

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX



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Missy

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EXPERTATEXPLOSIONS...**

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GOth OPERA

BIG FINISH'S series of *The Novel Adaptations* is back with a one-off special as it marks 30 years since the missing adventures range of novels began.

Published by Virgin Books from 1994–1997 and released monthly, *Goth Opera* by Paul Cornell launched the series and featured the Fifth Doctor, Tegan and Nyssa.

Over the years, Big Finish has adapted a number of these novels published by Virgin Books taking them from the printed page and into the audio medium. The first audio to be released, *Love and War* also written by Paul Cornell, marks Bernice Summerfield's inaugural appearance.

And now, *Goth Opera* is coming to audio with Lizbeth Myles having adapted the 238-page book into a 232-page audio drama script.

Peter Davison, Janet Fielding and Sarah Sutton reprise their roles as the Fifth Doctor, Tegan and Nyssa in an adventure that goes from Manchester in 1993 to Tasmania with vampires, Time Lords and much, much more.

Producer and director David O'Mahony says: "*Goth Opera* has got everything: vampires, superpowers, blood, guts and gore, and of course Peter's Doctor along with Tegan and Nyssa. It's set in and around Manchester which gave us a lovely opportunity to bring in young and exciting northern actors.

"Lizbeth has brilliantly adapted Paul's novel, and with an incredible cast and the wonderful Richard Armitage giving us a Rassilon prologue, it's a vampiric romp through the Whoniverse that should definitely not be missed!" **VORTEX**

THE NOVEL ADAPTATIONS GOth OPERA

- RELEASED: JULY 2024
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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EDITORIAL

THE RETURN of Missy is always a thrill for me. I find Michelle Gomez's portrayal as the Master so engrossing – helped in part, I suspect, because she's also from Glasgow in the west of Scotland!

Michelle plays the role in a way that I don't think anyone else could do, crossing the line into not just over-the-top villainy, but then having a party with cake and milkshakes whilst dancing to outrageous music!

Missy will turn on a sixpence and go from being light and fun to clinically, diabolically evil – and she would kill you in a heartbeat. It's her unpredictable nature that appeals to me so much.

Michelle brings with her a very Scottish wit, embellishing the original scripts with her own ideas, taking what were already brilliant lines onto another level. Her passion for the part clearly shines through.

If you've not listened to any of the **Missy** range, then you must! The fourth box set of fantastic adventures is coming out this May. **VORTEX**

Kerry



SUPEREVIL CALLOUS NO MATERNAL INSTINCT EXPERT AT EXPLOSIONS...

MISSY BEHAVIOUR

MISSY'S MAD, she's bad and she's very dangerous to know. Missy is back at Big Finish with a web of mayhem and intrigue following in her footsteps.

Michelle Gomez returns as the first female incarnation of the Master in a box set of three new adventures taking her across space and time in *Missy* and *the Time Assassin*, *Bad Apple Brigade* and *The Baron Robbers*.

There's a new producer at the helm too, with Noga Flaishon now guiding Missy's adventures.

Noga explains: "Before the COVID-19 pandemic, I was an actor

—or, at least, doing my best to be an actor. Then, of course, when the lockdowns started there was none of that going on. I've been writing my entire life and I got some friends together to record an audio drama that I'd written. It was a horror and we recorded the second one, *Smile*, *It'll Be Over Soon*, very quickly afterwards. I'm particularly proud of this one.

"Working with Big Finish has been a dream of mine for years. I'm a huge **Doctor Who** fan and it's got me through some dark times, so when I discovered there was a full fandom centring on audio drama, I

sent in a link to *Smile* with the hope that someone at Big Finish would hear it. Nicholas Briggs then got in touch saying that he had listened to the first episode and really enjoyed it – and would I like to have a meeting.

"Nick then asked if I would consider producing as I already had experience from the two audio dramas, so I shadowed a production through the recording process of it and it took off from there.

"I was then asked if I'd be interested in producing *Missy* – and I was like... 'Yes, awesome! Michelle Gomez as the Master. Love it!' And I've picked



Above: Michelle Gomez
Right: Paterson Joseph

**SHE'S SUCH
FUN TO
WRITE FOR
BECAUSE
SHE HAS NO
MORALS
AND NO
SCRUPLES.**

DAVID QUANTICK

up where David Richardsson left off.”
Missy and the Time Assassin by David Quantick is the first story in this set and guest stars Paterson Joseph.

Noga says: “David’s story is really chaotic and funny. Just hilarious.

“Both Paterson and Michelle recorded in isolation so I didn’t initially know what they would sound like together but I’m glad to say you could never tell they were recording from opposite sides of the globe. It shouldn’t be very surprising considering how talented they both are. Paterson is so good in this – he’s got incredible comedic timing.”

Script editor Matt Fitton adds: “When Noga came on board as producer the script from David was already in progress. Nick introduced David to me and mentioned he was really keen to write for *Missy* – it kind of made sense with it being one of our more comedic series, as David’s an experienced comedy writer and talent. We gave him free rein to go quite crazy with it so we’re on a bit

of a wild ride with a time assassin.”

