for different writers too. The adventures can take on a variety of locations, threats and enemies, and being able to use these characters in lots of different contexts is fun for the actors and the writers.

"We've got new writers for the Eighth Doctor with Stewart and

Lauren. I heard *The Grey Mare* and thought it was great – it's fun and spooky. I do like spooky! In *The Dalby Spook* there's an investigation into psychic phenomena, and what they came up with is brilliant.

"When I was younger, I remember being fascinated with the 'talking mongoose' Gef which was featured in *The Unexplained* magazine. Also known as the Dalby Spook, a supposed poltergeist on the Isle of Man.

"It was such a lovely experience working with Stewart and Lauren. They're really great. I've got several other things that will fit well with them so we'll be hearing more from Lauren and Stewart in the future."

Of being asked to write their first script for the Doctor, Lauren says: "It was incredibly exciting and pretty surreal. We both grew up watching Classic **Who** and I have very clear



Above: Felicity Cant

I OFTEN MAKE HIM DO THE BEGINNINGS BECAUSE BLANK PAGES GIVE ME STAGE FRIGHT!

LAUREN MOONEY

memories of the Paul McGann film coming out when I was 5 or 6 years old, watching it with my family, so it was very exciting to get to write for his TARDIS team.

"We'd already written for a couple of other Big Finish ranges so the process was familiar. Every range is fun to write for in different ways but the moment you get to write that first TARDIS materialising stage direction is pretty magical. Having said that, Stewart and I writing together tends to mean tag-teaming rather than literally both holding the pen so I think he actually got to write the very first one that appears in the episode – lucky for him. (I often make him do the beginnings because blank pages give me stage fright!)"

Stewart adds: "It was a pretty open brief from Matt. He told us that after the current *Stranded* thread concluded they wanted to make a shift back into more self-contained stories, and free the Doctor up to travel in space and time again.

"We were thrilled that Liv and Helen would be staying on in the TARDIS as we're such big fans of actors Nicola Walker and Hattie Morahan. Our day jobs are in theatre where obviously all three of this TARDIS crew are absolute living legends so it is such a treat to be writing for them.

"The only thing Matt told us was that we couldn't put a silly gag about Laika the space dog in because she's already had at least one Big Finish adventure about her! But other than that Matt gave us free rein and didn't balk for a second

when we started going on about a talking mongoose. What a gent!"

Lauren continues: "This is a story set on the Isle of Man in the early 20th century that uses, as its starting point, the story of Gef the Talking Mongoose – which if you haven't looked it up you absolutely should because it's a cracker!"

"Back in the 1930s, a family in this very isolated part of the Isle of Man began to be haunted by bangs and scratches and noises in the night, and after a while the noises developed a voice, and the voice apparently told them it was an ancient spirit in the



Above: Phillip Jackson
Below: Amy Rockson

Stewart concludes: "This was a really special story for us to write together. Partly because it was our first **Doctor Who** with the Doctor, and partly because we're such huge fans of Paul McGann. But the highlight for me was working out how Gef fits into the **Doctor Who** universe.

"One of our rules to ourselves was that we can't in any way reduce Gef as a legend by writing this. We didn't want to explain him away or make the original story look in any way small or foolish so we had to give Gef and Voirrey Irving, and all of the characters that existed back in those strange Manx days, a real adventure to sink their teeth into. We wanted to treat Voirrey, the young girl who first befriended Gef, with all the respect the series has afforded to more well-known 'real people' like Charles Dickens, Vincent

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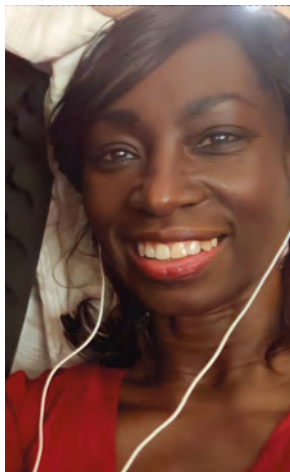
STEWART PRINGLE

Van Gogh and Rosa Parks. And Gef's such fun to write, he's a proper rascal. Nuts! Chew coke!" **VORTEX**

shape of a mongoose named Gef.

"What's not to love about a story like that? It became a huge cause celebre at the time, with all sorts of experts and debunkers descending on the family, and a big high-profile libel case in London, although nothing was ever quite proven in either direction.

"There was evidence of hoaxes and things that went unexplained – although I think the detail we both loved most is that the daughter of the family went to her grave swearing the whole thing was true. So either she was a very committed liar or she, at least, believed it. Anyway, it isn't exactly the story of Gef we're telling, but it uses the same place and setting and some of those people as a jumping off point to tell a **Doctor Who** story."



DOCTOR WHO THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES WHAT LIES INSIDE?



- RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2022
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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IN AT THE DEEP END

THE NINTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES CONTINUE THIS NOVEMBER IN HIDDEN DEPTHS...

SOMETIMES, THINGS lurk below the surface which only the Doctor can see... In this new trio of tales, there's plenty going on that may not, at first, be obvious.

