

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX

ISSUE 173
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The Diary of

RIVER SONG

THE ORPHAN QUARTET

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The Ninth Doctor encounters the Ice Warriors...





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THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:

AUDACITY

THINK YOU know your Eighth Doctor? Can you name his audio companions? Samson, Gemma, Charley, C'rizz, Lucie, Tamsin, Molly, Liv, Bliss, Cass, Alex... friends and companions, we salute you all! And now, there's Audacity, as we head back to the early days of this Doctor's life and meet his new fellow traveller.

Jaye Griffiths debuts as the noblewoman, Lady Audacity Montague, who is about to be propelled from Regency England into the far future and the war between the Cybermen and Vogans. We'll first encounter her in November in the box set, **The Eighth Doctor Adventures: Audacity**, which features *The Devouring* by Lisa McMullin and a two-part adventure *The Great Cyber War* by Tim Foley.

Then, there are more adventures and surprises in store in the following set, **The Eighth Doctor Adventures: In the Bleak Midwinter** with *Twenty-Four Doors in December* by John Dorney, *The Empty Man* by Tim Foley and *Winter of the Demon* by Roy Gill.

Producer David Richardson says: "We're exploring a different era in **The Eighth Doctor Adventures** where he makes a new friend. It's long before Lucie Miller, the Ravenous, Baker Street or the Time War and we've got the wonderful Jaye bringing Audacity to life most brilliantly. Hang on (I hear you cry), didn't Jaye recently play Hieronyma Friend in **Time War: Cass?** Sssh... spoilers..." **VORTEX**

THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: AUDACITY

- RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2023
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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EDITORIAL

I WON'T lie, I love a good story arc! I've never been a fan of soap operas with their ongoing twisty-turny strands – but I do enjoy a great adventure that ends in a dramatic climax. It's something that Big Finish has always done. Just listen to the early series of **Gallifrey** which builds up and builds up, leading to fantastic finales. Or the early days with **Dalek Empire** where we had no idea where things were heading and what was going to happen next.

We've had some fantastic story arcs in recent times with **Dark Eyes**, **Doom Coalition**, **Ravenous**, **Stranded** and **UNIT: Nemesis**, and one that's been bubbling away has been the ongoing **The Sixth Doctor Adventures** arc produced by Jacqueline Rayner. Here we've met new companion Hebe Harrison as well as Professor Patricia McBride (played by the amazing Imogen Stubbs who I've admired since the early 1990s) – and the 'Purity' storyline that's built up since the *Water Worlds* box set has been gripping.

If you've not given these a try yet then I hugely recommend you join the Sixth Doctor, Mel and Hebe on their adventures. We preview the next set in this issue.

VORTEX

Kerry



HOPE SPRINGS

The Ninth Doctor's adventures in space and time continue...

TRAVEL IN HOPE

THE DOCTOR, no matter which incarnation, is a defiant optimist. Whatever the odds and wearing any face, they will generally come through with wrongs being righted and villains being thwarted.

You could say that the Doctor always adventures with a positive

viewpoint, and that's the message behind the title of the latest release in **The Ninth Doctor Adventures** – *Travel in Hope*.

Christopher Eccleston is back in three new episodes: *Below There* by Stewart Pringle and Lauren Mooney, *The Butler Did It* by James Moran and *Run* by Robert Valentine. And

an old friend pops up along the way too – but a rather surprising one.

Producer David Richardson reveals: "There are lots of different tones and styles on offer in *Travel in Hope* – and the Ninth Doctor meets Alpha Centauri! Rob Valentine's prequel is a blast and more of an espionage thriller in style than



Above (l-r): Jane Asher and Christopher Eccleston

get more. So to be part of that story was the trip of a lifetime, as they say."

The pair were given a fairly open brief by Matt. Lauren says it contained: "Very little! We knew the Ninth Doctor would still be travelling alone and that we weren't plunging him into the depths of the Time War, but other than that we were given pretty free rein. So we talked around that and pitched a few different ideas... Secretly, *Below There* was the one we were most excited about so we were delighted it was the one Big Finish chose."

WE ABSOLUTELY WENT CHASING AFTER AN ADVENTURE WITH THE NINTH DOCTOR...

STEWART PRINGLE

Alpha's previous television stories. There's even a car chase of sorts!"

BELOW THERE by Stewart Pringle and Lauren Mooney opens the set. *Vyx works on a teleport relay station in the darkest depths of space – and she's afraid. Strange voices crackle through comms channels, shapes gather outside the starless viewing ports, and visions of death and destruction plague her dreams. Then she gets a call from the Doctor, who warns Vyx that her worst nightmares are about to become a reality.*

Stewart was delighted when he and his wife were invited to write a Ninth Doctor script. He tells *Vortex*: "We usually wait patiently and just hope we'll be invited to do a range but we absolutely went chasing after an adventure with the Ninth Doctor, and were over the moon when script editor Matt Fitton offered us the chance to be part of this series.

"We're both lifetime fans of the classic series and there was something absolutely magical about the first Eccleston series for us both. That Easter weekend where the *Radio*



Times had the TARDIS on the cover! **Doctor Who** coming home at last! And Chris Eccleston was already one of my favourite actors. I'd seen his Hamlet in Leeds back in 2002, and loved him in *The Second Coming* and *The Others*, but his Doctor was just something else. So rich, oozing vocal variety, such darkness but also light and fun. And he's from the north, so that's instant kudos in my book. That first Russell T Davies series is a proper masterpiece from start to finish, tonally perfect, truly it feels like a season 27 – it's a tragedy we didn't

Stewart continues: "It all takes place on a teleportation relay beacon where a lonely operative is experiencing some spooky goings on. The beacon is owned by a great whacking transport company named Leap Corps, and it's all a bit run down and unloved. And poor Vyx is trapped there, doing this monotonous, dangerous job in the pitch blackest bit of deepest space. Not a soul for a million miles. And then someone comes tapping on the window! It's a ghost story, really, our tribute to Charles Dickens's *The Signalman*, which is maybe the best ghost story of them all. It's the scariest thing we've written. We really went all out to shake up the listener!"

