

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX



ISSUE 174
AUGUST 2023
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OF STORIES

PREPARE TO MEET A CERTAIN

DOOM

IT'S FOUR FOR DOOM'S DAY AS THE ASSASSIN MEETS JACKIE TYLER, THE SILENCE, CHARLEY POLLARD AND THE EIGHTH DOCTOR!

ALSO INSIDE

HEART OF EMPIRE

AFTER 14 YEARS, DAVID TENNANT RETURNS IN THE ADVENTURES OF LUTHER ARKWRIGHT...





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THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES:

INTELLIGENCE FOR WAR

THE DOCTOR and Liz Shaw are back this autumn in **The Third Doctor Adventures**. *Intelligence for War* has been written by Eddie Robson and stars Tim Treloar (as the Doctor), Daisy Ashford (as Liz Shaw, the role made famous by her late mother, Caroline John) and Jon Culshaw (as Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart).

The Doctor and Liz investigate a disturbing incident in the quiet Norfolk village of Humcleath. Is time travel technology to blame? And what is the link between the disappearance of the village's wealthiest resident, Francis Teeling, and anti-war campaigners in Cambridge?

As the Brigadier mobilises UNIT, a secret branch of the British military has serious concerns about UNIT's scientific advisor – Dr Elizabeth Shaw.

In the ensuing struggle, Liz must make connections with her past, consider her future and fight against both incarceration and an unusual alien weapon. And try as he might, the Doctor may not be able to help her!

Script editor and director Nicholas Briggs says: "I was very keen to have Liz at the centre of this story in a way that would never have been done back in 1970. That was my brief to Big Finish stalwart writer Eddie Robson: 'Make it all about Liz'. And that's our modern twist in a tale of intrigue, treachery and, of course, alien threat." **VORTEX**

THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES:
INTELLIGENCE FOR WAR

- RELEASED: OCTOBER 2023
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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EDITORIAL

TIME TRAVEL is a wonderful thing! And in this issue we're previewing a Big Finish story which was conceived over 15 years ago.

Luther Arkwright: *Heart of Empire* is the sequel to Bryan Talbot's *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright*, a comic book which was adapted for audio by Big Finish and released in 2005.

The cast of that first audio featured a number of names familiar to people who know early Big Finish releases – India Fisher, Robert Jezek, Siri O'Neal, Jez Fielder. And some actor called David Tennant, whatever happened to him? I think he went on to join the army and shouted at Siri O'Neal a lot... (which makes sense if you've heard **UNIT: The Wasting!**).

The Adventures of Luther Arkwright is mind-bending and brilliant. Mark Wright's script took the best of the original comic and forged it into something that genuinely has to be heard. It's clever, it's witty and David gives a performance that couldn't be further away from the Doctor.

It's been a long time since the band got together, and I can't wait to return to this twisted world. To the best of my knowledge, no other Big Finish story has ever had this long a gestation as Mark's first draft of *Heart of Empire* was written in 2009 (unless the 'lost' Seventh Doctor script *Dark Rising* has been completed!). I'm very much looking forward to hearing this one. **VORTEX**

Kerry



Big Finish is joining the BBC's 2023 multiplatform event **Doom's Day**, as we...

make ROOM FOR DOOM

DOOM IS living on borrowed time. She's travelling through all of space and time in pursuit of the Doctor, who she hopes can save her from the ever-approaching Death.

Doom only has a vortex manipulator to save herself before her fate is sealed forever. Actor Sooz Kempner is the face and voice of Doom, and a number of very familiar characters will feature along her journey.

John Ainsworth is the producer and director of the audio adventures. He tells *Vortex*: "It's exciting to be part of something that's one element of an even bigger adventure. Our contribution at Big Finish is one of many which go towards telling the whole **Doom's Day** story.

"Doom is an assassin who has just 24 hours to live. Each of our adventures is one hour long, and we're making a box set of four stories which actually fit in at the

very end of **Doom's Day**. Our final story is hour 23 and Doom knows that her last hour is about to come as our box ends. There's a real sense of literal doom in our stories as time is running out for her.

"These are four very distinct episodes in *Dying Hours*. Each of our contributions has something from somewhere in the **Doctor Who** universe.

"The first one very much takes elements and characters from the



Above (l-r): Camille Coduri and Sooz Kempner

television episode *The Daleks' Master Plan*, the second one features Jackie Tyler – which is brilliant fun, and the third one has the Silents in it. The Eighth Doctor and Charley feature in the fourth story, and it's a great script for them."

DAWN OF *an Everlasting Peace* by Jacqueline Rayner opens the set. *Venus, 3975. The day of the non-aggression pact. The perfect ironic location for an assassination! But Doom's mission is about to become much more complicated thanks to an explosive plot to undermine the treaty itself.*

How exciting was it for Jac to be involved in these audio adventures?

"The huge thing about this project was that the action had to be portrayed pretty much in real time. That was a challenge and a half, staying with Doom continuously for the play, and we didn't even get ad breaks!" Jac, a huge fan of *The Daleks'*

I THINK MY LOVE OF CERTAIN 60s WHO IS NOT A SECRET...

JACQUELINE RAYNER

Master Plan, reveals: "In *Dawn of an Everlasting Peace* (which is a quote from *The Daleks' Master Plan*), Doom gets mixed up in some of the Galactic Council's early planning while trying to discover the identity of her new target – will the Treaty of Venus be signed? There are surprises! Moral dilemmas! A new delegate! Extremely obscure references!

"I think my love of certain 60s **Who** is not a secret, and more than one returning character pops up here. It might not be too much of a surprise that I'm also a big fan

of the Dalek books, they're very much part of that whole big Terry Nation adventures-in-space world epitomised by *The Daleks' Master Plan* and the TV episode *Mission to the Unknown*, so it felt rather fun to bring some of that aesthetic in too."