Producer David Richardson says: "We have a couple of reunions in *Hidden Depths*. We know from the Eleventh Doctor's era that the Silurians were a space-faring species, and now we find a colony of Sea Devils off-world in the seas of Titan's largest moon.

"The Ninth Doctor will then be arriving in London a while after the Eighth Doctor left in *Stranded 4*, to be reunited with Liv and Tania. What

a glorious mix of characters – John Dorney must have had the best fun writing this one as they all have something to say for themselves.

"In contrast, Lisa McMullin's *Lay Down Your Arms* is a pseudo-historical with a strong message as this era continues to stride forwards – while never being afraid to look back too."

THE SEAS of Titan by Lizbeth Myles opens the set. *Out on Saturn's moon, Titan, an outpost all-but-forgotten by Earth struggles on against the odds. As the Doctor joins explorers deep in the methane seas, they discover a hidden civilisation. But will the Sea Devils prove to be the colony's salvation or its final destruction?*

Script editor Matt Fitton says:

"Hidden depths is the theme for this next Ninth Doctor box set, and we take that quite literally in the first story of the set, going deep beneath the sea.

"Liz has come up with this brilliant story about a forgotten outpost which is kind of struggling along and still exploring the waters. They then discover there's a whole other civilisation sharing their world. Liz has created a different twist on the Silurian/Sea Devil story, which is usually about the conflict between humans and the reptile people, and who was here first.

"It's great to have a new angle and to have the Ninth Doctor confront another classic monster. Given his era, there are certain places we can't go but it's fun to find the places we can. I think people like to have the Doctor meeting old monsters again, and to see how each Doctor deals with them differently, whether it's the threat of the Sontarans or the threat of the Sea Devils. How does the Ninth Doctor deal with them as opposed to the Third or Fourth?"

When asked by *Vortex* how she



Above (l-r): Christopher Eccleston, Kate Sissons and Joseph Kloska

to keep the peace when all hell breaks loose in a European spa resort with warring aliens, as well as dealing with her mother's matchmaking!"

Lisa continues: "This is a historical featuring the first woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, Baroness Bertha Sophie Felicitas von Suttner. The story is very much exploring the Doctor's attitude to war alongside a



Above: Nicholas Briggs

felt about being asked to write for this incarnation, Liz says it was: "Incredibly exciting! It brought back those magical tingles I felt whenever I saw a trailer for the first series of Doctor Who on television.

"The main point in the brief was a request for the Sea Devils to return. The big highlight was the obvious: getting to write for the Ninth Doctor. I adored the first series and I never imagined Christopher Eccleston would come back to the role, never mind that I'd get to write for him. He's got a special place for me because despite growing up with **Doctor Who**, the Ninth Doctor was the first one I got to see weekly on TV and flail about with other fans as the adventures were actually happening!"

LAY DOWN *Your Arms*, by Lisa McMullin, is set in 1864. *Instead of relaxing at the Bad Homburg Spa, its visitors are fighting. And Bertha Kinzky, housekeeper to Alfred Nobel, is appalled.*

Matt explains: "Bertha Kinzky was

SHE DECIDED TO LEARN TO BE AN OPERA SINGER SO THAT SHE WOULDN'T HAVE TO MARRY ANY OF THE LANDED GENTRY...

MATT FITTON

a real-life person that Lisa was keen to bring into a **Doctor Who** story and it tied in nicely with something that Chris mentioned being interested in – female historical figures who may be forgotten or overshadowed by the focus on the male side of events.

"We meet her in her younger days, encountering the Doctor and trying

woman who campaigned for peace.

"She was an amazing woman in a time when women didn't have any ownership over anything. She decided to learn to be an opera singer so that she wouldn't have to marry any of the landed gentry that were paraded in front of her, although she never actually found employment as a singer. She became a governess and fell in love with her pupil's older brother – a man seven years younger than her. And although the family didn't approve, eventually she married him. It was a marriage of love and passion, rather than convenience.

"She also worked for a time as a housekeeper for Alfred Nobel and they became really, really firm friends. It was her idea to create a prize for peace (which became the Nobel Peace Prize). And she won it, a decade or so later.

"When we first brought the Ninth Doctor back there was a lot of 'don't mention the war' around, but I felt enough time had passed so we could start to explore it a little bit again."



Above (l-r), Diana Quek and Christopher Eccleston

FLATPACK BY John Dorney is a sequel to *Best Year Ever* from *Stranded 4*, and continues the story of Liv and Tania. Matt says: "At the very end of *Best Year Ever* – after Liv's further travels with the Doctor and Helen – Liv and Tania stay together in their happy ever after.

"In *Flatpack* we find them engaged in the traditional couples activity of furniture shopping in one of those big flat-pack superstores. But something has gone wrong with the dimensions and time within the shop, and they meet up with the next Doctor, from their perspective.

"It was interesting for Liv to deal with what has happened to her friend. She met the Seventh Doctor and then spent a long, long

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JOHN DORNEY

time with the Eighth, so how does she deal with the fact that he's no longer around and that this new guy's seemingly taken his place?"

John tells *Vortex*: "I do find it slightly weird that I've written two stories that follow up *Best Year Ever* and they're both out in the same month! [For more, see the *Eighth Doctor* preview – Ed.]