Vortex asks the writers what their highlights were with this script?

Stewart says: "We didn't go to the studio for this one but we did listen in while Chris and the other performers were doing a few scenes. And there's just something about his Doctor. Maybe it's about the time in my life when that first series came out, 2005, my first year at uni, 19-years-old. It just takes me right back to that.

"And then to have him saying lines we'd written, and have him be kind

about the script. It was wonderful, just wonderful. There are three Doctors for me, really. Sylvester McCoy's because he was the one who was on telly when I was a little kid, then Jon Pertwee's because he was my family's favourite, and then there's Chris Eccleston's. He's just the Doctor for me. He made it all possible again."

Lauren agrees: "Seconded, listening in on recording day was an absolute dream. Though I'd also add that I enjoyed writing this one perhaps the most of everything we've done for Big Finish so far. I was still at school when **Doctor Who** came back (having grown up watching the original series on VHS), and I think the voice and tone of that era, and the Ninth Doctor, is so iconic that it just felt effortless to tap into.

"I watched it at a very susceptible age and it clearly rewrote my DNA in several key ways which was all just in there, waiting to come out! Plus, *The Signalman* is one of the most brilliant ghost stories ever written. I'll never forget reading it in my first year of uni, sat in my little halls bedroom in broad daylight, absolutely paralysed with fear... it is a real privilege to get the chance to pay tribute to it here."

THE BUTLER *Did It* by James Moran is the second adventure in the set. *The Doctor lands at a spaceship repair port on a dusty planet to tune up the TARDIS engines. But someone has poisoned an old friend of his, and now everyone here is a suspect. It's time to round up the clues, get out the magnifying glass (or sonic), and check the butler's alibi...*

James, who wrote *The Fires of Pompeii* for the Tenth Doctor on TV and more recently *Previously, Next Time* for **The Eighth Doctor: Time War** series, was delighted to claim the scalp of another Doctor for his collection. He confirms: "It's been a dream of mine to write for the Ninth Doctor, ever since the first few minutes of the rebooted show. I was watching it and I was thinking, 'I love this. I love this show.' I loved it anyway, but there was a worry when we knew the show was coming back. I know quite a lot of us feared it just wasn't going to be for us anymore, and we'd just have to accept it and live with our memories. "I remember sitting down to see it, thinking, 'As long as it's not



Above (l-r): Homer Todiwala, Kelly Adams, Christopher Eccleston, Helen Goldwyn, Daniel Cerqueira and David Richardson



Above (l-r): Paul Thornley, Louise Faulkner, Christopher Eccleston, Emma Swan and Andrew French

terrible, even if it's just OK, then I'll be happy!' And then I watched *Rose* and it was just amazing. I remember sitting there with tears rolling down my face, thinking, 'It's so good.'

"When the Ninth Doctor says: 'Nice to meet you, Rose. Now run for your life,' and waggles the bomb in his hand, I thought, 'That's it. That's

perfect. That's like every Doctor wrapped up into one in a single moment.' It was just beautiful.

"I've been desperate to write for the Ninth Doctor but I thought I'd never get the chance. And then, somehow, they lured him to Big Finish. I didn't think Chris was ever going to do it, and now, I think he's loving it.



Above (l-r): Jane Asher, Nicholas Briggs, David Langham, Jane Asher and Christopher Eccleston

He's having such a good time."

James had a few thoughts for his script before settling on the final one. He explains: "When I was asked to come up with some story ideas, I knew Chris was big on the positive aspects of the character and how his Doctor changes other people around him. That was the only sort of steer I really had. Even if it's a dark story, you want to show how the Doctor comes into people's lives and hopefully makes things better – and they make him better as well.

"I wanted to write a big scary story, full of bombast. And I ended up going with a completely, bizarre, quite madcap romp. The Doctor has some really dramatic moments, but I also wanted to do some more light-hearted stuff. Honestly, I want to see the Ninth Doctor being funny.

"Chris's speech patterns are just so distinct. You know what he's capable of and even though I didn't know who would be cast in the other roles, Big Finish never hires slouches. They get people in that are amazing for all the roles and I knew they would be able to handle

BIG FINISH NEVER HIRES SLOUCHES. THEY GET PEOPLE IN THAT ARE AMAZING...

JAMES MORAN

it. So I threw quite a lot at them!"

James adds: "I got to listen to the recording and you can hear how much Chris is enjoying it. When he says he's having a ball, you know he means it. It's not just PR because he wouldn't do that. He wouldn't just do PR fluff. It's obvious he's relishing it."

THE SET concludes with *Run*, a story by Robert Valentine that pretty much sums up what the Doctor does half the time! And he encounters our favourite hermaphrodite hexapod again.

When heinous demagogue Bellatrix Vega threatens the stability of the Galactic Federation, the Doctor

convinces newly elected representative Alpha Centauri to run against her for president. As Vega's team mount a campaign of dirty tricks, the Doctor and Alpha must thwart a murderous conspiracy or see the galaxy's greatest democracy become a brutal dictatorship.

Rob says: "Run", obviously, was one of the Ninth Doctor's first words spoken on screen, and this is indeed a story about running... but possibly not the kind you are expecting.