A DATE with *Destiny* by Robert Valentine is the second adventure in the set. *A romantic dinner turns life-threatening for an unsuspecting human in 2007. But this time, Doom has competition. And if she loses, then her last chance to find the Doctor could be snatched away. Cue an action-packed chase through the streets of London. But has Doom met her match?*

Rob says: "The brief was to give Doom a mission near the end of her 24-hour search for the Doctor where she's really desperate, and for that mission to involve Jackie Tyler. Immediately that got me thinking that these two would be huge fun as a double-act, and so the idea of



Above (l-r) Susie Riddell and Trevor Littledale

bringing a second assassin into the story to hunt them came out of that.

"I felt quite lucky that nobody else seemed to have nobbled the idea before me, but giving Doom a rival she has history with also meant she had someone who knows all her strengths and weaknesses. Destiny is the 006 to Doom's 007, or the Saruman to her Gandalf, and making it a sort of toxic workplace friendship also meant there was lots of space for comedy."

Rob particularly had fun with writing for his leading actors. He confirms: "Knowing I was getting to write not only for Sooz but also for Camille Coduri was really exciting. Jackie Tyler is one of the great characters of the revived series and the idea of her getting caught up in the middle of an assassination thriller as both the target and the sidekick was a gift. It also meant that this story could take place against the backdrop of the Powell

BATTLES FOR SURVIVAL THREADED WITH DARK VEINS OF HORROR...

SIMON CLARK

Estate circa 2007, which is a really magical era in **Doctor Who** history."

DOOM'S NEXT trip takes her to encounter *The Howling Wolves of Xan-Phear* by Simon Clark.

A warring world of wolves. Doom's target turns out to be the puppeteer of the warring Xan: a Silent. But what if she's already completed her mission? How will she know? What if this wasn't even her mission in the first place? No time to waste. The countdown is on.

Simon was delighted to be a part of the writing team. He reveals: "On a scale of 1 to 10? Call it 1,000! Big Finish emailed me, inviting me to write a script – my jaw dropped with surprise and then the excitement kicked in. This is a big project and so massively ambitious. A real threshold event that contributes yet another powerfully imaginative element to the **Doctor Who** universe. It was one of those occasions that, after reading the Big Finish email, I had to stand outside in the fresh air for a while and tell myself that this was really happening and I wasn't dreaming.

"Big Finish always have tremendous faith in their writers. Therefore, often the brief is... well... brief! Big Finish allow their writers to spread their wings, be creative and dream big. John and I worked together on the Big Finish adaptation of *The Night of the Triffids*, so he knows that my work ventures deep into the horrific. He encouraged me to ramp up the suspense and the fear factor – and plunge Doom into a frightening adventure that pulsates with absolute danger and dread."

Teasing what happens in his script, Simon says: "Sixty minutes of high-octane battles for survival threaded with dark veins of horror and alarming encounters with creatures of utter nightmare. People are saying you should listen to *The Howling Wolves of Xan-Phear* in the dark – but keep one finger on the light switch. Just in case..."

Asked for his highlight, Simon adds: "It's hard to pick just one. It was hugely exciting to become part of **Doom's Day**, which is a truly epic project. And it was also massively thrilling for me to literally fling Doom into a nerve-shredding adventure. One that I believe listeners will thoroughly enjoy while generating more than a few shivers down the spine."

THE CROWD by Lizzie Hopley closes the box set. "*Follow the crowd*", that's what they say, right? In this case, however, devastation, murder and destruction follow this particular Crowd – Doom's next target. But amongst them – an unfamiliar face, with a familiar name. Could this be Doom's salvation?



Above (l-r): Sooz Kempner and Becky Wright

Lizzie says: "To have my story as the penultimate Doom story is massive. It will be a challenge to the fans as there'll be a huge amount of material to collect, but the beauty of this is you can explore, cherry pick or just take it slow.

"After being part of the far-reaching ambition of *Time Lord Victorious*, this was another challenge. Nothing was certain until my story pitch was accepted. And I had one right up my sleeve! The 24 hours aspect of it is so compelling, I CANNOT WAIT to see Doom in a comic.

"It's one of the creepiest adventures I've written. Set in medieval

Canterbury around a very specific event that draws a crowd – but not a crowd you'd want to be part of. The idea of tragedy tourists came to me a while ago and I've been waiting to put them into a Big Finish for a while – this was utterly the right fit.

"The Crowd are disaster tourists, galactic ambulance chasers if you like, who time travel to watch and feed off historic tragedies. It was fun to test Paul McGann's Doctor and Charley with such a vile enemy. From Doom's point of view, the answer to the Crowd is obvious – just let her do her job on them. The Doctor's is far more complicated. It made for a tense triangle!"

JOHN TOOK charge of the studio sessions as director, with Sooz leading the various casts.

John says: "I hadn't met Sooz before, but she is brilliant.

I absolutely loved working with her, and she was very at home with it all – both the character and performing at the microphone.

"Due to the nature of the stories, and the fact that each story is an hour of Doom's life, this more or less meant that Sooz is in virtually every scene of every episode. It must have been exhausting, but if it was, she didn't let it show.

"Sooz was also performing in other shows across the country in the evenings, and then back with us in the mornings. She was full of energy and never seemed to flag.

"Someone less comfortable and less familiar with working in audio might have had a harder time with it, and I wouldn't have blamed anyone for being a bit tired by the end of

SOOZ IS IN VIRTUALLY EVERY SCENE OF EVERY EPISODE.

JOHN AINSWORTH

each day. But that wasn't the case.

"It was really lovely to work with someone so on the ball and focused, it made my job as director much easier!" **VORTEX**

DOOM'S DAY: DYING HOURS



■ RELEASED: SEPTEMBER 2023
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/24hour 



HIT AND MISSY

The Doctor Who 60th anniversary celebrations continue with a pair of Scottish Time Lords...