David says: “I’d written an audio for Big Finish a while back – *The Dark Husband* – with the great Sylvester McCoy as the Seventh Doctor – and I’d always hoped to write another. And I finally got the nerve to ask if I could write a *Missy*. I love *Missy*!

“It was a pretty simple brief: write a *Missy* audio. She’s such fun to write for because she has no morals and no scruples. She can say and do what she likes, and she does. And haven’t we all dreamed of destroying an entire solar system because we don’t like the way the red planets clash with the purple ones?”

Summing up the plot, David says: “*Missy* meets one of her heroes – a time travelling assassin.

But it soon becomes clear that the man she worships is a massive, massive let down. If you’re a time-travelling sociopath, that is.

“I really enjoyed writing for the *Time Assassin* James Blakelock, so my favourite moment is probably when he accidentally starts the First World War...”

BAD APPLE *Brigade* is the next adventure written by newcomer Freddie Valdosta.

Noga says: “Now that I’m producing a few things, I’m trying to bring in people who may have written for audio before but never written for Big Finish.

“In this set, there’s Freddie who’s the first of these new writers. And she knocked it out of the park! My theatre



company, Harpy Productions, held a horror story telling competition at Christmas 2021. Freddie won by a knockout. In most stories we had people clapping or laughing at the end, but after Freddie’s story you could hear a pin drop! So as soon as an opportunity arose I brought her in.

"I got very lucky with Nick giving me this role and I want to pay it forward to other people – whether writing or acting."

Matt adds: "When Noga came in she had her own contacts and ideas for writers from all her experience in theatre as a writer, director and producer, so she suggested Freddie. Noga has lots of contacts from that world, and we've found in the



past that new writers coming from theatre seem to translate particularly well to audio. I hope we'll be seeing more new names coming through.

"Freddie's story, *Bad Apple Brigade*, fits very well with the kind of stories we want to tell with Missy almost as an evil Scout mistress looking after delinquent girls and being a bad influence on them."

Freddie was delighted with the commission, and says: "I've always been a huge **Doctor Who** fan – I've been watching since the Christopher Eccleston days – so saying yes was really a no-brainer.

"The team at Big Finish were looking to inject a bit of horror into this episode. The whole **Doctor**



Above: Paterson Joseph
Left: Natalie Gurnede

MISSY ALMOST AS AN EVIL SCOUT MISTRESS LOOKING AFTER DELINQUENT GIRLS...

MATT FITTON

Who universe is a lot of fun, but it can also really deliver on scares (the TV episode *The Waters of Mars* and the Toclafane are some of my favourites) and it was awesome to try and write something scary!"

How would she sum up the plot? Freddie tells *Vortex*: "Enid

Blyton meets *Friday the Thirteenth*.

For a time, I jokingly referred to *Bad Apple Brigade* as *Five Survive on Brownsea Island!*

"At first I felt a lot of pressure knowing Michelle was going to be reading my lines. But after rewatching and listening to some of her previous appearances I got a much better handle on the character. It's always fun to write a story where the protagonist is a villain, and it really helps when the character is as distinct, dynamic and fun as Missy."

Freddie also had a personal highlight: "It would definitely have to be the alien monster of the story – he reads like Bridget Jones writing the *Necronomicon*. I had

the good fortune of listening to part of the episode's recording and the actor did an incredible job."

THE BARON *Robbers* by Lou Morgan is the final tale in this trio. Matt says: "Lou's script started life as something rather different and went through several iterations until we got it to where it needed to be. We were



Above: Ian Cunningham

in this episode. I used to be a Marvel fan and I'm a big Taylor Swift fan so I love a good Easter egg hunt!"

Lou takes up the story: "There was a very open brief for this episode and we decided to connect it (very loosely) to the one that comes before it in the set. In practical terms, though, it was straightforward: Missy has got herself stuck somewhere and somewhen, and needs to get out. I



Above: David Shaw-Parker

be an interesting experience.

She explains: "Missy's quite daunting to write for – like a lot of versions of the Master – because she's so incredibly clever. But added to that, she can be charming one moment and absolutely uninged the next. I thought I'd got the balance right in one early draft, only for Matt to very quietly tell me that she was actually being a bit too nice at that point! Obviously, we soon fixed that..."

"The real highlight for me was going into the studio for the recording; it was the most joyful day watching such a fantastic cast, and I can't remember the last time I laughed so much. They're all so brilliant, and I can't wait to hear the finished thing."

Noga adds: "What can I say about Michelle that hasn't already been said about her? She's a one take wonder as she really knows what she's doing.

"It took us a while to sort out a time when we could record with Michelle because she's such an amazing actress and always busy. But she's so fast when you record with her. We booked her for four hours and she'd already nailed it in half the time!

"My biggest highlight of this set were the days we were in the studio. It was so much fun seeing it come together.