"The brief for this was for a story about the Galactic Federation but set away from Peladon with the Ninth Doctor meeting Alpha Centauri and some Ice Warriors."

Summing up the adventure, Rob says: "A vile, murderous but charismatic celebrity politician is in danger of becoming Galactic President and the only way the Doctor can stop her from giving rise to a brutal dictatorship is to have a novice politician stand against her – Alpha Centauri."

This isn't Rob's first script for the Ninth Doctor – how much of a buzz is there in writing for Chris? He replies: "It's really exciting to be writing for Chris, and it's also a lot of fun spending time with the Ninth Doctor. He definitely feels different from the others, and that keeps you on your toes a bit.

"Listening to it being recorded was a highlight, especially as no one told me Jane Asher was playing the baddie until I heard her come out of character! That was a delightful moment for me. She plays a narcissistic monster in this one – and she's utterly brilliant." **VORTEX**

THE NINTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: TRAVEL IN HOPE



■ RELEASED: AUGUST 2023
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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IN THE NAME OF

PURITY

The Sixth Doctor and Mel have landed themselves in a twisted timeline with no obvious escape...

THERE'S SOMETHING wrong with time. In the previous **The Sixth Doctor Adventures** box set, *Purity Unleashed*, the Doctor and Mel went through time to stop Professor Patricia McBride from erasing new companion Hebe Harrison from history. Patricia, previously a friendly lecturer, took a trip through time and it was discovered that she was bigoted against the disabled, amongst others. She took ownership of an abandoned time suit – merging with it – and adopted the username Purity to alter

the world to her own image.

In *Time-Burst*, the concluding episode, the Doctor and Mel thought they had returned events to their normal course. They travelled back to Sheffield and went to meet Hebe and her friend Ron – but neither of them remembered the time travellers. And then Ron produced an energy weapon, powering it up, before telling the travellers to step away from Hebe, “In the name of Purity...”

And now the story continues in **The Sixth Doctor Adventures Purity Unbound**. Script editor, Robert Valentine, sums up this new

release: “*Purity Unbound* sees the Doctor and Mel finally reunited with Hebe after she was erased from history, but the entire course of time is in deadly peril and we’re racing towards a reckoning.”

There’s been plenty of praise for the range since this story arc began. Produced by Jacqueline Rayner, the trio of adventures stars Colin Baker and Bonnie Langford as the Doctor and Mel, with Ruth Madeley as Hebe and Imogen Stubbs as Patricia.

Rob continues: “People have reacted really positively to the series so far. The *Purity* saga is a tragedy in many



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

ways, charting the fall of Patricia, a woman who unexpectedly obtained the means to act on her deep-seated prejudices. There are some villains you'll never meet in real life but I think we all know people like Patricia, and that's what makes her terrifying."

Girl in a Bubble written by producer Jac opens this set of three adventures. *Vortex* asks how pleasing is it for her that listeners are loving this new era for the Sixth Doctor and Mel?

Jac says: "I'm so happy about the people who are enjoying it, for those who've found a home in it, who've felt seen by it, who've felt validated by it. For their reactions, I am over the moon. I can turn to our little team and say, 'We did good'. It's made the hard work so completely worthwhile."

"I'm also loving the positivity towards the team of Colin, Bonnie and Ruth. Separately, they're three extraordinary actors, but putting them together adds a little extra cherry of brilliance on top. That's not something you can plan or write in, it's a mixture of luck and magic."

So what can she tell us about *Girl in a Bubble*, in terms of plot? Jac replies:



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

"Ah, how much to give away?! The theme of personal identity has always loomed large in my work because it's something that utterly fascinates me: what makes us who we are? But, as I'm not a philosopher, I come at the subject through the rather less intellectually rigorous medium of some madcap sci-fi stories."

"Major spoilers for the ending of *Time-Burst* ahead (although if you find yourself spoiled here, please listen

to *Time-Burst* anyway – its worth does not lie in its last few minutes).

"How much the Hebe that the Doctor and Mel find is our 'original' Hebe is the question here. I've always loved alternative history stories, they're such fun. But they have to earn their place by telling us something about our own world. Hopefully by the end of this set – which is of course also the end of the 'Purity arc' – it will have earned its place."

"Going into this we had several goals. To provide our wonderful leading man Colin with the dark and meaningful arc he was hoping for; to say something about disability and our society; and to have fun. So far we

Putting them together adds a little extra cherry of brilliance on top.

JAQUELINE RAYNER

know we've succeeded in the latter, having a blast at the recording!"

Jac, who is a wheelchair user herself, took real pleasure in writing for Hebe in this adventure.

She explains: "I love this one particularly, Hebe discovering what it means to be Hebe."

The writer happily admits that her favourite part of the story was writing for Hebe's friend. Jac says: "My highlight is Ron. We all love Ron."

Ron is, of course, the academic who has been promoted to management but unfortunately, finds himself way out of his depth. Oh, and he just so happens to be played by the affable Toby Hadoke (whose partner in real life also appears in this story, as *Coronation Street* star Cherylee Houston MBE returns to the part of poetry tutor Elise).

THE CORRUPTIONS

by Mark Wright continues the adventure, and it was a joy for the writer to return to the Sixth Doctor, having first written for him, with Cavan Scott, in 2001's *Project: Twilight* at the dawn

of his writing career. Mark tells *Vortex*: "It always feels like coming home, writing for the Sixth Doctor. So many Big Finish memories are bound up in working with Colin and starting my writing career there. It's very special. Also writing for Mel is such fun. I'd wanted to do it for years and then I got offered two scripts in quick succession with *The Death of Peladon* and then *The Corruptions*. I think Bonnie Langford is one of **Doctor Who's** unsung heroes.