ONE OF the real joys of Big Finish's commemoration of Doctor Who's diamond anniversary celebrations has been the possibilities it has conjured up. With time out of joint and the Doctor phasing through his incarnations, it's the perfect opportunity to answer those age-old questions of... what if? But this is no Doctor Who Unbound range of stories set in parallel universes. These are adventures taking place in the aftermath of the Doctor fighting in

the Time War, then being struck by an unknown weapon which forces him to degenerate and shift through his many faces.

The next release in the series, *Once and Future: The Martian Invasion of Planetoid 50*, marks a slight change as rather than revert to one of his former selves, the Doctor is going to find himself in a very familiar modern form – a body which looks just like the actor David Tennant!

The Martian Invasion of Planetoid 50 is a story which also brings together some of the characters from the eras of the Eleventh and Twelfth Doctors, as the Tenth Doctor encounters Missy (played by Michelle Gomez) and the Paternoster Gang where Madame Vastra (Neve McIntosh), Jenny Flint (Catrin Stewart) and Strax (Dan Starkey) unite once more.

Producer David Richardson says:

"This really was a brilliant recording. We made it in the deepest, darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Everyone was working remotely from home, but the social contact even over the internet was a welcome boost.

"Michelle was beaming in from the US so the schedule was geared around her joining us in the afternoon, UK time. My strongest memory is of Ken Bentley, our director, just letting the actors play with the script. We might not have included every minute of what they did in the final edit, but when you have David and Michelle firing on all cylinders and making revisions to the lines, it always pays to leave the tape running as they push beyond what is on the page.

"We also had the glorious Paternoster Gang – a perfect



Above: Michelle Gomez

cocktail of characters. What a joyful hour of entertainment this is."

THE WRITER tasked with bringing this group together was Jonathan Barnes. Vortex asks him how he reacted on being asked to be part of the 60th anniversary celebrations.

Jonathan says: "Beyond excited. It was completely unexpected and wonderful. Another memorable email from David! And to have a proper crack at the Tenth Doctor too...

fantastic! (Sorry, wrong catchphrase!)

"The brief was fairly... well not restrictive... but detailed for this one. Some elements remained in flux while David and script editor Matt Fitton finessed the details of the overarching plot and an ever-shifting cast. But the brief boiled down to one (or two) older Doctors, then the Tenth... plus Missy and the Paternoster Gang. At one point we had the General in there too."

With David Tennant being available for a few days during the 2020 lockdown, it meant that Jonathan had to make a number of revisions along the way as the cast changed when the overall storyline was nailed down.

Jonathan explains: "I don't think

I WAS PLEASED TO BE ABLE TO WRITE A SORT OF LOVE LETTER TO THE WORK OF HG WELLS...

JONATHAN BARNES

I've rewritten a **Doctor Who** script for Big Finish more times than on this one! Some personnel changed as time went by, and it needed to fit in with what had gone before and what was to come afterwards. It was written a long time in advance..."

Big Finish had already signed David up for the 60th anniversary celebrations before it was announced that he would be back on our screens in 2023 as the Fourteenth Doctor. Jonathan says that putting words in his mouth was: "A joy. His speech patterns as that character are so well-defined you can hear them as you type! He's the most extraordinary actor too. I tried to

give him a bit of new stuff to do as well, in amongst the greatest hits."

Jonathan was also given the Paternoster Gang and Missy – but he found capturing their voices to be more of a challenge. He explains: "I found it really difficult! They have very precise voices which didn't come altogether naturally to me. Thank heavens for Matt who really helped me out. He's a brilliant mimic on the page and he made them feel Moffat-level, I think! So that element was absolutely a team effort."

Summing up the plot, Jonathan says: "I always try to include a personal element in my stories so I was pleased to be able to write a sort of love letter to the work of HG Wells as well as the required ingredients. It's a commentary on fandom too in some ways. The Doctor lands on a planet which seems to have been remodelled as an exact replica of the fictional London in Wells's *War of the Worlds*... but who could be responsible for such devilry? Well, check out the front cover! Hopefully there are a few surprises along the way too..."

As for Jonathan's highlight, he says it was: "Just to be a part of the 60th celebration and a show that's meant so much to me. A privilege to be given such a high-profile gig. As it stands, I have no more contributions to mainstream **Doctor Who** to come so it may be my farewell! In which case I couldn't think of a better way to say goodbye. Although, of course, 'I don't want to go'..." **VORTEX**

ONCE AND FUTURE: THE MARTIAN INVASION OF PLANETOID 50



- RELEASED: SEPTEMBER 2023
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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GET READY TO TRAVEL TO ALTERNATIVE
WORLDS WITH ROSE TYLER, WHICH ARE ALL...

CANNON-ICAL!

IN DOCTOR Who's fourth series on television, Rose Tyler fought her way back across the dimensions to be reunited with the Tenth Doctor.

But finding her best friend wasn't an easy process, as we are discovering in **Rose Tyler – The Dimension Cannon**. Billie Piper is back in her iconic role for the third box set in this series, *Trapped*, joined by Camille Coduri as the one and only Jackie Tyler.

Producer Emily Cook says: "While **The Dimension Cannon**: *Other Worlds* followed pretty much the

same format as the first volume (i.e. each episode took Rose and co. to a different parallel Earth), we wanted to mix things up with volume three and do something a little different. We ended *Other Worlds* on a cliffhanger – what happened to Rose? – and in *Trapped* we pick up straight after that.

"Wherever Rose went she's now trapped there for the duration of this series... and this reality is stranger and more dangerous than anywhere she's been before. This series is essentially Rose's quest to get herself back so she can find the Doctor.