"I was asked to do a story with the Ninth Doctor meeting Liv and Tania, so, loving the actors and the characters, it was a no brainer to say yes. *Flatpack* was an intriguing opportunity to do something new with Chris, which is always fun and exciting, and having the Doctor meet old friends.

"It gives you the opportunity to play out new facets of the Doctor so he isn't having to introduce himself. You can talk about regeneration, but there's already a trust there."

Looking at what the script has in store, John explains: "I think with a name like *Flatpack* that people might assume it's based on a very specific type of store, and I can't possibly comment on that! What inspired the story, if anything, was the science of shopping which I've always found interesting.

"There's a bit where the Doctor talks about how stores are effectively designed to keep you inside them for as long as possible, or to make you pass more things so you buy more. That has always intrigued me and formed the basis of what I think is a fun story of a shop which is a lot harder to leave than you might otherwise like it to be..." **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO
THE NINTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES
HIDDEN DEPTHS



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DORIAN GRAY

THE LOST CONFESSIONS

IT'S HARD to believe it's been a decade since **The Confessions of Dorian Gray** was first released, a Big Finish original series devised, produced, directed and in some parts written, by Scott Handcock.

Based on the premise of 'What if Oscar Wilde had based Dorian Gray on a real person with immortality?', Alexander Vlahos has embodied the part to perfection.

In 2019, a special volume of three stories, *The Lost Confessions* was released with *Last Man Standing* set in France in 1915, *There Are Such Things* set in England in 1930, and *The Last Confession* set in the future.

Scott explains why these stories are defined as 'lost': "Back in 2010, pitching **The Confessions** series was quite a lengthy process. I had no track record, really, as a producer or director so even getting the attention of Big Finish wasn't easy. Also it wasn't an established series with an existing audience so inevitably the format went through a few different iterations as I presented it to various companies.

"At that point, a lot of commercial companies wanted hour-long standalone dramas rather than an

ongoing anthology series, so a few different spec scripts were developed in the hope that they'd convey what the series could go on to be.

"When Big Finish came on board and we began exploring the half-hour format, these then sat in a folder on a forgotten USB drive, although elements would later be utilised in **The Confessions** series (the WWI trench setting, for instance, which I think I persuaded Roy Gill to incorporate

as a flashback in *The Prime of Deacon Brodie*). Otherwise, they weren't really things we touched upon."

How did Scott find adapting them as narrator-led tales rather than full-cast scripts? He explains: "It's funny, isn't it? If the stories had been told first-person, as Dorian, I'd have fought to adapt them myself. I love writing as Dorian. I even found an excuse with our mini-COVID-19 pandemic episode, *Isolation*, which I re-wrote in a day. But with *The Lost Confessions*, Alex and I were both keen not to revisit **The Confessions** format directly – so if he was reading, they would be in the third person, not as Dorian. Due to schedules, as much as anything, I turned to Scott Harrison to adapt them for us as I knew he enjoyed writing in prose, and he also had a love of Dorian stemming back from our very first series and *The House in Between*."

ALTHOUGH NEW Dorian Gray release *The Anniversary* is out this month, at the time *The Lost Confessions* looked like the final release of the series. Scott concludes: "The

Lost Confessions are a bit of a curiosity for me as they're sort of a document of a path not taken. A proof of concept. They're not quite what **The Confessions** would later go on to become – except for the final story which is very much an alternative finale for series five.

"Again, that's why it was so good asking Scott Harrison to adapt them. I'd have been too tempted to retool and rework the entire story to make them more in-keeping with **The Confessions** series we ended up telling, whereas these are a bit more embryonic.

"We're still discovering the character and they're discovering themselves. But I'm not sure about that lost finale – maybe it's what we should have done?! I'm delighted that we managed to keep the 'full-cast' final confrontation with Hugh Skinner a surprise! It's just lovely how much he and Alex have contributed to the series over the years." **VORTEX**

DORIAN GRAY THE LOST CONFESSIONS



■ RELEASED: JUNE 2014
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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WE'RE IN TROUBLE, THE VULPREEN ARE COMING... AND ONLY UNIT CAN SAVE US NOW!

DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH

KATE STEWART, Osgood, Harry Sullivan, Naomi Cross and the team are readying themselves for an alien invasion in **OBJECTIVE: EARTH**, the latest **UNIT** box set, as the Vulpreen have set their sights on Earth.

Producer Heather Challands says: "This is my second box set as producer of **UNIT**. I've got to know the team and the world that they inhabit even more and we were fortunate to get nearly all our actors in studio which we couldn't do on the previous release, *Agents of the Vulpreen*. That made it feel very comfortable and we had a lot of fun when recording.

"UNIT is very much aware that the Vulpreen are on their way. Earth is caught in the crosshairs now they've been freed from their void world. There's unfinished business for Lord Varliss with UNIT – and it's personal!"