"Working remotely can be fantastic but there is something to be said about actors being in visual distance from each other and able to pick up on each other's vibes. The energy was through the roof on this one and everybody had a great time." **VORTEX**

A HEIST FELT LIKE IT WAS SOMETHING THAT WOULD BE RIGHT UP MISSY'S STREET.

LOU MORGAN

looking at themes of knights and quests but we had to change things around because we've covered Camelot in the Rory series, **The Lone Centurion**.

"It was really nice to make it a bit more realistic with a gritty, dirty kind of medieval aesthetic, as opposed to shining armour and the nobility that you normally see with this kind of thing. So that was great fun as well."

Noga adds: "I didn't know this at the start but Lou has studied Arthurian lore and it fed into this piece a lot, so listeners who know their Arthurian legends will clock a lot of Easter eggs

came up with the idea of a heist as she tries to steal a component for her vortex manipulator – a heist felt like it was something that would be right up Missy's street. And setting it in the 14th century meant I got to put a lot of medieval jokes into it.

"In *The Baron Robbers*, Missy is stuck in 14th century England. Her vortex manipulator's broken, it won't stop raining, and just when things can't get any more irritating she spots a familiar face she'd rather avoid. But she has a plan: all she needs is a little help... and a lot of leeches."

Lou found writing for Missy to

MISSY BAD INFLUENCE



■ RELEASED: MAY 2024
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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BRING ME YOUR DREAM

THE FIFTH DOCTOR IS ABOUT TO FIND OUT IF TEAMWORK REALLY DOES MAKE THE DREAM WORK...

THE FIFTH Doctor and his original TARDIS crew are off on more adventures in their next box set of adventures, *The Dream Team*.

Peter Davison is joined by Matthew Waterhouse, Sarah Sutton and Janet Fielding as his companions Adric, Nyssa and Tegan, in a pair of stories that take the travellers to Scotland and an alien world where a familiar foe to viewers of the

Twelfth Doctor's adventures awaits. Producer David Richardson explains: "What would it be like to throw the Fifth Doctor and his team into a historical murder mystery in which he gets to play detective? That was the starting point of *The Merfolk Murders* by Tim Foley which may – or may not – have a very subtle link to a Fourth Doctor adventure that's in the works... "Tim, as always, excels with a

rich character drama, and then Lizzie Hopley gets to unleash her wild imagination with the Dream Crabs as they imperil the Doctor, Tegan, Nyssa and Adric in a story that features only the lead actors."

St Andrews, Scotland, 1940. The Merfolk are a university society meeting through the summer to discuss murder mystery stories. Innocent escapism during wartime, they say. Their latest book is The Casebook of Orion Hood – whose hero is all-too familiar to the Doctor... When a real-life murder occurs soon after their gathering, the Doctor's friends encourage him to investigate.

Script editor John Dorney says: “*The Norfolk Murders* is a hard one to actually talk about! Tim and I have had long conversations about how much we enjoy a ‘whodunnit’?. We love that golden era of mystery writers exemplified by people like Agatha Christie, most obviously, but there are others such as Margery Allingham who wrote *Campion* and Dorothy L. Sayers of *Lord Peter Wimsey* fame. But our joint favourite is John Dickson Carr who is the master of the locked room mystery and one of the key inspirations for *Jonathan Creek*. He’s a fantastic writer that I’ve been a major league fan of for many years. “There’s something about a lot of the classic stuff, particularly with Agatha Christie, where, if you can figure out who the least likely person is to commit a murder, then it’s

IF YOU CAN FIGURE OUT WHO THE LEAST LIKELY PERSON IS TO COMMIT A MURDER, THEN IT'S PROBABLY THEM!

JOHN DORNEY

probably them! There is occasionally a flaw in this theory. In the television adaptation of *Murder is Easy at Christmas*, there was a vicar played by Mark Bonnar and I couldn’t decide whether that made him the most or least likely character to be the killer! “But in the impossible crime story it almost doesn’t matter if you can figure out who the killer is because the key thing is more about trying to figure out why it was done and how it was done? I think that’s why we love those so much. “Tim and I were very keen to do an absolute classic locked door mystery with just the Doctor and his friends. Science fiction potentially has teleportation and things along those lines which makes it tricky to pull off a satisfying locked room story. But Tim is a very, very clever chap and played totally fair. There was even a little header at the front of the script saying ‘this abides by the Golden Age classic rules – see if you can figure out who did it!’