"As is always the case with Big

Finish productions, it was a joy to work on this box set. It's a great privilege to be creating stories which edge Rose ever closer to the events of *Turn Left* and *The Stolen Earth* (TV stories I adore). It was interesting, too, to see how far we could push Rose as a character by placing her on an Earth where she's totally alone.

"That said, she meets Danni and forms a bond with them – that was a wonderful relationship to explore and is essentially the heart of the series. We also play with some brilliant sci-fi ideas including entropy and Anti-Life."



Above (l-r): Em Thane, Bailey Patrick and Lorraine Horgan

Sink or Swim by Lizzie Hopley is the set opener. She admits: “This one was a big deal for me – knowing that what you write is going to breathe life into such an iconic and much-loved character. It’s an honour to be asked to join **The Dimension Cannon** gang.

“Rose is a big name to tick off my list. I’m delighted to get to write for her, and what’s more, she’s the protagonist of her own story. Billie created such a memorable depth and attitude for Rose, it’s just a joy to write her lines and create a world for her to kick ass in.”

Lizzie had a simple brief: “Challenge Billie as an actor. That was central to everything. We were told she enjoys being stretched, and to keep her central to the action and give her a stonking great emotional journey (I don’t think Russell T Davies used that particular word!).

“Our box set started with a genius idea (as usual) from script editor Matt Fitton about a dystopian future Earth and a terrifying new menace (the Anti-Life). This was followed by a Zoom meeting where we pitched ideas for world-building (including at one point, porpoise-sized bacteria). We were to introduce a new character (Danni) who Rose would become reluctantly responsible for, exploring



Above: Cleo Sylvestre

her maternal side and really giving Billie something to get stuck into.”

Summing up the script, Lizzie says: “Rose wakes up on a dilapidated cruise liner without the Dimension Cannon. People are using the liner to get around a terrifying dystopian Earth, but there’s a particular prisoner on board who they are using to survive the ever-present threat of the ‘Anti-Life’. Rose ends up torn between tribes of survivors and unable to trust anyone. There’s also Danni, who is another responsibility altogether.

“Is it *The Love Boat* gone wrong?! No, this is Rose fighting pirates on a differently evolved Earth to track

down her Dimension Cannon whilst being at risk of a new unexplained terror. I wanted to feature a derelict super cruise liner and write it from an ocean-adrift perspective. Where else do you live when the land has become too dangerous?! Super liners horrify me after seeing one negotiate Tower Bridge. To include a crash in that precise spot was basically me marrying memory with nightmare.”

Rose’s adventures continue in *The Lower Road* by Tim Foley. Like Lizzie, he was delighted to be given the chance to write for the iconic companion: “It’s Rose! I was over the moon. Billie Piper is a legend. I think she’s such a talent.”

What was in Tim’s brief from Matt?

He explains: “The adventures in this box set are all set in the same world so we did a writers’ Zoom meeting where we fleshed out ideas and the overall story. My middle episode picks up the baton from Lizzie and delves into the world a little more. It also brings some of the themes about mothering and responsibility to the fore.”

Summing up the script, Tim says: “Crossing a vast wilderness, our heroes seek shelter in an unusual encampment. Are they the future of mankind? Or is the truth more complicated than that?”



Above (l-r): Chelsea Little, Heather Coombs and Em Thane

"I enjoy how we've anticipated recent favourites like *The Last of Us*. And it's the first time I've written a script inspired by a song – one of Matt's picks – *The Lower Road* by Theo Gilmore."

THE CONCLUDING episode in this set is *The Good Samaritan* written by Helen Goldwyn, who is also the director.

How did Helen feel writing for Rose, a character beloved by millions all over the world? Helen tells *Vortex*: "You can't really think too much about that side of things because you have to focus on the character rather than the mystique and celebrity around it. But I'm absolutely delighted to have the chance to work with someone like Billie, who is one of my favourite actors."

"She's so phenomenal, so incredibly talented – there's a degree of pressure that goes with that when you're writing for someone like Billie. The last thing you want is for an actor to read your words and ask, 'Who wrote this rubbish?' That's always a possibility!

"But there was enormous scope for imagination to run

THERE WAS ENORMOUS SCOPE FOR IMAGINATION TO RUN RIOT. WE HAD FREE REIN, REALLY, TO WRITE WHATEVER WE WANTED.

HELEN GOLDWYN

riot. We had free rein, really, to write whatever we wanted as it's set in an alternate universe."

Helen's brief was explained by the producer: "Emily was very definite when she said she wanted it to be set in an alternate reality where Earth is quite different. Before, Rose has arrived in subtly different environments but this was where something had radically changed about the way people lived on Earth."

"Rose finds herself in a version of a post-apocalyptic Earth. But it's not a human apocalypse, it's something else that's happened which means the planet functions in a completely different way – it's almost like a different world. And there are other

entities that inhabit the planet that aren't there in our world."

Helen is delighted with the family feel which has grown between the cast at the Big Finish recordings.

She explains: "I've worked with Billie quite a lot now, over the course of these three series. And because I've worked with her a few times I think she trusts me, and I feel really honoured by that. We've had some great chats about life, families and the challenges outside of being an actor."

"Camille is adorable – just as adorable as you would hope and expect her to be. She never, ever disappoints. Her performance is always so fresh and I love her unexpected delivery. I think that's what she does so brilliantly. She never says a line quite as anybody else would – it's always her own idiosyncratic way of doing it."

Rose is joined on these adventures by Danni, a new character played by Em Thane described as 'Rose's reluctant companion. Impulsive, petulant, but brave.'