"Jac first asked me to write a Sixth Doctor story back in those days of lockdown. We were part of a regular Monday night Zoom quiz group that kept us all sane. During one quiz, Jac texted me in the middle of it and asked me to write a script. We've been good friends for years, so it's all part of the family feel of Big Finish.

"The brief was really intricate as so much of the Hebe/Purity arc was coming before it, but it was to be almost a final face off. The Doctor trapped by Mel and Hebe's timelines like a cage... but Mel's complicated history is perhaps something to be used to fight back."

Vortex asks Mark to sum up the events of *The Corruptions* (but in a spoiler-free way, of course!). He says: "Purity has been consumed by her hatred and the power of the timesuit, trapping the Doctor in a very unusual prison, while Mel and Hebe live an idyllic life in Pease Pottage. But something is wrong – villagers are dying and dark, corrupted figures stalk the shadows at the edge of the village green. Will the Doctor ever get back to his friends and stop Purity once and for all?"

"There are nods to Mel's past, to Matt Fitton's brilliant *The Wrong Doctors*, and a final act that feels like an 1980s era **Doctor Who** in the style of a 21st century **Doctor Who** season finale."

For Mark, there were countless highlights from working on this adventure, both in front of and behind the microphone. He says it was: "So much fun. The joy of working with Jac, one of my oldest and dearest friends in the whole world. Writing for such a brilliant cast – Colin, Bonnie, Ruth, Cherylee... and Imogen Stubbs! I was a big fan of the short-lived



Above: Patricia England

It's one of the real joys of Big Finish when you get to write for actors whose work you've enjoyed over the years.

MARK WRIGHT

crime drama *Anna Lee* that Imogen starred in back in the early 1990s.

"It's one of the real joys of Big Finish when you get to write for actors whose work you've loved over the years. After 23 years, it never ceases to amaze me."

THE WHOLE arc with Patricia/Purity comes to a conclusion in *The Wrong Side of History* written by Robert Valentine. He tells *Vortex*: "*The Wrong Side of History* is the final chapter in the story of Patricia, and it's where the Doctor, Mel and Hebe

hopefully put right everything that Purity put wrong.

"One highlight was certainly listening to Colin and Imogen playing off against each other. I'm still amazed that Jac managed to cast Imogen as Patricia, and the scenes are electric."

Rob concludes: "This box set marks the climactic end of Patricia's story, but Hebe's adventures with the Sixth Doctor and Mel will hopefully continue. There's a lot of universe out there, and I don't think Hebe's done exploring it yet." **VORTEX**

THE SIXTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES PURITY UNBOUND



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■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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BOOK CLUB



THE SECOND Doctor and Jamie are reunited in the latest **The Second Doctor Adventures** box set this month, but let's turn the clock back to 2010. In a trio of stories in **The Monthly Adventures**, the Sixth Doctor was accompanied by his old friend Jamie McCrimmon.

The first of these three releases was *City of Spires*. Colin Baker and Frazer Hines were reunited after an idea from script editor Alan Barnes. Executive producer Nicholas Briggs explains: "It was Alan's idea, all part of our push to bring back much loved classic elements. And we knew Frazer was good and wanted to work with us." *City of Spires* was written by Big

Finish newcomer Simon Bovey. He recalls: "Alan sent me a general call for pitches for a 4 x 25-minute adventure featuring the Sixth Doctor and Jamie which would launch a three-story arc. I put together what I thought was a cool take on it, ink instead of oil, technology way in advance of its period, and emailed it in on a couple of sides of A4.

"The brief was very clear. The Doctor re-encounters an older Jamie, probably in Scotland c1780. From the start he is to have no memories of travelling with the Doctor, doesn't recognise him at all. Only as the trilogy unfolds will his memories become restored and he ends up re-joining the Doctor on his travels.

"It was already decided that it should be set in the Land of Fiction so there was a tight frame to work with, but also a lot of latitude in what you could do and where you could go with it – which is always the best brief, to be honest."

Frazer was delighted to be back as Jamie. He tells *Vortex*: "I don't feel like I'm too old to play Jamie; the minute I get in that booth I'm Jamie McCrimmon, this young person. I've always had a kind of spring in my step anyway and I've never got to the point where I thought, 'I'm an older person now, I must start acting old!' I still have some joie de vivre.

"As soon as the recording begins, I'm Jamie again. It leaps off the page."

A guest star of note in *City of Spires* was **Jenny – The Doctor's Daughter** actor herself – Georgia Tennant (then Moffett). Colin Baker notes: "In *City of Spires* we had Georgia Moffett, daughter of somebody who played a part involved with **Doctor Who** once. Can't remember his name. Davidson or something like that. But him, anyway.

"I knew Georgia when she was 4-years old, when she was at school with my daughter, Lucy, and they were in the same class. So there were two girls in the same class whose father was **Doctor Who**, which made it quite ordinary really, which was probably quite a good thing for both of them. Having seen Georgia over the years, I knew she was a good actress, but she's really very impressive." **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO: CITY OF SPIRES

- RELEASED: APRIL 2010
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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Cry Me a

RIVER

Prepare for some extracts from **The Diary of River Song**, it's going to get emotional...

THE DOCTOR'S wife is back with four brand-new adventures in, appropriately enough, *The Orphan Quartet*. **The Diary of River Song** series is usually produced by David Richardson but this set is being looked after by James Goss – who is no stranger to the character of River.