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



Above: Pearl Appleby

“**THE ONLY** frustration for me was that I had read the storylines provided before the full scripts so I already knew who the killer was! Hopefully by the time this adventure comes

out it will be far enough away that I will have forgotten, and I might just be able to hear it as a ‘normal’ listener!” Tim adds: “The Season 19 crew are my people. I see myself in all of them – slightly hapless, often sassy. Sometimes I’m arrogant and sometimes I stand quietly like a ballerina. It’s a real challenge to write for four protagonists but that just made me more determined to give them all some meaty moments. “This is the first (or is it the third?) of a loose trilogy I have written! It’s a **Doctor Whodunnit**, a tale inspired by the Golden Age of Crime. It’s a properly clued mystery with an impossible crime at its centre. “The process began long ago with another Doctor and companion (yet to be released) when John and I discovered we shared a love of J.D. Carr. I’ve written three mysteries across different ranges and I’ve had

a blast doing it. So if you enjoy this one you've got another two to look forward to! They're all standalone but gently linked as well..."

How did Tim find writing a murder mystery? He tells *Vortex*: "I may love my Agatha Christies but writing a fiendish murder mystery is very hard! Making sure the plot is puzzling and the characters are three dimensional is a tricky balancing act. Plus, making a locked room mystery work on audio is a puzzle all by itself! And if I hadn't already made things hard enough, the biggest challenge is to tell this tale with all of this TARDIS crew – that's four detectives you've got on the prowl. But hopefully I've pulled it off. Peter Davison delivers one heck of a denouement!"

THE WONDERFUL THING ABOUT THEM IS THEY'RE IN IT EVEN WHEN YOU THINK THEY'RE NOT.

LIZZIE HOPLY

DREAM TEAM by Lizzie

Hopley is the second adventure in the set.

A protected wonder of space is being exploited for 'company away days' but when the Doctor, Tegan, Nyssa and Adric land to challenge the organisers, they fall into a web of perfectly tailored nightmares.

The Dream Crabs were introduced in the TV episode *Last Christmas*, and now face off against another Doctor. John explains: "The idea of using the Dream Crabs came from David. It's a two-parter involving the crabs and our heroes.

"This is a really fun one and when we were working on the synopsis, David asked, 'How many people do we need for this? Could we do this with just the four regulars?' And that's what we've ended up doing, which is probably the most exciting way of approaching it. It means you get to play with the characters in quite a degree of depth."



Above: Matthew Waterhouse



Above: Angus Imrie



Above: Tom Alexander

Lizzie says: "Dream Crabs came into my life in a random email from John and I jumped at the chance to write for such an iconic nightmare creation. David suggested the title and it really does describe the line-up. He also suggested cutting out all other speaking characters aside from the Doctor and his three companions. That made things very interesting! "The Dream Crabs are all over this! The wonderful thing about them is they're in it even when you think they're not. I usually hate it when characters wake up from a nightmare, thinking it's over and then wake up again as it's not. It's a much-repeated device but the Kantrofarri are far more complex than that. And horrific. Which was really fun to meddle with!"

How did Lizzie find writing for the

crabs, which are not a vocal race? She explains: "I watched *Last Christmas* a few times to get my head round the layers of false reality (and to see more of Dan Starkey's Ian the elf obviously). Dream sequences are challenging as they can often be less dramatic but this structure was really effective in building tension. The main trick was to create the layers whilst not confusing the listener (and myself!). "The Dream Team are basically on a sightseeing trip. I've been wanting to create a planet archipelago for a while, the type of place David Attenborough would visit. Except it's been taken over by nightmare face-hugging brain-eating crabs. There are a few other nasty surprises along the way, including just why they're there and who's behind it all. Let's just say they're pink and greedy and on loan from John's brain." **VORTEX**

THE FIFTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES THE DREAM TEAM



■ RELEASED: APRIL 2024
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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TORCHWOOD SERENITY



OVER THE years, Big Finish has seen a number of its writers such as Mark Gatiss, Robert Shearman, Paul Cornell and Joseph Lidster go on to write for television in (what's now known as) the Whoniverse. But that's happened the other way around too as James Moran, who wrote the TV episodes *The Fires of Pompeii* and *Sleeper* for **Torchwood**, has also written audio drama for Big Finish, including *Serenity* in the **Torchwood** – Monthly Range.

James recalls: "I got a mysterious email from producer James Goss asking me how much I missed **Torchwood** and I replied with 'very much, I love it and always will'. And then he asked if I wanted to write one! It was an easy yes and I sent in a bucketload of ideas so clearly it had always been on my mind.

"James liked several of them and asked if I could smash two together. I had one about a sinister gated community and a proposed sequel to my TV episode *Sleeper*, and James brilliantly said, "what if it's a gated community of sleepers?" I said yes please, and my clever idea for a title was *Sleepers* which obviously gives the entire game away, so that had

to change! As soon as James suggested combining them I realised that meant we'd get to have a cosy domestic scene with Jack and Ianto talking like normal people before we discover they're undercover, with all the fun stuff and petty arguments that would ensue from that. Then we were off and running."

How different was writing **Torchwood** for audio? James says: "Luckily I've written a few audios beforehand so I'd already got the initial terror out of my system. But when I first did audio I found it very difficult as I'm so used to the visual element – you can't just throw in an explosion because on audio nobody knows where the explosion is, what just exploded or if any characters were caught in it.