Helen adds: "I listened to lots of voice demos when casting the role of Danni and as soon as I heard Em's showreel I knew they had exactly the sound and style I'd heard in my head. They didn't have much audio experience and needed a bit of reassurance at the start – and then it was immensely satisfying to see them grow in confidence and deliver this marvellous, nuanced performance; mirroring Danni's growing confidence and independence in the stories." **VORTEX**

ROSE TYLER: THE DIMENSION CANNON TRAPPED



■ RELEASED: SEPTEMBER 2023
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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TORCHWOOD: DEADBEAT ESCAPE

ONE OF the many joys of the **Torchwood** audios by Big Finish has been the ability to explore the characters of the recurring cast. And without the restrictions of having ensemble stories with a host of regulars, the monthly **Torchwood** range has been able to not only put the original Torchwood team under the spotlight, but other interesting characters as well. For example, Andy Davidson has become a member of the Torchwood team in all but status. We've found out far more about Queen Victoria that we would ever have expected, and Yvonne Hartman has been given a whole new lease of life. Captain John Hart has returned with typically extravagant flair, while the long-suffering Rhys Williams has had his own adventures without his wife, Gwen Cooper, being involved. We've found out more about Suzie Costello before the television series began, and travelled to the future to find out about the escapades of Zachary Cross Flane in his work for the Torchwood Institute.

I KNOW ALL THOSE FANS OUT THERE HAVE BEEN SCREAMING FOR YEARS TO BRING HIM BACK!

MURRAY MELVIN

And then, there's the mysterious Bilis Manger. Played by the late, great Murray Melvin, not much was known about the elusive character originally introduced in the TV episode *Captain Jack Harkness*, but little by little, Big Finish has been able to flesh him out. Bilis made his first audio appearance in *Deadbeat Escape*, written by range producer James Goss. "Welcome to the Traveller's Halt. You're in luck – we have one room

left. My name is Bilis Manger. Let me show you to your room."

The story reveals that Bilis has become trapped at the Traveller's Halt – part of the ongoing story in the early monthly range releases – with the mysterious Committee working away in the background and using Bilis in their plans.

There's a very dark side to everything – with a human story at the heart of it as Hwyl (played by Gareth Pierce) is making his way to visit his terminally ill father, with whom he has had a difficult relationship.

Murray admitted he was delighted to be playing the character of Bilis again: "I know all those fans out there have been screaming for years to bring him back! I had to find lots of different levels of emotion. He doesn't really go in for that, does he? It was terrifying."

Gareth had a fantastic time at the recording, comparing some of the scenes to the 2016 film *Passengers*. He says: "I don't think I've ever had that much fun being tortured! There's a similar thing in *Passengers* with Michael Sheen as the barman. Hwyl's looking for a sounding board and I really don't think he sees any massive threat from Bilis.

"The status is almost flipped part way through this episode – I think Hwyl possibly thinks that he's in some form of control.

"We had a wonderful, wonderful time working on this. It was a really fun one to record." **VORTEX**

TORCHWOOD: DEADBEAT ESCAPE

- RELEASED: AUGUST 2018
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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DEADBEAT ESCAPE IS DISCOUNTED
FOR THE WHOLE OF AUGUST.



IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT...

DAWN OF AN ERA

BIG FINISH has been exploring how humanity would survive in the aftermath of a global pandemic since 2014. Developed from Terry Nation's television series, *Survivors*, the latest box set in the audio series continues to look at the lives of Abby Grant (played by Carolyn Seymour) and Jenny Richards (played by Lucy Fleming), and how life is developing under the New Federal Government.

The trio of tales in *New Dawn 4* has been written by Ken Bentley, who is also the series director, and Matt Fitton. Producer Emma Haigh admits that despite working

with a grim setting, she enjoys the challenge. Emma tells *Vortex*: "It's strange, for a world that can be very tough I have a real affection for it. We've created stories about all aspects of humanity, and I feel we've told as many positive and uplifting stories as we have bleak.

"I've particularly enjoyed going on the journey with Abby and Jenny. I admire them hugely. They've overcome such sadness and adversity, and really show what humans can do when they have to dig deep. We are incredibly resilient. And their friendship and love have prevailed no matter how much time passes."

THE FIRST story in the set is *Albion* written by Ken. He says: "I've been lucky enough to direct the whole audio series from the beginning. I had to take a break as a writer for domestic reasons but it's great to be back. The world Terry Nation created has so much potential, and the more we explore the more ideas we have. These are stories Matt and I have been itching to tell for years and we're really excited to finally have the chance to share them.

"The jump forwards in time between the original audio series and *New Dawn* has been really useful.



Above (l-r): Lucy Fleming, Carolyn Seymour and Helen Goldwyn

The extra 15 years means a whole generation has grown up without education as we know it and that fascinates me. There's a tension between those for whom this new world is unfamiliar and dangerous, and those who grew up without any knowledge of what life was like before and who are therefore more capable and adaptable. It's where I always hoped we'd get to in the world of *Survivors* so it's very exciting to finally be here.

"What I've tried to do with my two episodes in this set is show a world on the brink of change. Where those who grew up before the pandemic finally understand they have to let go of what life was like in the past and embrace the opportunities ahead. The episodes challenge our obsession with nostalgia and try to

confront the mistakes of the past."

Ken also enjoyed working with Matt on the story in the middle. Ken says: "Matt is one of my favourite people in the world, I love him, and he's one of the best writers to work with, so I was over the moon he was able to join me on this box set. His knowledge of the world of *Survivors* is second to none and I've always admired his storytelling instincts: I know I can trust his judgement. It's rewarding and reassuring working with Matt."

MATT WAS also delighted to return to the series. He explains: "I was keen to hear what Andrew Smith had done with the *Survivors: New Dawn* series set-up, moving it on another 15 years or so since the end

of the last series, establishing a new form of society. So, it's great to come back to this series, with Ken, to look at it and think how can we shake things up again.

"Often in *Survivors* we see how the worst instincts can drive people and unfortunately that can be a destructive force. But we've got hope, and here we have the hope of Jenny and Abby moving forward through everything.