James has written for her on several previous occasions with stories in the first, second, seventh and eighth **The Diary of River Song** box sets. James also wrote *Lies in Ruins*, River's encounter with fellow archaeologist Bernice Summerfield and the Eighth Doctor in Big Finish's 20th anniversary story *The Legacy of Time*.

This box set may be titled *The Orphan Quartet*, but there's a subtle link between each of the stories which will become apparent as you listen to the adventures.

This set features *The Excise Men* by

Lou Morgan, *Harvest of the Krotons* by producer and writer James, *Dead Man Talking* by Tim Foley and the intriguingly-titled *The Wife of River Song* by Lizzie Hopley. Oh, and for an extra treat we can look forward to the eternally popular Jackie Tyler popping up too! James tells *Vortex*: "River Song is such a brilliant character and we've tried to really honour her in these stories.

"It was Tim who came up with the idea of four adventures that help River deal with something significant that's happened in her life



Above (l-r): Camille Coduri and Alex Kingston

a genuinely awful person – although I think I’ll always have a bit of a soft spot for the Excise Men themselves – I love a good monster. I suppose the Agent fits into that category too, come to think about it.”

FROM A new monster to an old one as River is about to face one of the most infamous creations from the history of classic *Doctor Who* – the Krotons. Created by Robert Holmes, the crystalline species perhaps aren’t as memorable (for the right reasons) as his other monsters such as the Autons, Sontarans and even the Drashigs.

Over the years, there have not been very many adventures featuring the Krotons. They were memorably reinvented as a danger in the Eighth Doctor novel *Alien Bodies*, and the Sixth Doctor and Charley Pollard encountered them back in 2009 in subscriber exclusive story *Return of the Krotons*. They also featured in the short story *The Dreaming* published as part of the

each story. Other than that it’s four episodes that are full of action.”

Writer Lou is making her River-writing debut with *The Excise Men*. James says: “Lou’s story is full-blooded horror and mystery set on the Cornish coast, which is really where more stories should be located. It’s set in a time of great moral ambiguity and River fits into it brilliantly. She finds out that the people she’s surrounded by have given away something so unimaginably precious that she can’t forgive them for it.”

Lou admits she was delighted at being invited to craft a tale for River. She explains: “It was a bit of a surprise being asked to write for River – but a lovely one. She’s such a great character, and so intelligent and unpredictable which makes her enormous fun to write for.”

“The original brief was fairly open, I’m a huge Daphne du Maurier fan and that felt like a good fit. So we came up with the idea of doing something that had a slightly du Maurier feel about it, particularly referencing *Jamaica Inn*: smuggling, windswept moors, secret passageways and a pub where everything isn’t quite what it seems.



Above: Nina Toussaint-White

And then we thought we’d put a shipwreck in there too, just for fun.”

When asked how she would sum up the script, Lou says: “River meets Poldark. With monsters!”

Having assembled a tale with so many distinctive elements, Lou had to think long and hard about picking her personal highlight for the story. She tells *Vortex*: “I think writing the character of the Agent who works for the Excise Men was probably my highlight because he’s

IT’S SET IN A TIME OF GREAT MORAL AMBIGUITY AND RIVER FITS INTO IT BRILLIANTLY.

JAMES GOSS

Tales of Trenzalore collection.

But now they’re back, and they’re about to face a threat worse than the Doctor – Jackie Tyler! Writer James Goss says: “In *Harvest of the Krotons* there’s the unimaginable joy of River and Jackie meeting the Krotons.

“When we originally pitched the idea to Russell T Davies (proposing the Krotons arrive at the Powell Estate and set up a learning hall) he said it sounded too much like the original story, so he suggested instead that we set it after the Krotons have arrived, tried to improve humanity and given up. If we can’t be bettered, then what can we be used for?”

Bringing the Krotons to life on



Above (l-r): Sam Stafford, Alex Kingston, Sarah-Jane Potts and Jay Perry

audio once more is Big Finish's creative director, Nicholas Briggs.

Nick says: "It's always a delight to voice the Krotons so I was thrilled when James emailed to ask me to return. I don't know where the idea that one of them should have a 'Brummie' accent comes from! One certainly sounded South African in the original television episode, presumably riffing on the 'colonial' theme, but the other one sounded more like someone who just couldn't do a South African accent... so at least I have that in common with the originals.

"My favourite memory of doing the voices for this production is that afterwards I took a Zoom call with a prospective new director who was very nice and attentive. It was only afterwards that I realised I'd conducted the entire meeting with a Kroton voice effect activated – and he'd been too polite to mention it!"

DEAD MAN *Talking* is the third story in this set by someone who is no stranger to the worlds of River Song either. Tim Foley wrote the opener of the tenth box set, *The Two*

Rivers, and was responsible for all four stories in the previous box set, *Friend of the Family*, released in January this year.

James says: "*Dead Man Talking* is an eerie haunted house story

I DON'T KNOW WHERE THE IDEA THAT ONE OF THEM SHOULD HAVE A 'BRUMMIE' ACCENT COMES FROM!

NICHOLAS BRIGGS

about the love that a mother has for what she has lost and the desperate weakness that causes people to pray on that love. It's a great script by Tim which deserves to win awards."

Tim reveals that this adventure is one which has been a few years in the making, having first been conceived in a pre-COVID world. He confirms:

"This is a script I wrote in 2019 so it's been a long time in waiting! James asked me for something spooky and character-driven and we talked about motherhood and life after war.

"More than usual this is a script inspired by the theatrical form so it contains longer scenes and lots of tension, asking above and beyond from the brilliant actors."

When asked by *Vortex* to sum up what happens in *Dead Man Talking*, Tim says: "It's a séance on a winter's night but with a twist. Because the dead can't really talk, can they?"