"You have to really think about your transitions to clue the listeners in that the scene has changed – but that has helped a lot with my visual scripts too, thinking more about the ambience and atmospheric. Also, on audio you can have longer runs of dialogue and take more time for silly exchanges, which is right up my alley."

How did James find putting Jack and Ianto as a couple front and centre

of the story? He tells *Vortex*: "I had great fun! We all like to imagine what they'd be like as a proper couple living together, so it was a 'be careful what you wish for' exercise. What would that actually mean? What if there was no **Torchwood** and they just lived a normal life? How would they get on with neighbours? What would they do all day? How would they adjust?

"It was a great chance to explore how they'd react to situations they might never have otherwise come up against. And an angry, drunk, frustrated Ianto is always hilarious to me."

I WAS CONVINCED HALF OF THE SILLY STUFF WOULD BE TAKEN OUT...

JAMES MORAN

James adds: "I still can't believe I got away with so much, I was convinced half of the silly stuff would be taken out before it got near the studio! But it's all there. Blueberry muffin, 'Ken and Ifan', *Murder She Wrote* references, 'if you can't pronounce "Sauvignon", you've had enough to drink', 'my tagine...' Bonkers. I absolutely love it!" **VORTEX**

TORCHWOOD SERENITY



- RELEASED: JULY 2019
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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PREPARE YOURSELF FOR THE
WORLD OF DARK GALLIFREY...

DARK TIMES

MORBIUS IS back... and he's not the only renegade Time Lord we're going to hear more from in the months and years ahead. Prepare yourself for the return of Samuel West as the despot former Time Lord President, playing the part he first took on in **The Eighth Doctor Adventures**.

It's all part of the new **Dark Gallifrey** range. *Vortex* asks producer Robert Valentine to explain what it is all about.

Rob says: "**Dark Gallifrey** is a mammoth series of adventures in which all the most dastardly Time Lords are being let out of

the box in various unexpected ways! Some stories are very dark, others are wickedly funny and some are absolutely insane."

John Dorney, who is supervisory script editor over the range, adds: "To start with we have eight adventures. Each one focuses on a different renegade Time Lord – sometimes it's the same renegade Time Lord but a different version of them!

"So, we have different producers, different villains and different adventures. We're giving everyone three hours to play with. I also wanted it to be a different writer for each set, which may or may

not end up being the case.

"I pretty much said to everyone, 'Okay... it's a concept album. Do something a little bit daring and interesting and a bit bigger in scale. Do something that you wouldn't necessarily be able to do with **Doctor Who**, because although it's set within the Whoniverse, it's not the Doctor who's leading it.'

"There is a lovely gossamer thread linking everything but ultimately it's eight largely standalone stories. Each one's a big, bold idea. We wanted it to be led by the writers and the characters, and for each one to have a really strong central conceit."



Above (l-r): Samuel West, Mina Anwar and Andrew French

gold-spined kids' books. There's a flip book. And everything in the box is different shapes and sizes.

"That got me thinking that it feels like we're wedded to a three by one hour structure, so I messaged everyone saying, 'You don't have to do that, so if the story you're wanting to tell would be better told in a different shape, go with it!'"

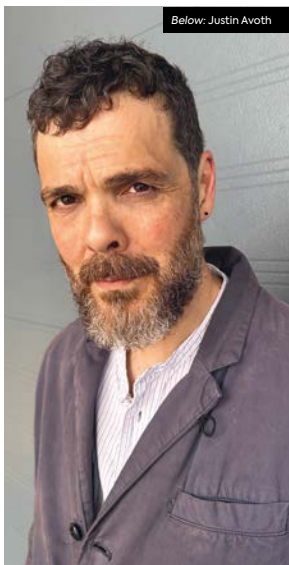
DAVID RICHARDSON, producer of the first adventure **Dark Gallifrey: Morbius** says: "Can it really be 15 years since Samuel was in the Big Finish studio bringing Morbius to brilliant life in **The Eighth Doctor Adventures**? I've no idea why it's taken so long to bring Morbius back, but I promise it's been worth the wait. The script by Tim Foley is searingly imaginative and Sam is breathtaking, as is the whole ensemble cast."

Tim says: "My pitch for this three-hour epic was not the typical paragraph I usually deliver - it

I RECKON THIS IS THE MOST EXPERIMENTAL PROJECT THAT BIG FINISH HAS UNDERTAKEN YET.

TIM FOLEY

DARK GALLIFREY has a number of influences. John explains: "There were lots of ideas that fed into this, things like *The Norman Conquests* by Alan Ayckbourn which are three plays about the same six characters that take place simultaneously in different rooms of the same house. "Also, there was an enormous publication by Chris Ware who's a graphic novelist. It's called *Building Stories* and is multiple books in a box about a building and different things happening there. You can read them in any order you like - you open the box and there's a cornucopia of stuff. There's a big sheet the size of a newspaper, there's a book bound in the corner like one of those old



Below: Justin Avoth

was a picture of the Caspar David Friedrich painting 'The Sea of Ice' (which I ended up putting on the script as well!). I reckon this is the most experimental project that Big Finish has undertaken yet.