"It was great to work with Ken on the third series of *New Dawn*, which he wrote entirely, and then we decided that for series four I'd write the episode in the middle. We met up and talked through our ideas as we worked out the kind of story we wanted to tell and the world we wanted to place Abby and Jenny in.

YOU CAN START TO SEE A GLIMPSE OF WHAT AN ALTERNATIVE SOCIETY MIGHT LOOK LIKE IN THE AFTERMATH OF SURVIVORS.

MATT FITTON

We wanted to move things forward because so much time had passed – you can start to see a glimpse of what an alternative society might look like in the aftermath of *Survivors*."

Matt's script sees a journey across the south of England, from Devon to Kent. He tells *Vortex*: "Abby and Jenny are continuing their journey towards the coast. They've virtually given up on staying in Britain and want to try and start something new. But along the way they've run into this mysterious young tribe, a strange bunch of people who've been isolated, who've been living in a corner of the country.

"At the beginning of my story, Abby's on her own with her dog, looking for Jenny, seeing what might have happened to her, when she runs into a very old friend in the



Above (l-r): Issey Van Randwyck and Hannah Raymond-Cox

form of Ruth. Ruth is also exploring this area of the country but for a completely different reason.

"One of the things we were always curious about was, what would happen to the nuclear power plants? What happens when everything is shut down? So there's an element of is this area safe anymore? Is it radioactive? Has some disaster happened here? How has it impacted on these people? Has it affected the people that farmed the land? Just what is going on in this mysterious corner of England?"

KEN HAS been part of the *Survivors* range at Big Finish since its first day in studio, and admits there's a degree of pride in the way that it's grown and developed over the years. He explains: "*Survivors* has been one of my most fulfilling creative experiences and it's been a real honour to be one of the custodians of these characters and this story world. "It was always our intention to be true to Terry Nation's original vision. Back in 1975, the very first episode of *Survivors* was about Abby and Jenny

and it followed their experience of the world breaking down. It was written very much from a female perspective including a number of dramatic moments that are unique to women.

"From the beginning of the audio series we tried to remain true to that vision and one of the most exciting things about working on these final episodes has been the opportunity to bring Abby and Jenny's journey to an end.

"We probably didn't fully appreciate at the time what an ambitious odyssey the audio series would turn into, but it's been hugely satisfying

WE PROBABLY DIDN'T FULLY APPRECIATE AT THE TIME WHAT AN AMBITIOUS ODYSSEY THE AUDIO SERIES WOULD TURN INTO...

KEN BENTLEY

to continue the story of two women surviving against all the odds."

Emma adds: "I've thoroughly enjoyed working on *New Dawn 4*. I've loved what Ken and Matt have explored in this set – learning how humans might evolve in different ways when faced with near extinction. I've particularly enjoyed the language and sounds of communication the tribe have developed, along with hearing suggestions of how the wild animal population has grown. I feel quite protective of the tribe, I hope they are left in peace! And the closing scenes with Abby and Jenny are really poignant." **VORTEX**

SURVIVORS
NEW DAWN 4

- RELEASED: SEPTEMBER 2023
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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RIVER'S LAST SONG?

With River's solo series coming to an end, will this be the last we hear of River Song on audio? There's one particular story that has left us on an intriguing cliffhanger, and I was wondering when we might get a follow up? At the end of *Lies in Ruins* from *The Legacy of Time*, River does not erase the Eighth Doctor's memory as he needs to remember her for their next encounter. Will we ever see this come to pass? Is it part of the 60th celebrations perhaps? I would be sad to see the wonderful Alex Kingston go without a chance to follow this up!

BEATRIX O'TOOLE

Nick: I note there have been some online blogs assuming the end of The Diary of River Song means we've been prevented from making more River Song adventures and that a TV spin-off is nigh... Suffice it to say that River Song and Alex are rightly very popular with Big Finish listeners so it would be very odd, Beatrix, if we were to consider ending our audio adventures with them.

THE GLORIOUS TWELFTH

In the past year, I've listened to each of your 'main' **Doctor Who** ranges from the First Doctor all the way to the Eleventh. Each one perfectly captures the feel of the era they belong to and are simply out of this world. My thanks to everyone who works on them, I'm looking forward to the exciting releases to come (such as the Fugitive Doctor series). One question – are there any plans for more Twelfth Doctor audios?

JAMES WHITBY

Nick: With Jacob Dudman stepping back from his involvement in Doctor Who, James, it's difficult for us to know yet what future there is for the Twelfth Doctor at Big Finish (unless a certain Mr Capaldi changes his mind any time soon!)...

DOUBLE DEALS

I'm a big fan of your CDs. They look amazing and let me listen to a story without having downloaded it. Over the years, though, I've gone over to

buying a lot more audios digitally, only buying a physical copy of an audio if I really liked it. That has, in the past, led to quite a few double purchases on my side. To ease my wallet's pain I was wondering if it would be at all possible to make it so that if one has already bought the digital version of an audio, a physical copy can be purchased at the price of the download. I know it would make my decision of a double purchase a lot easier.

YANNICK FISSE

Nick: That's an interesting idea to feed into our constantly simmering pot of discussions on release patterns in a very fast-evolving world, Yannick. However, since even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost of pressing CDs has risen hugely and almost none of that increase has been passed on to our loyal customers. Given the reality of this increase, I can't see us deciding to reduce the price of a CD purchase any time soon – even though I do follow your logic.

SHORT AND SWEET

I've recently gotten my hands on some more of your old out of print **Short Trips** collections and I'm thrilled about it – I'm super excited to read them. I know the position regarding these print collections already but I was curious if, for the audio series, you have considered making your future sets follow a theme like the books did? Like, for example, you could do a collection themed around the Seven Heavenly Virtues as a kind of audio successor to the *Seven Deadly Sins* book.