THE VULPREEN *Encounter* opens the set written by the series script editor Andrew Smith. Andrew tells *Vortex*: "I really enjoyed writing this one. It's tightly cast, mainly Kate

Stewart and Osgood alongside new UNIT recruit Lieutenant Jimmy and troubled journalist Jacqui McGee. Osgood and Jimmy are in *Starseeker*, the new UK spacecraft which we introduced in the second series, which was always going to be a big part of an episode in the third box set right from the very beginning of our planning.

"We had the ship's engine test going wrong in *Agents of the Vulpreen* but now it's all operational. UNIT go to investigate a huge asteroid that's coming into the solar system that might or might not be a threat. It's actually based on a real science news story, when in 2017 a giant oblong asteroid

called Oumuamua passed through the solar system and there was conjecture it was an alien spacecraft.

"Each episode in the set has a specific job to do and each of the writers has done a great job. As ever, they have knocked everything out of the park."

BY JACQUI *McGee* comes from the mind of Lisa McMullin. Heather explains: "This story starts to shape what the threat to Earth is going to look like as Kate, Osgood and the team are on the run from an assassination squad sent to tie up loose ends before the assault on the planet begins. We're in Beijing for part of it as well as back in Norway. It's an emotional script, I think, but it's very action-packed." Lisa continues: "I do love this iteration of UNIT and it's so lovely to write for them."



Above (l-r):
Jemma Redgrave
and Ingrid Oliver

“What I like about these stories is that they are all so epic. This four-part box set just goes to places that you wouldn’t expect. So many twists and turns – you think it’s one story and then suddenly it explodes and it’s an entirely other story – it’s like a Russian doll. You get to the end of this box set and you realise, ‘Oh wow, it’s not even that, it’s something else entirely.’

“There’s monsters upon monsters among monsters in this series, which is great fun.”

AN OLD foe returns in *Axos Unleashed* by Katharine Armitage. Heather says: “It felt really good to link back to the Pertwee era by having a monster from that time, as here we have the Axons facing modern UNIT. But they’re absolutely part of the Vulpreen plan and they fit in really neatly to

the arc, happy to help out as long as they get their revenge.”

Kat says: “The story brief was busy! I had Axos, the Eleven, building Vulpreen threat, all of UNIT and a new guest character. Which is a lot of ingredients making it both a total joy and quite a complicated balancing act. The idea behind my episode was a break away from the Vulpreen (the enemy which have been building up throughout the series) and hark back to classic **Who**, brought bang up to date in true Kate and Osgood style.

“*Axos Unleashed* presents a new version of Axos. No longer feigning goodwill towards humans, Axos is plotting behind the scenes with powerful allies and trying to take the Earth from right under humanity’s nose. Meanwhile, the Eleven has his own agenda and Kate and Osgood have to navigate a network of new friends and old enemies, none of whom are ever quite as they seem.”

TIME OF the *Vulpreen* is the set finale written by Roland Moore. Roland says: “Andrew planned the arc of the series, building on what he’d done in the other box sets, so we knew the overall story. But as always with Andrew, he gives you enough for a framework but trusts you to expand it and bring your own ideas. He asked me to write the final episode of the box set which was an honour and a lot of fun. Who wouldn’t want to write an epic finale?”

“UNIT coordinates a world-wide response to the arrival of Vulpreen Arches around the globe. Troops stand ready to face the invaders. Kate Stewart and Osgood form an uneasy alliance with the Eleven to destroy the time fields that protect each Arch which are being used as a devastating

YOU REALISE, ‘OH WOW, IT’S NOT EVEN THAT, IT’S SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY.’

LISA McMULLIN

weapon by the Vulpreen. But when the invasion starts, the odds may be stacked too heavily against them...”

Andrew concludes: “We have a cliffhanger ending to this set which I’m very confident will have our listeners extremely eager to know what happens next.” **VORTEX**

UNIT — NEMESIS OBJECTIVE: EARTH



- RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2022
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WE JOIN THE SEVENTH DOCTOR TO DISCOVER THAT HARRY SULLIVAN AND NAOMI CROSS ARE...

ABSENT WITHOUT LEAVE

THE SEVENTH Doctor continues his travels with a pair of adventures that few saw coming. In *Sullivan and Cross AWOL*, the Doctor encounters his old friend Harry Sullivan (played by Christopher Naylor) and his more recent friend UNIT secretary Naomi Cross (Eleanor Crooks), who we previously heard in **UNIT: Nemesis**. We'll find out how she first meets the Doctor in **The Fourth Doctor Adventures** in 2024.

Script editor Matt Fitton says: "*Sullivan and Cross AWOL* is another part of our ongoing story with Harry and Naomi. We're being careful about how much we want to tease out the events from the listener's perspective, as all these stories have been written and recorded way ahead of time. But we do know at some point we'll hear the beginning of the Harry and Naomi story with the Fourth Doctor. "We're in the middle of the story

in the **UNIT: Nemesis** series, so this adventure will pick up from there and tell the next part of what happens, without giving too much away about the end. "We have the Seventh Doctor picking up Harry and Naomi, apparently not having realised that he left them in the wrong place. They are currently in 21st century London, and that's where we begin with John Dorney's *London Orbital*.