"I was delighted to be asked to write for Morbius. He is largely a blank slate, and what little we know about him is infused with vague, strange Time Lord lore that's all to play for and a joy to explore. He's famously inspired by Frankenstein so I thought about the sections which bookended that original novel - on Captain Walton's ship exploring the North Pole. I also thought about the format of the gothic thriller as a whole. This informed my story's setting and the way I approached

the telling of my tale. It's a series of moody, murky chapters exploring the voyage home after the defeat of Morbius. He's a complex character and there is much to dissect."

OVER THE next three months, prepare yourself for delving deep into Morbius's life. Tim says: "Format-wise, part one is the first three chapters, part two is the next three, and part three has the final epic two. Eight chapters for the Eight Domains of ancient Time Lord myth. You can't listen to these discs separately or in a different order as they won't make a lick of sense! Imagine it as a nautical gothic novel with twists and turns ahoj. I cannot believe you



Above (l-r): Lara Lemon and Rachel Atkins

ABSOLUTE FREEDOM TO EXPLORE OUR OWN WEIRD AND WONDERFUL CORNERS OF THE WHONIVERSE, HOW OFTEN DOES THAT GET TO HAPPEN?

TIM FOLEY

have to wait a month between discs, you'll be chomping at the bit! Perhaps listen to a chapter a week, or wait for all three discs and binge listen to them.

"We start aboard the Gallifreyan ship, *Proteus*. We meet her Captain, the recently-regenerated Argento, and a meek apothecary from the Sisterhood of Karn called Gilda. Events spiral from there as this duo form an unusual bond. As the story progresses, we'll explore Morbius's origins, hear of Gallifrey's recent civil war, and meet Time Lords old and new. Imagine Dan Simmonds's *The Terror* meets *Doctor Who Magazine's The Tides of Time*. These three discs form a standalone mini-series, but they do set up events and questions for the **Dark Gallifrey** releases to come."

Tim adds: "Writing for this project has been a privilege. Absolute freedom to explore our own weird and wonderful corners of the Whoniverse, how often does that get to happen? There will be a mix



Above: Samuel West

of Time Lords, genres, episode lengths and ways of experimenting with audio. If you want to support writer-led projects, do support this." Rob concludes: "After **Dark Gallifrey: Morbius**, expect a rogues'

gallery of Gallifrey's most evil, diabolical and mischievous villains all taking to the stage. Their stories are wildly different, showcasing some of Big Finish's most wonderful writers. And behind it all, something massive is brewing..." **VORTEX**

DARK GALLIFREY MORBIUS | PART ONE



- RELEASED: APRIL 2024
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ANNIVERSARIES – SPECIAL

I'm very excited for the 40th anniversary Sixth Doctor special *The Quin Dilemma* and quite enjoyed the first part of the Seventh Doctor's *The Last Day* – very intriguing. It all has me realising though that the Fourth Doctor's 50th anniversary is coming in August 2025 and I'm really hoping you guys release something awesome for it. Maybe another face-off with Davros for the Fourth Doctor, and Leela (personal favourite companion, she's so funny) has never met Davros, which could be fun to play with. Maybe even bringing back Jago. I really miss **Jago & Litefoot**.

JAMES FANTASTIC

Nick: *My understanding, James, is that Tom's 50th anniversary in the role of the Doctor is December 2024 because the first episode of Robot aired in the UK on 28th December 1974 — which may give you a clue to the fact that we have been discussing anniversaries!*

THE EIGHTH OF MARCH

I was recently going through your What's New listings for March 2024 and realised that there isn't a new **The Eighth of March** release coming this year. This is a little disappointing. Has it just not been announced yet?

RICK RUSSELL

Nick: *There are no plans for any more **The Eighth of March** releases, Rick, but there's plenty of other exciting stuff coming out in March.*

GO WESTMAAS!

It was such a joy to hear Conrad Westmaas back as C'rizz after 17 years in **Sontarans vs Rutans: The Battle of Giant's Causeway**. Conrad still sounds exactly the same as he did way back in the 2000s when C'rizz was first introduced. It was like he had never been away, it's insane! I hope there is more in the pipeline for that TARDIS team in the future. I always get so nostalgic for those early

days of Eighth Doctor audios!

BENJAMIN CALLINICOS

Nick: *Well you know, Benjamin, our Conrad is still a young-ish man! It was so great to have him back. He's one of my favourite humans. I'd love to see him return again.*

NEW AVENGERS?

I notice that there are no new **The Avengers** box sets listed on the Big Finish website. Has this series now been concluded or are further releases planned? I am very much enjoying the Mrs Peel and Tara King sets, and a Cathy Gale set with the fantastic Beth Chalmers would be very well received!