JAMES BELCHER

Nick: That's a lovely idea, James, and certainly something we'll consider for the future. **VORTEX**



The Doctor and his friends are getting ready to discover that there are dark things out there – and they knock on the door...

IN THE NIGHT

THE FIFTH Doctor's era on television has featured several contrasts: the scientific Nyssa, the practical Tegan; the calm of the Doctor, the insanity of the Master; the heat of *Planet of Fire*, the cold rain of *Resurrection of the Daleks*. And now, we are going to discover that all the light and joy that the Doctor, Nyssa and Tegan share on their adventures together is going to contrast with what happens *In the Night*.

Producer David Richardson says: "Terrible things happen in the dark – as the Doctor and his companions discover in deepest space and in Poland in 1982. These two stories, despite the inter-linking theme, are worlds apart in geography and tone, and most importantly, feature the

return of the TARDIS crew's space helmets from *Four to Doomsday*!"

A four-parter opens the box set with *Pursuit of the Nightjar* by Tim Foley – who previously wrote *The Auton Infinity* as part of the *Forty 2* release.

The story of the Nightjar has been told for many years. A spaceship helmed by the legendary Captain Goben on a vital mission of mercy, delivering medical supplies to a distant colony in the middle of devastating war, an act of bravery that triggers the end of the conflict.

At her heels throughout the journey her pursuer, the spaceship Nemesis, helmed by the dogged Captain Eslo, never quite able to catch her target.

Tim wasn't given any guidance on what his script should include, saying his brief was: "Very open.

I initially pitched this as a Third Doctor adventure, but somewhere along the process we realised it might suit the Fifth Doctor more.

"I was really pleased about that, it's on the other end of the spectrum to *The Auton Infinity* – tiny, claustrophobic, no returning elements – yet it still hopefully feels like a celebration of the Fifth Doctor's era."

SUMMING UP the script, Tim says: "The Doctor gets to visit a famous ship in space and everything goes wrong!" This script has a very unusual title – does Tim enjoy finding names for his episodes? He says: "Oh, I hate it! They often get changed anyway so it's generally



Above (l-r): Sarah Sutton, Peter Davison and Janet Fielding

out of the writer's hands. But this one was a lucky find – it even gets a title drop in the script!”

“In many ways, the script became a love letter to **The Monthly Adventures** which they'd announced was finishing when I was writing the script. It's a range I grew up with and always wished I'd written for, so there are lots of references (in both form and content) peppered through the story.”

The second adventure in this set is a two-parter. *Resistor* has been written by Sarah Grochala, who previously wrote for this TARDIS team in *Forty: God of War*.

The TARDIS lands in a basement beneath a club in Warsaw in 1982 – which is a bit of a surprise as the Doctor was hoping to take Nyssa and Tegan to Yugoslavia. But a bigger surprise is yet to come – the band on stage are missing one of their musicians. And getting them through the gig is only the start of the TARDIS crew's troubles.

Something strange is happening on the

SHE'S BOLSHY AND PUSHY BUT ABSOLUTELY DETERMINED.

SARAH GROCHALA

streets. Black cars glide through the city, picking off the unwary. Some are driven by the Secret Police... but others... by something very much not of this world.

Sarah says: “The commission for writing another Fifth Doctor story came after I created *God of War*. I really enjoyed writing for the characters – and Big Finish must have liked what I'd done and so asked me for another!”

“I had eighties contemporary Europe as an instruction. It might have also been suggested I do something that links a little to Tegan's heritage. The Doctor's trying to take them to Yugoslavia to visit Tegan's

family but, typically, the TARDIS takes them slightly off course and they end up in the wrong place. They find themselves in communist Poland in the 1980s and end up getting involved with members of a punk band who are on the run from the authorities.

“There are also some aliens who are sort of based on an old Warsaw myth about a black Volga – a car – that used to drive around Warsaw and kidnap people off the street. It was probably based on the Polish secret police, the SB, who would pick up suspected dissidents in the same type of car. It was interesting to think what kind of alien might be employing the same tactics and why.”

SARAH WAS delighted to

write for this TARDIS crew, and admits: “I love writing for the Fifth Doctor team. As a kid, my favourite was Nyssa because I was a bit of a geek, like her, and loved the fact that she was a brilliant scientist. And as an adult, however, I've definitely developed a soft spot for Tegan. During her first travels with the Doctor she spends most of her time moaning, but I get that! She wants to get back to her dream job as an air hostess. I love the way that she develops from this person who's worried about her job and money whilst being crippled in high heels, into one of the strongest companions of them all.

“She's bolshy and pushy but absolutely determined. Tegan is a lot of fun to write for.” **VORTEX**

THE FIFTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:
IN THE NIGHT



■ RELEASED: SEPTEMBER 2023
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/volga 

David Tennant is back in a story 14 years in the making!



IF YOU'RE Interested in useless trivia, what's the first story in which David Tennant uses a Cockney accent to say the name "Rose"? If you're thinking it's either the Children in Need short *Born Again* or *The Christmas Invasion*, then you're wrong. It was another story – produced by Big Finish and released in 2005 – **Luther Arkwright: The Adventures of Luther Arkwright**. David played the titular character

in a three-disc released based on Bryan Talbot's apocalyptic comic book series published from 1978. And now, an audio adaptation of the sequel, *Heart of Empire* published in 1999, is on the way from Big Finish.

David reprises his role as Luther alongside returning cast members India Fisher (Queen Anne), Siri O'Neal (Rose), Robert Jezek (Karl) and Jez Fielder (Harry Fairfax and Dr John Dee), as well as Georgina Helliier

playing Luther's daughter Victoria. The box set, once again adapted by Mark Wright, has two parts – *Daughter of Albion* and *Cataclysm*.