"Harry is going through old files looking into something with Naomi, and they discover something very strange going on in the London Underground. There's a bridge between worlds, with whole other realms of existence. There are elf-like creatures who live in a parallel London, and a war is about to break out.

"So as Harry and Naomi get involved in that, the Seventh Doctor has also turned up to try

and stop this war, and he meets his old friends along the way."

LONDON ORBITAL by John Dorney is the first story in the set. John explains: "We've been talking for ages about the journey of Harry and Naomi. It began with a vague idea of starting them off with the Fourth Doctor, carrying on in **UNIT**, and the payoff would be with the Seventh Doctor – but not told in that order! Because I script edited Harry in the Fourth Doctor series and I'd written an episode with him and Naomi for **UNIT**, it seemed sensible that I was the one who brought them back into the fold to re-join the Doctor – but in this case, the wrong Doctor.

"There are actually some clues about that in this one, so you find out precisely what they're doing and why they are in a contemporary version of London within the



Above: Sylvester McCoy

story, because it does come up in conversation. You're going to begin to put the pieces together."

SCREAM OF *the Daleks* is something of a double celebration for writer Lisa McMullin. She explains: "I've been pestering Matt for 100 years for a Dalek episode, because I never get Daleks. I've written so much Time War stuff but there's not been a Dalek amongst any of them! You would think it would be almost impossible to write stories about the Time War and not have a least one Dalek, but I've just not had the luck. So yes, I've been nagging him for ages!"

"The other reason I wanted to write for this set was because I haven't written for this Doctor, so when Matt said, 'Do you want to do a Sylvester story? And with the Daleks?', I just couldn't say no!"

Matt adds: "*Scream of the Daleks*

IT DOES
COME UP IN
CONVERSATION.
YOU'RE GOING
TO BEGIN TO
PUT THE PIECES
TOGETHER.

JOHN DORNEY

is a two-parter, a bonkers kind of horror. It feels bigger than a two-parter because of everything that goes on in it – it really throbs Harry and Naomi back into TARDIS travelling with a bang!

"The TARDIS picks up a scream of distress and the Doctor traces it back to Halloween and a horror festival in the 1960s. He discovers there have been deaths on this site,

on this day, throughout history, which nobody had noticed before.

"So he goes off to investigate with Naomi, while Harry is caught up in trying to keep everyone safe in 1969, and we gradually discover the Daleks are involved, taking advantage of the Doctor's propensity to answer a cry for help."

Lisa continues: "It's set at Halloween – which seemed apt for an October release. Actually it's set at various Halloweens across the millennia. Something evil is trying to break through a tiny little rift on October 31st, every year over thousands of years, and the Doctor, Naomi and Harry have to stop it. It's a whistle stop tour of Halloween through the ages – and a chance to explore how the things that scare us haven't really changed in all that time – death, darkness and Daleks."

JOHN CONCLUDES: "I adore writing for Harry – he is genuinely one of my all-time favourite **Doctor Who** companions. I think Ian Marter does an amazing job of him on television and Christopher Naylor is brilliant on audio. They've managed to take this character that could be a little bit annoying in slightly lesser hands and turn him into an absolutely charming, delightful, likeable figure because Harry is effectively who I think most of us would end up being, if we were travelling with the Doctor." **VORTEX**

THE SEVENTH
DOCTOR ADVENTURES
SULLIVAN AND CROSS — AWOL



- RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2022
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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THE STAR COPS ARE
BACK WITH SOME NEW
CASES TO CRACK...



THE FINAL FRONTIER

THE FIFTH Big Finish **Star Cops** box set promises to be an arresting listen, as original television stars Nathan Spring (David Calder), Linda Newton (Pal Kenzy) and Trevor Cooper (Colin Devis) reprise their roles.

Joined once more by Philip Olivier as Paul Bailey, **Star Cops: The High Frontier** comprises two box set releases overseen as previously by ex-policeman and script editor Andrew Smith. The title is a term used in the very first episode of the original TV series referring to space – and also a working title that creator Chris Boucher had for the show.

Andrew tells *Vortex*: “It’s great to come back to **Star Cops**; the other releases have gone down really well. The third and fourth box sets are a specific continuing story where our characters go to Mars. But in *The High Frontier* they’re back on Earth and the Moon, the more traditional territory of the TV series.

“As with *Mother Earth* (the first two sets), there’s an overall story arc and a connecting theme across the releases. We’ve got a new over-arching adversary for the **Star Cops** in the form of organised crime group, the Collective. And they are making their mark. To begin with they’re a rumour, but their presence grows as they are involved in the stories to differing degrees, and the **Star Cops** become aware they could become a serious criminal problem and a threat.

“The Collective is not only a criminal organisation. They are highly secretive and I suppose you could say they are Mafia-like in terms of their membership and leadership, which was great to play with.”

THE HIGH *Frontier 1* opens with *Dead Air* by Roland Moore who explains: “Andrew has a plan for the entire series but the beauty is that he gives you room to do what you want

within that. So my brief for the opener was that the **Star Cops** investigate a recluse on a decrepit space station who, it turns out, is hiding a crime from his past. It’s a loose enough brief to get you thinking about various options. I pitched a story featuring a recluse, Xander O’Brien, who has been studying meteorology on the antiquated Hattie Jacques space station. Xander seems to believe that he’s encountered actual aliens, so that’s a first for the **Star Cops**...