How much fun is there to be had with recognisable character types such as Mrs Prendergast, a grieving, sweet old lady who has lost her son and Stanley Kim, the morally dubious medium, who both feature in the adventure? Tim says: "For Stanley, we were channelling the likes of Charles Laughton, a monstrous jovial figure preying on the likes of Mrs Prendergast."

With five scripts behind him in this series now, how much does Tim enjoy working on **River Song** adventures?

He replies: "With each release I learn more about her. This was the



Above (l-r): Derek Elroy, Jade Matthew, and Joseph Millson

earliest in her timeline, where she gets to discuss Amy. *The Two Rivers* held up a mirror to who she was, and then *Friend of the Family* allowed me to really deep dive into what makes her tick. I'd love to write a story with her and the Doctor. I have ideas!"

EVENTS COME to a close in the final story in this set with *The Wife of River Song* by Lizzie Hopley. James says: "*The Wife of River Song* allows the box set to go out with a bang. It's an incredibly ambitious piece of work by Lizzie that's an action adventure space opera and also a psychedelic time travel mind game."

Lizzie, author of *Beauty on the Inside* which appeared in *The Two Rivers* and a *Firewall* set last year, was delighted to be asked to write for the character again. She tells *Vortex*: "What can I say? It's like being asked to meet royalty every time!"

The story sees River reunited with a clone of herself created by Madame Kovarian. The character is played by Nina Toussaint-White

who, of course, played the younger incarnation of River on TV – Mels in *Let's Kill Hitler*. Will she cast a shadow over proceedings as River encounters her wife Jane?

In her brief from the producer, Lizzie says: "The suggestion was that River is reuniting with Brooke either answering a distress call or showing her the wonders of the universe – I kind of cheated and did both!

"It's a bit stalker-y. It's a dark version of the Doctor seeing River in the library and working out she's his wife that he doesn't remember. Here, it's River's turn, but the outcome is not positive or safe."

The title, of course, has echoes of the 2015 *Doctor Who* Christmas special *The Husbands of River Song* in which Alex Kingston came face-to-face with the Doctor played by Peter Capaldi.

Was this title a deliberate bid to trigger the listeners? Lizzie replies: "Of course! I did that very purposefully. I mean, it'd make me listen!"

When asked for her highlight of working on the script, Lizzie says: "River meeting her older, alternate

self was my favourite bit. I knew Alex could achieve the level of performance required to make it real and moving. It was also lovely having the tense triangle of River, Brooke and Jane. There's a strange jealousy coming from Brooke too which is interesting – she doesn't like Jane being so close to River..." **VORTEX**

THE DIARY OF RIVER SONG:
THE ORPHAN QUARTET



■ RELEASED: AUGUST 2023
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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STEP IN TIME

It's time to dip our toes into the worlds of the beloved **Timeslip** once again...

WHEN THEY were children, Simon Randall and Liz Skinner discovered the existence of a strange anomaly known as the Time Barrier. It gave them the chance to travel in time and

sometimes elsewhere on Earth, visiting the past and exploring alternative futures.

Now, Liz (Cheryl Burfield) and Simon (Spencer Banks) have been joined in their adventures by new friends, Charlotte Trent (Sarah Sutton) – a biology and life sciences lecturer, Neil Riley (Orlando Gibbs) – a trainee nurse from 1982 and Jade Okafor (Amanda Shodeko) – a history student, also from 1982.

In *The Time of the Tipping Point* the travellers find themselves in an alternate world, 30 years in the future. The people here are living simplified 'back to basics' lives, having been told they've averted the ecological tipping point by radically changing their way of life.

However, the team soon find out that the world governments are still preparing for a catastrophic environmental disaster that will



Above (l-r): Spencer Banks
and Cheryl Burfield

alter the planet forever. Only the chosen few will survive so Liz, Simon, Jade, Neil and Charlotte must work together to find the Time Barrier and escape certain death.

Written by Helen Goldwyn, *The Time of the Tipping Point* is Big Finish's fourth **Timeslip** adventure following on from 2020's *The Age of the Death Lottery* (by Andrew Smith), *The War that Never Was* (by Marc Platt) and *A Life Never Lived* (by Roland Moore).

Producer David Richardson says: "Helen has written a magnificent script. It's full-blooded **Timeslip** in the tradition of the original television show with a growing sense of menace affecting the whole world. The apocalyptic threat is coloured with brilliant personal drama and our four audio stories form a neat mini-series that can be enjoyed as a whole run.

"It was wonderful to work with Spencer and Cheryl on these and feel their love of the series, and

I'D FORGOTTEN THAT IT WAS A TWO-PARTER, SO I PANICKED A BIT!

HELEN GOLDWYN

Orlando, Sarah and Amanda were on great form too, giving top notch performances in a script that demands a lot of them."

THE RANGE has also been directed by Helen who has developed an understanding of the series, its set-up and characters, as well as getting to know the actors who bring the regulars to life.

The Time of the Tipping Point is a

release in two parts but writing it turned out to be slightly more fraught than Helen had initially imagined.

She reveals: "When I was first asked to write the script, obviously I said yes to it because I knew it would be great fun. And then I had months and months of non-stop directing and an absolutely endless trail of deadlines. I kept putting it off and putting it off, and then I left myself a few weeks in which to write it before I started a Christmas show.

"I thought to myself, 'Oh, I can write 10,000 words in four weeks.' And then I looked at my contract, because I still hadn't signed it, and I saw that it was for 20,000 words! I'd forgotten that it was a two-parter, so I panicked a bit!

"So that was me, every day, non-stop for two months, just writing. But actually, as often is the way when you're under pressure like that, that's when the best stuff happens because you don't have time to overthink it. You just have to write."