Director and executive producer Jason Haigh-Ellery says: "I'm so excited to be returning to Bryan's work with *Heart of Empire*. It's been wonderful reuniting with the original cast. David, India, Siri, Robert and Jez have all shown such love for the original production and have



Above (l-r): Jez Fielder,
Georgina Hellier and India Fisher

enjoyed working with each other again after all this time. They are joined by Emma Williams, Georgina Hellier and Ahmed Hamad who all bring something new to the series.”

WRITER MARK tells *Vortex*:

“We’d always intended to make the sequel. David was keen but the time was never really right.

The first draft of the script was actually completed in 2009 and there it was, left hanging between parallels. I’d pretty much forgotten about it as my life has changed so much since finishing the first draft. I wrote it as a writer in his 30s living in London and shortly after that I moved back to West Yorkshire, turned 40 and got married. So the writer that came back to the script in 2022 was very different to the one that turned in that first draft in 2009.”

How surprised was Mark when he was asked to come back to it? He explains: “Hugely surprised! As I say, I’d largely forgotten about it, one of those jobs that didn’t work out – which can happen. The fact we still had the first draft was in itself a miracle as, over the years, files can get lost as you

THE FACT WE STILL HAD THE FIRST DRAFT WAS IN ITSELF A MIRACLE...

MARK WRIGHT

upgrade computers, lose track of email threads and swap out hard drives. But brilliantly, the script was still there.

“It’s set 23 years after the original *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright* and follows Victoria Arkwright, the daughter of Luther Arkwright and Queen Anne (born alongside her twin, Henry) in the battle heard at the end of the first release.

“Victoria is a troubled soul, resentful of the father who vanished soon after her birth and emotionally tortured by the murder of her brother Henry. As Victory Day approaches, Victoria is plagued by psychic premonitions and the awakening of powers inherited

from her parents. As a dark force threatens to rip the parallels apart, Victoria rushes headlong towards a reckoning with her father – the great hero Luther Arkwright.”

David tells *Vortex*: “Luther Arkwright was introduced to me by Big Finish with the script of the first instalment. When I read it, I was captivated. There’s something very hypnotic about the world that Bryan created. It was hugely appealing! What a treat that we’ve gotten to revisit this world and these characters.”

BRYAN IS excited to hear the adaptation too: “After the great audio adaptation of *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright*, I can’t wait to hear Big Finish’s production of the second story, *Heart of Empire*. I’m especially pleased that David is reprising his role as Luther.”

Jez too was delighted to work on the adventure, travelling from his home in France back to the UK to record last year. Recalling David, Jez says: “When we recorded the first *Luther Arkwright*, in 2004 or 2005, he was one of the nicest people I’ve



Above (l-r): Ahmed Hamad and Emma Williams

ever worked with – just funny, nice and easy to get on with – relaxed.

"I later went to see him play *Richard II* at the Barbican with Jason and executive producer Nicholas Briggs in around 2015. I'd never seen Richard II and David was extraordinary. Nick and Jason said, would you like to come backstage to see DT afterwards? And I thought, oh no, I'll be embarrassing! I'll embarrass him and myself because he won't remember me. But Jason and Nick said they'd already asked him and he knew exactly who I was – he'd recalled: 'The long-haired guy? Yeah, yeah. Bring him back!'

"I had long hair down to my waist until about five years ago, and I had been telling him about my journalism job saying I worked in a development company that did loads of stuff in the Middle East – and David was genuinely interested. Lovely chap."

Was Jez surprised when asked if he'd be interested in playing Harry once again? He confirms: "Being asked to do the sequel was a great surprise. I have great memories of doing the first one, and especially of Mark, the brilliant writer. The way he transferred a comic book into an audio script was extraordinary.

"I remember speaking to him back when we were recording the first

one and, of course, I asked, 'When's the next one, are we going to do this again?' Mark replied, 'There's a sequel. I'm already working on it and I've spoken to the guys. It might not be this year, but maybe next year.' So I was thinking of 2006 or 2007 but then David became the Doctor and his career exploded, and it's something that seemed to have been forgotten about.

"And then in 2022, I got a message from Big Finish to say they were going to make the sequel. It actually makes sense because a long time has elapsed between the two different stories in the comics, and a long time has elapsed in real life. It's almost like we meant it to be this way!"

PRODUCER HEATHER

Challands says: "The *Luther Arkwright* series is so rich with material, spanning parallel worlds, involving supernatural powers, reconfiguring historical events and figures. It's just full to the brim with loud, unapologetic sci-fi."

When Mark returned to re-read his script, he says: "I was pleased to find that it held up well after more than a decade of not being touched. But it still needed work as all first drafts do. I'm a very different and

more experienced writer now than I was 13 years ago and also the world has changed, so amendments were needed to bring it up to date.

"This is a story for a mature audience and it was great to have the opportunity to go back and do another deep pass on the script, with excellent notes from our brilliant producer Heather and script editor Roland Moore. They both brought a much-needed fresh eye to things and in turn that revitalised my own energy for it."

THE LUTHER ARKWRIGHT SERIES IS SO RICH WITH MATERIAL... IT'S JUST FULL TO THE BRIM WITH LOUD, UNAPOLOGETIC SCI-FI.

HEATHER CHALLANDS

Mark concludes: "It feels like a little bit of unfinished business has been put to rest. The chance to work once again in the breathtaking, mind-bending, exciting universe that Brian created is one of those pinch me moments. I got to do it in 2005, and to get to do it again years later is just lucky!"

"And to hear the original members of the cast – David, India, Jeremy, Siri, Robert – return along with our amazing new lead Georgina, it doesn't get much better really." **VORTEX**

LUTHER ARKWRIGHT: HEART OF EMPIRE



■ RELEASED: SEPTEMBER 2023
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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VORTEX



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BIG FINISH
FOR THE LOVE
OF STORIES

THE MARTIAN INVASION OF **PLANETOID 50**



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