“I love writing for these characters – all the original ones and the others that Andrew has created have such distinctive voices. I could write dozens of cases for Paul Bailey and Colin Devis – what a team! It was great fun putting these two together for the investigation and hearing their mix of jokey bickering and their mutual respect.

“Another highlight is the relationship that Pal Kenzy develops



Above (l-r): Philip Olivier, David Calder, Trevor Cooper and Linda Newton

WHEN STAR COPS IS SET, THE AMOUNT OF SPACE JUNK WILL BE IN THE MILLIONS. BUT HOW DO YOU GET RID OF IT?

ROSSA McPHILLIPS

with someone in the enquiry as I felt it shows a side to her we haven't heard before. I figured that it must be lonely sometimes doing that job – miles from home and family. So, this gave me an angle into exploring what happens when Kenzy feels the need for a friend. I hope it's a touching strand to the story."

HOSTILE TAKEOVER by

Rossa McPhillips continues the action. He explains: "Part of the brief was to introduce the character of Alice Okoro who is a former soldier in the Military Police and is now an investigator for a private company. I didn't have to stretch much for that as I was in the military myself and my day job now is working as an intelligence advisor for a large IT company.

"Andrew also wanted me to focus on the amount of junk orbiting space for part of my story. I didn't know much about this, but I have a book called *The Power of Geography* by Tim Marshall. There is a whole chapter devoted to space as a potential flashpoint between the great powers. It also states that there are currently 3,000 dead satellites and 34,000 pieces of space junk at least 10 cm in size, and many smaller orbiting the planet. Looking ahead at the

immediate future when *Star Cops* is set, the amount of space junk will be in the millions. But how do you get rid of it? Using lasers is the favoured response, but do you want the great powers – or private companies – playing with lasers in space, risking miscalculation? I found that a really interesting thing to explore."

DEATH IN the Desert by Sarah

Grochala closes this set, and she says: "My brief was to write an episode in which the Collective had put a contract on Nathan and he might be kidnapped. Then SPF would have to find him before he was killed. A close friend or family member might also be under threat. Alice Okoro would be involved in it all somehow and come under further suspicion.

"For Nathan, it's a bit of a blast from the past. He has to go to the aid of his ex-girlfriend Lee's sister when she is kidnapped. Lee was murdered in the original series and I wanted to explore the lasting impact of that on Nathan. Kenzy tries to take a break but ends up having to work with Alice to find Nathan when he too is kidnapped. Paul suspects that drugs have found their way onto Moonbase despite all the stringent precautions, and Devis gets to do something he's always wanted to do..." **VORTEX**

STAR COPS THE HIGH FRONTIER 1



- RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2022
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WHAT LIES IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE GALACTIC WAR IN **BLAKE'S 7**? WE'RE ABOUT TO FIND OUT...

WARZONE

ONE OF the biggest storylines in **Blake's 7** came at the end of television Series B in *Star One* as an alien fleet arrived to attack the Federation and the *Liberator* had to choose between the devil they knew, or the devil they didn't.

Due for release in November, **The Worlds of Blake's 7: After the War** sees Jenna Stannis, Cally and Space Commander Travis each have their own startling encounter with an alien threat from a distant world.

The galactic war has unexpected repercussions. Humanity struggles. The Federation is reeling. And enemies are still at large...

Producer Peter Anghelides says: "I have prior history with the **Blake's 7** galactic war. Ten years ago, I wrote the very first Big Finish full-cast audio called *Warship*. My story fitted in between the TV episodes

Star One and *Aftermath*, and told of how the *Liberator* crew were at the heart of the human fight back against the alien invaders. Thinking ahead, even then, I allowed a small number of the alien vessels to sneak past *Liberator* on the front line. And now a decade later we're finding out what happens to those aliens, and how they respond to that shattering defeat.

"All three stories in *After the War* are set immediately after *Warship*.

So listeners will be interested to discover how Travis can appear, given that he definitively dies on the telly at the end of *Star One*!

"I wanted Trevor Baxendale to write the first story, *Andromeda One*, because he did such a splendid job with Travis's personal journey in his audiobook *Outlaw*.

"I invited Steve Lyons to write

Fallout because I knew he had mapped out Jenna's journey in his **Liberator Chronicles** episode *Jenna's Story*. This new episode starts with Jenna scrambling out of her escape pod to witness the aftershock of the conflict.

"Cally's story also starts immediately after her flight from *Liberator*, and in *The Enemy* Katharine Armitage has written a fab script about Cally's attempt to save Jenna after the war."

Trevor tells *Vortex*: "The brief for *Andromeda One* was a **Blake's 7** story dealing with the immediate after effects of the Galactic War running parallel with what we know from the first few episodes of TV Series C. Very exciting! Peter mentioned that I might like to use Brian Croucher's Travis if I could find a way to bring him back from the dead..."