JACK BOULTON

Nick: *There are currently no plans for any further **The Avengers** releases but I certainly wouldn't rule out a return for Steed and co., Jack.* **VORTEX**



Above (l-r), Conrad Westmaas and India Fisher



TIME WARRIORS

THE WAR DOCTOR JOINS THE CONCLUSION OF THE SONTARANS vs RUTANS MINI-SERIES...

AFTER SKIRMISHES with the Eighth, Third and Sixth Doctors, the **Sontarans vs Rutans** series is coming to an end with April's release *In Name Only* written by John Dorney.

This time, the War Doctor (played by Jonathon Carley) is the Time Lord who encounters the warring species – and in the Time War too.

Producer David Richardson says: “We’re into the Time War and there’s not a Dalek in sight as the Sontarans and Rutans are the focus of hostilities – and the Time Lords are about to make a move they will regret. Hold on tight, we’re into the endgame...”

John tells *Vortex*: “This is effectively the story that ties everything in the mini-series together, but at the same time it will work as a

standalone adventure if it’s the first one you’ve listened to.

“There are obviously a lot of Sontarans on the edge of the Time War and that’s what I wanted to deal with in this adventure. It’s weird, though, as this isn’t really a Time War story as such because you’re dealing with people who aren’t involved in the Time War, but it involves the War Doctor and is set around the fringes.

“It’s a hard one to describe because it follows on from the previous three other stories and the precise angle it takes is interesting – it’s so hard to talk about without giving anything away! It starts with the Rutans attacking the Time Lords and the consequences of that.

The Doctor is concerned with this due to connections with the past,

and it all begins to blend together with what’s come before.

“It’s the first War Doctor script I’ve written in quite a while – the last one was *Legion of the Lost* for John Hurt in **The War Doctor: Infernal Devices**. I’ve had a few ideas banked away ready for the Time War. It’s such an interesting area to play in because it has a very specific backdrop. But we still want it to feel like **Doctor Who** and this story is very specifically that. It was good fun to write for Jonathon Carley.”

JONATHAN WAS delighted to feature in this mini-series portraying the War Doctor once again. He tells *Vortex*: “It’s so funny that in all these years we’ve heard so much about the Sontaran/Rutan war but never gone into it in depth. It begs the question why it’s never been done before. And now here we are.

“But SONTARANS! They were on my bucket list of **Doctor Who**



Above (l-r): John Banks, Debbie Korley, Dan Starkey and Jonathon Carley

WE'VE GOT OUTRIGHT VILLAINS, DELUDED WARRIORS AND SOME WHO EVEN TAKE THE CONCEPT OF THEIR HONOUR SERIOUSLY...

DAN STARKEY

monsters I've wanted to face, but I wasn't sure if it could ever happen as they were forbidden from the Time War. There have been exceptions but you can't do that all the time. So to be asked to do this story was a real punch the air moment! And, pushing my luck, I did ask if I could also do a little cameo as a Sontaran and thankfully David and director Ken Bentley obliged, so listen out for that.

"There's something brilliantly tactile about the Sontarans. They're physical, they're connected. They walk and talk and speak and blink in a way that Daleks and Cybemen can't. They aren't programmed as such. And despite being clones they are individuals with their own experiences but with a shared fixation. What this story does is really push the flexibility of that and goes to some really interesting places."

FEATURING ONCE again as a variety of Sontarans is Dan Starkey, who's enjoyed taking part in all four instalments of this mini-series. He says:

"**Sontarans vs Rutans** is a great set of stories that takes the Sontaran-Rutan conflict and pulls it in some great directions. Lizzie Hopley can be justifiably proud of writing the scene in *The Battle of the Giant's Causeway* with a Roman Sontaran in the bath. Such a jarring, disturbing and comical set of images! We've got an epic sweep of locations from Ireland in Antiquity, alien jungle and deep space opera, so there's something for everyone! "As ever, for a clone race, the sheer

range and variety of Sontarans I've played keeps me on my toes. We've got outright villains, deluded warriors and some who even take the concept of their honour seriously in a way we pitiful humans would recognise! It's great to still be keeping the flame alive in this Sontaran jubilee year, even if the Rutan host are determined to crash the party."

Dan adds: "*In Name Only* is the culmination of the series, where some mind-bending sci-fi concepts dovetail with wartime espionage in an action-packed climax. Who are the heroes and who are the villains? It will be a good listen."

Jonathon concludes: "It was just as delightful being in the room with the wonderful Dan who's been so committed to these creatures over the years. His energy is brilliant and the detail with which he has studied them is admirable.

"Plus Christopher Ryan of *The Young Ones* fame is an icon in his own right who gave such a stellar performance in the television episode *The Sontaran Stratagem*. It gave me chills hearing him in studio but in real life he is the gentlest man. Then we have John Banks who is playing a very special Sontaran but I can't say any more about that.