Thankfully, Helen got there in the end and found that **Timeslip**'s open format with the barrier leading into alternative worlds meant she didn't need to have huge worries about continuity issues. The original ATV series ran for just four stories over 24 episodes, from 1970-71.

Helen explains: "With **Timeslip**, unlike **Doctor Who**, there's nowhere near as much canon to tie into. There weren't that many episodes of the TV show so it's much easier to write when you're not having to tie into a very complex history.

"And obviously, the world is your oyster because it's set in alternate worlds, so it could be a historically accurate one, or it could be one where things are profoundly different. It just gives you great licence to use your imagination."

When developing her ideas, Helen wasn't given any set stipulations or lists of requirements from either David or script editor John Dorney, instead having pretty much free rein to come up with her own thoughts and ideas.

Revealing the origins of what her story developed from, Helen says: "Initially we talked of an idea about how ancestors and our history impact on how we function through the line of descendants, for



Above (l-r): Esmonde Cole and Heather Coombs

WHAT IF, SAT AT YOUR DINNER TABLE, YOUR ANCESTORS WERE GIVING YOU WORDS OF ADVICE...

HELEN GOLDWYN

example, if you found something that your grandmother had written, you would treat it with some gravitas. You would take on board the advice of your ancestors.

"I thought, 'How could that be used by a corrupt government to manipulate people?' I figured, what if, sat at your dinner table, your ancestors were giving you words of advice that they pre-recorded before their death. So that was my original idea but, as happens with these things, it evolved into something quite different in the end.

"We're in a parallel world. They're dealing with a problem that we are going to encounter one day and the governments are dealing with it in a very duplicitous way – as I believe our governments probably would as well. Something is going to happen and not everyone is going to survive..."

HAVING WORKED with her five leading cast members on numerous occasions now, Helen is familiar with how they speak and interact, and was able to bring that into her script.

She says: "I know these characters really well and I can hear their voices very clearly in my head when I'm writing because they're all so distinctive. I just

love working with this team of regulars, there's such a nice vibe.

"It's fantastic because Spencer and Cheryl, in particular, are so delighted to be there. That adds to the pleasure for me and obviously you want to give them lots of gritty stuff to get their teeth into.

"Like a lot of our lead actors in other shows, when they do come in it's a real treat for everyone, and you know they will really get into the performance."

The five regulars were joined by three guest cast members over the course of 27 and 28 February this year when the story was recorded.

Helen adds: "The studio days are always full of laughter when we've got people like Orlando, who is such a brilliant comedian, but deadpan dry as you like. He's just so entertaining to be around and very self-deprecating. He doesn't really know quite how funny he is.

"Amanda was starting out in the industry when we first did **Timeslip** and by this last set of recordings she has become an absolutely fully-evolved superstar. She's fantastic and that's obviously come through having more experience in the business, knowing herself better and feeling the confidence of success.

"It's always lovely, when you've met a young actor at the start of their career and you get to see them evolve. It's great to watch that journey and know you've played a small part in it." **VORTEX**

TIMESLIP: THE TIME OF THE TIPPING POINT



■ RELEASED: AUGUST 2023
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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LOVE FOR LOUISE

I thought I'd drop a line to comment on the recent **The Ninth Doctor Adventures: Pioneers**. I am absolutely loving this box set and have it on repeat. A complete delight. Listening to the first story had me double check, I thought, 'I recognise that voice'. Louise Jameson, playing Fiacra, something different and amazing too – I love the accent! I am really happy that she is playing next to other Doctors. My advance orders get bigger. I'm very much enjoying **Space: 1999** too. Being very much the Big Finish fan and enjoying the high quality of most every release, I have been trying to spread the word to everyone who enjoys classic television series about what you do. Long may you continue to be a large part of my favourite pastime.

IAN BRANCH

*Nick: Ian, thank you, you are such a great ambassador for us! Yes, Louise is one of our favourite actors and one of my favourite human beings. She is versatile and brilliant in every role she does. We'll always ask her to play as many roles as she can manage for us. And so glad you're enjoying **Space: 1999**.*

LITE LUNCH?

I wanted to ask, now that a new run of **The Paternoster Gang** has been announced, whether we might get some more Henry Gordon Jago involvement? Perhaps it could be looking at Jack the Ripper with an explanation as to how Vastra on screen said she had eaten him, but Jago and Litefoot also seem to have dealt with him? Another question – any chance Big Finish would consider doing a limited run of the series 14 **Jago & Litefoot** audiobook on CD?

ANDREW BARRETT

Nick: On the first part, I'm sworn to secrecy! And on the second, there's no news on a change of policy on download-only products appearing on CDs. CD production is now far, far more expensive than it was pre-COVID-19 pandemic, and sadly the price is only going up.

BOX CLEVER

Very pleased with **Torchwood: Among Us 1** including individual cover artworks for the digital download and having them printed onto each disc for the CD release (in a single jewel case).

It's more economically-friendly than having a slipcover box set with four CD cases, which takes up more storage. Are there any plans to continue this practice for other Big Finish ranges such as **The Ninth Doctor Adventures**?

ANDREW HSIEH

Nick: We're sticking with established patterns for packaging of continuing ranges for consistency, for now. But we're looking to reduce levels of packaging across the board for both economic and environmental reasons.

HERE COMES THE RAINE AGAIN?