“The story is basically what happens to Travis between the TV Series B episodes *The Keeper* where we see Travis depart the planet Goth with the coordinates of Star One, and *Star One* where we see him attempt to conclude his deal with the aliens to destroy humankind. That’s actually quite a big adventure to tell, considering that up until *Star One* we had no idea that Travis had been in communication with any aliens, or indeed that there

SHE LOOKS HUMAN, SHE’S OFTEN TREATED AS THOUGH SHE IS – BUT SHE ISN’T!

KATHERINE ARMITAGE



Above: Sally Knyvette

was a fleet poised to invade our galaxy! So it was a good opportunity to explore the details behind that collusion, and Peter cleverly and generously suggested that I could link it to the events of *Outlaw*, which had already gone some way to setting the groundwork for Travis and his connection to the Andromedan aliens.

“The highlight was writing for Brian Croucher’s wonderful interpretation of Travis – a renegade Federation officer in a state of turmoil.”

THE SECOND story of the set is *Fallout* by Steve Lyons. *When her life capsule crashes on a farming world, Jenna Stannis strikes up an uneasy alliance with the local population and a suspicious Federation officer.*

Steve tells *Vortex*: “My brief from Peter was to follow Jenna after she left *Liberator* and have her encounter some kind of fallout from the alien war. Obviously, I had to weave my story around the few details of Jenna’s fate revealed in *Aftermath*.

“Jenna’s life capsule malfunctions and she crash lands on a world already hit hard by the war. She joins an ongoing rescue mission, but with alien shape-shifters and stranded Federation officers in the mix she has to work out who she can trust.

“The last time I wrote for Jenna, it was a prequel story in the *Avalon* series. So, having looked at who she was before Blake, it was fun to revisit her post-Blake and see who she has become. I also had to dig out my old *Liberator Chronicle*, Jenna’s

Story, which was set in this era, and try to find the narrative gaps I’d left! The best thing was when we realised we could tie all three stories in this set together in a way we hadn’t originally planned...”

The final adventure is *The Enemy* by Katharine Armitage.

In the aftermath of their narrow escape from a devastated Liberator, Cally tracks down Jenna to a dilapidated space service station.

Kat explains: “The idea from Peter was ‘unseen’ episodes that fit into the infamous gap in **Blake’s 7** history in which so much happened and yet so little was reported! The war itself has been beautifully explored already in *Warship* so the idea here was to tackle the after effects of the war; in particular what might happen to the shape-shifting aliens who were part of the invading force. For my episode the brief gave me lots of space: I have Cally and Jenna amid the fallout from the war where everything has been thrown off kilter.

“It was a thrill to get to write for Cally who has always fascinated me as a character. Because she looks human, she’s often treated as though she is – but she isn’t! She’s a solo member of her people who can be made to feel ‘other’ at any moment. Plus, all her best mates aren’t telepathic! I’ve often thought that must be really hard for her and wanted to explore the repercussions of having telepathy but no one to share it with.” **VORTEX**

THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S 7 AFTER THE WAR



■ RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2022
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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PENNIES FROM HEAVEN

Those investigators of the strange are back, played once more with aplomb by **Celia Imrie** and the late, great **David Warner**...

IN 2018, Big Finish released a range of audio dramas under its **Originals** range using new characters and creations in **ATA Girl**, **The Human Frontier**, **Transference**, **Cicero**, **Blind Terror** and **Jeremiah Bourne in Time**.

A further release, **Shilling & Sixpence Investigate**, brought Nigel Fairs's 'murder mystery serial' to life on audio.

The murder mysteries have been running for more than 24 years (with episodes performed in country houses, steam trains, old jailhouses, castles and restaurants throughout the UK), as **Shilling &**

Sixpence Investigate takes place in a sometimes quirky, sometimes dark world where nobody is quite whom they seem...

The first box set features a stellar cast headed by Celia Imrie as Lavinia Sixpence and David Warner as Edmund Shilling, with guest stars including Louise Jameson, Matthew Waterhouse and Samuel Clemens.

And a second set of tales is due for release this November with six new adventures in **In Loving Memory** – *The Walls Have Eyes*, *Rags and Tatters*, *The Severed Hand*, *The Coward's Kiss*, *Cease to Be* and *Alone in the Dark*.

Producer/writer/actor/musician and sound designer Nigel says: "I was very pleased with the way the first series turned out and delighted to be making a second series that might resolve the *Dynasty*-style end of series one cliffhanger!"

Nigel was particularly pleased with the dynamic of David and Celia, who everyone loves. He tells *Vortex*: "They worked magnificently together. That much was obvious

from their very performance. If you listen to the different tones and notes they establish in each scene, you're absolutely aware (as we all were) that you're dealing with two very classy performers.

"In writing the second series I was very much able to write to their strengths (of which they both have so many) and it was an utter joy to hear them explode onto the microphones in studio. There's one scene in particular which makes me cry every time I listen to it. (If I'm honest, I thought David might raise a doubtful eyebrow at it, but – foolish me – of course he embraced it and was utterly truthful and funny and heart-breaking. Just beautiful).

"**In Loving Memory** very much carries on from the first series, answers some (but maybe not all!) of the questions left dangling and sows the seeds for more stories to come. Most importantly, it adds flesh to the bones of the characters that survive the first series. The whole thing is based on a dinner theatre



Above (l-r), Celia Imrie and David Warner

murder mystery serial I wrote between 1996 and 2021 (with a new episode every month) so there are lot more adventures to explore.

"What I'm especially glad about is that there were aspects to David's character, Desmond Shilling, that I chose to put in the second series rather than wait. Of course I'd give anything to have David still with us to record more.

"IT'S THE same cast as last time: David and Celia in the title roles supported by Abi Harris, Max Day, Radley Mason, Rebecca Crinnion and me (the actors in the original dinner theatre series). We're also joined by Matthew Waterhouse and Lisa Bowerman once again. And my bestie Louise Jameson very gallantly agreed to record a couple of scenes in the first episode to tie up her story from series one."

How much fun are these to bring to life as audios? Nigel replies: "They are a joy. During the first lockdown in the absence of any **Shilling & Sixpence**, a

The whole thing is based on a dinner theatre murder mystery serial I wrote between 1996 and 2021...

NIGEL FAIRS

group of us got together remotely and recorded 24 half-hour episodes of **The Pogley Wood Murders** (available for free on all streaming platforms!). But to get back into the studio and record these six adventures was just delicious.

"Everyone gave it their all and I even got to play one of my favourite and campiest of characters, the Countess of Cannoth. I got to the end of my first scene as the Countess and David (in his typical generous way) said, 'I

don't know why we all bothered to turn up!' Coming from him, that was a huge, huge compliment and one which I will treasure forever. But I am so proud of everyone in the cast. When I was doing the sound design, I had to remind myself that many of the scenes were one actor talking to themselves, occasionally three times over!"

With the recent passing of the acclaimed David Warner, Nigel pays a final tribute to the man who's become Edmund Shilling on audio.

He says: "In Lisa Bowerman's beautiful eulogy, David had commanded that she quote Stan Laurel's 'If any of you cry at my funeral, I'll never speak to you again!' Everyone tried their best, myself included, but he was so loved. I adored him. He was so generous, so talented (of course), so open and oh, so funny.

"He also had his demons, some of which I shared. I will never forget the little messages he used to send me when I had Churchill's 'black dog' to stay. One in particular, on Christmas Day (a bad day for those of us who suffer from depression), was so insightful, so kind, that I copied it into my diary and still refer to it when needs be.

"I think it was partly because of his occasional times of darkness that he was able to fill every role he played with such humanity and depth. I feel so honoured that I was witness to him doing that to some of my words, making them oh so much better." **VORTEX**

BIG FINISH ORIGINALS SHILLING & SIXPENCE INVESTIGATE IN LOVING MEMORY



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THE GATES ARE OPEN

I'm delighted that Big Finish are able to sell the **Stargate** audio adventures once again – they really were great fun. Now that you can do these, is there any possibility that more could be on the horizon?

ALAN

Nick: There's nothing on the horizon currently, Alan, but we never say never.

BOX CLEVER

I'm really liking the new streamlined range of box sets for the monthly

Doctors Collections at Big Finish. I wanted to ask, were you planning to continue ranges you have made at least one box set for already

– **The Sixth Doctor and Peri**, **The Seventh Doctor: The New Adventures** and lastly **The Further Adventures of Lucie Miller**? All were very good and it would be great to see these continued.

ANDREW BARRETT

Nick: Glad you're enjoying the new box sets, Andrew. Depending on sales and actor availability, plus

navigating our over-packed release schedule, we certainly intend to revisit some of those occasional box sets.

DARE TO DREAM

I have recently revisited the **Dan Dare** series and really love the adventures of Frank Hampson's Pilot of the Future. Are there any plans to give us a season three or even four?

EAMONN MCGRATH

Nick: These adventures were not produced by Big Finish, Eamonn, and we believe the production company who made them have no plans to make any more due to sales being too low to recoup their budgets, sadly.

TALES OF RIVER'S SIDEKICK

I loved the new series of **The Diary of River Song** and the news that the next series will be one long story has really excited me. It's great to hear what River gets up to without the Doctor. Have you considered doing a box set of River travelling with Nardole as played by Matt Lucas? He was her companion first, after all.

PETER

Nick: Glad you're excited by the news, Peter. There isn't much of a sign that Matt would want to do this, unfortunately.

ADVENTURES TIME

I'm a big fan of Bernice Summerfield and am thoroughly enjoying her audio adventures and the recent audiobooks. Is there any chance that you would be able to do readings of her **New Adventures** books as well? The physical books are very difficult to get a hold of and I'd love to hear Lisa read them.

JACK HUGHES

Nick: I'd never rule that out, Jack. Lisa is a great audiobook reader.



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THE **BIG FINISH** MAGAZINE

VORTEX



HIDDEN DEPTHS

THE NINTH DOCTOR FINDS HIMSELF IN AT THE DEEP END...

ALSO INSIDE

THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S 7
AFTER THE WAR: WHAT LIES IN THE
AFTERMATH OF THE GALACTIC WAR?



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OCTOBER 2022
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