I'm a bit behind the times as I've only just got around to listening to **The Lost Stories** featuring the Seventh Doctor and Raine. Nothing against the Seventh Doctor and Ace, who are possibly my favourite audio team as Sylvester and Sophie sound exactly the same now as back in the day, but I'm enjoying the new dynamic that Raine brings. 'The Lady of a Thousand Voices' behind Raine, the very talented Beth Chalmers, was particularly incredible in the first story, *Thin Ice*, with her spot-on Russian accent (a bit of positive feedback 13 years overdue!). I was wondering whether you had any plans to continue her journey beyond **UNIT: Dominion**, assuming she's not written out in that story (no spoilers please), either with various writers or perhaps as an "Andrew Cartmel Presents" series? And as a follow-up question, any chances of briefly luring Ben Aaronovitch away from his current career as a novelist to pen a Big Finish story or two?

DAVID CANFIELD

Nick: All superb ideas, David. No plans, currently, but we've now got those suggestions in our back pockets for later down the line. **VORTEX**



TWO GOOD TO BE TRUE

Once and Future continues – and there’s a host of larger-than-life characters coming together...

ONE OF the staples of drama over the years has been the mismatch of people – bringing together different personality types, backgrounds and beliefs to see how they get on with each other. Think Mulder and Scully from *The X Files*. Arya and the Hound in *Game of Thrones*. Walter and Jesse from *Breaking Bad*. Bert

and Ernie from *Sesame Street*.

And now, here’s Jackie Tyler (Camille Coduri) and Lady Christina de Souza (Michelle Ryan), another mismatched duo in *Two’s Company*, the fourth release in the 60th anniversary special series **Once and Future**.

They are guaranteed to have interesting conversations – and if

you then throw the Sixth Doctor into the mix, you know the sparks are going to fly! Only Harry Sullivan can add some sanity...

Two’s Company is written by Lisa McMullin. Producer David Richardson says: “This episode is a glorious collision of much-loved characters. It’s chalk meets cheese in the **Once and Future** universe,



Above: Colin Baker

and there's so much fun to be had... imagine how much laughter there was at the recording of this one!"

Script editor Matt Fitton tells *Vortex*: "With these 60th anniversary stories, it was great to work with David and sort out what the shopping list of characters would be, who we'd use in each adventure, how they'd bounce off each other and who would work well together."

"Because we were going to have a contemporary-ish London story, using Jackie Tyler made sense. We felt it would be really fun to put

Lady Christina and Jackie together. They're at two different ends of the social spectrum and so having them run into each other would make for an interesting mix. And then, we have both of them running into the Sixth Doctor. The idea of the Sixth Doctor meeting Jackie was, well, irresistible really!

"When we picked the characters we wanted to use in each story, we were also doing our best to represent lots of different eras of **Doctor Who**. And with this particular setting, we've got an older Harry

Sullivan turning up as well.

"So we've got Harry from the classic show mixed with Jackie from the new series Ninth Doctor era, as well as Christina from a Tenth Doctor special.

"We're bringing together people we've worked with quite a lot over the years. We know they're fun and enjoy recording, so it's a great group of people – both characters and actors."

LISA SAYS: "I am delighted to be involved in the 60th anniversary. I didn't really know what I was going to have to do to start with, but I said, 'I'll do it, whatever it is!'"

"The brief wasn't a case of being given a shopping list: it was more of an ingredient list because I didn't get to choose the characters. It was a bit like **Ready, Steady, Cook** – I was given a list of characters and told to make a play out of them!

"The Sixth Doctor, Lady Christina, Jackie Tyler and Harry Sullivan. "It was great to be handed characters like these, especially the Doctor and Jackie. But then you wonder

It was a bit like Ready, Steady, Cook – I was given a list of characters and told to make a play out of them!

LISA McMULLIN

how on earth does this group come together on an adventure? They're all from such very different worlds.

"Having Lady Christina and Jackie bouncing off each other was just hilarious. I had so much fun with that, but working out how they would meet each other was a headscratcher at first. I had Jackie going for a cleaning job with Lady Christina. But Russell T Davies gave the note back when I first pitched it that, 'London is not a village' – it was too much of a coincidence!

"Now, I have her being sent, by a mysterious person with curly hair,

to knock on Lady Christina's door. It's all part of the big plan to try and help the Doctor with this ongoing battle against the degenerative madness that's going on."

LISA WAS delighted to write for the Fourth Doctor's companion in particular. She said: "We've got Harry, being completely confused as usual.

He bumps into the Third Doctor who starts to regenerate and Harry thinks it's because he's pressed a button and accidentally killed him. It's chaotic but fun!

"I love Harry and I think Chris Naylor has got him down to a 'T'. He's becoming one of my favourite companions to write for because he's a bit of a bumbler but he's also brilliantly intelligent – and I love that combination. Someone who's smart but also a bit rambling at the same time."

Matt adds: "When you've got all of these factors, I knew I could give it to a great writer like Lisa, and say, 'This is what we need to do. This is where we are in the arc. We need to get from here to here but you can have fun along the way with the story.'

"Each story, in a way, is a little side step as the Doctor's gradually progressing along his quest to discover what is happening to him."

Lisa concludes: "I wrote this in lockdown so it's been quite a while since I looked at the script. I'm really looking forward to hearing it." **VORTEX**



Each story, in a way, is a little side step...

MATT FITTON

Above: Michelle Ryan
Below: Christopher Naylor



**DOCTOR WHO: ONCE AND FUTURE:
TWO'S COMPANY**



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THE **BIG FINISH** MAGAZINE

WOTEX



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BIG FOR THE LOVE
FINISH OF STORIES

THE NINTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES

TRAVEL IN HOPE



Sometimes the journey
is as interesting as
the destination...

ALSO INSIDE

THE DIARY OF RIVER SONG
THE ORPHAN QUARTET

It's going to get emotional...