"Of course with this being the final episode in the arc, I did have the challenge of wrapping everything up. Which is easier said than done given that the previous episodes feature different Doctors!" **VORTEX**

**SONTARANS VS RUTANS
IN NAME ONLY**



■ RELEASED: APRIL 2024
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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THE STAR COPS ARE BACK AS THEY CONTINUE TO TRY AND CRACK THE OVERARCHING MYSTERY IN THEIR LATEST CASE...

BAD BLOOD

BLOOD MOON is a series of six monthly adventures which began in January (see December 2023's *Vortex* for previews of the first three episodes) where the Star Cops have been investigating a mystery that runs very deep.

Script editor Andrew Smith says: "This run of stories features a revelation that really knocks one of the Star Cops backwards – but it's very difficult to say anything about more without spoiling the episodes that follow! However, the consequences are still being felt by the time we get to April's release, *A Cage of Sky*."

"This is a cracking episode from writer James Swallow who's a real **Star Cops** fan. He approached me a while ago saying he'd love to write for the series, and when I eventually managed to get him onboard, he really hit the jackpot!"

James says: "It's no exaggeration to say **Star Cops** is one of my all-time favourite

bits of science fiction television. I even own a couple of the original costumes from the show including Paul Theroux's ISPF jumpsuit! So yes, you could say I am a big fan. It lands right in the middle of a very particular Venn diagram of my interests – near-future science fiction, space exploration, police drama, great writing, distinctive characters and a certain snarky kind of Britishness. I watched the show in its original airing on the BBC back in the late 1980s and I always felt it could have run and run – so having **Big Finish** revive it on audio feels like a validation.

"For me, this was a moment to tick off a box on my writer's bucket list; getting to do a **Star Cops** story was, for a long time, a vain hope! I recall that years before **Big Finish** got the rights to do these audios, I kept telling producer Nicholas Briggs they ought to do it (and hire me to write one, of course!). And when that actually came to pass

I wasted no time in putting myself forward. While the *Blood Moon* series was being developed, I was luckily in the right place at the right time as Andrew was gathering writers so my persistence and patience paid off.

"I was given a pretty free hand to develop my own storyline. *A Cage of Sky* is the fourth episode in the *Blood Moon* arc and I knew I had to build on the narrative set up in episodes one to three. I also wanted to write a lunar-centric investigative story for Nathan, Kenzy and the other characters. I had the idea of a prison on the Moon – cops and convicts immediately gives you spurs for action and drama – and I threaded the two elements together."

Jim particularly enjoyed working on a series with an ongoing storyline.

He explains: "On something like this with a serial narrative threaded through the whole arc it really feels like a shared project where we all have input.

I worked closely with my colleague Una McCormack who wrote *Troubled Waters*, the episode before mine, to make sure our stories dovetailed. Una and I have previously written together on tie-in series like *Star Trek* so we have a good working relationship. It's been great collaborating with a team of such talented writers. Everyone wanted to bring their best to the project and I think it really elevates the overall work."

LONDON ZONE by Andrew Smith follows in May. Andrew says: "I think *London Zone* is my favourite *Star Cops* script that I've written. It's definitely got the best opening scene – there's a bit of

humour in it and I'm really looking forward to hearing it in the recording where the actors have fun with it as well. As you might tell from the title, the adventure is largely set in a London of the future so we learn a little bit more about the society of the UK in the time of the *Star Cops*, and that was interesting to play around with.

"Devis is in his old stomping ground, his former beat in Brixton, which I relate to because Brixton was my first policing beat in London. Devis is tracking somebody down – and doing it in a very Devis-like manner.

"Along the way, we come across a character called Roy Chubb which is a nod to *Star Cops* creator Chris Boucher and his character Chub from the *Doctor Who* TV serial *The Robots of Death*. Chubb's a bureaucrat, a civil servant whom the *Star Cops* go to for some assistance. The stakes are very high with emotional punches in there as well.

"We've also got Rosa Coduri playing the part of Sophie. She's so good. Sophie was a character I thought I knew really well and then Rosa came along and brought something else to it. She's absolutely spot on as Sophie. She's been a presence throughout all these *Blood Moon* episodes and I look forward to seeing the reaction to her. And there's a cliffhanger at the end of *London Zone* leading directly into episode six and the last episode of *Blood Moon*."

THE SERIES concludes in June with *Devis* by Roland Moore, and the writer was delighted to craft the sixth and final episode of the *Blood Moon* hexalogy. Andrew adds: "My episode and Roland's



Above: Philip Olivier

JUST WHAT HAS BEEN GOING ON WITH THOSE OMINOUS MONOLOGUES FROM THE STAR COPS AT THE START OF EACH EPISODE?

ANDREW SMITH

effectively form a two-part finale. Roland wraps everything up really well, in a very exciting and satisfying way. We have worked on different series together so many times now and paired up on things like *Survivors*, *UNIT*, *Transference* and *Star Cops*.

"Big Finish listeners are going to love what Roland has done for the finale. And he's also going to reveal something that's been a dramatic tease throughout *Blood Moon* – just what has been going on with those ominous monologues from the *Star Cops* at the start of each episode? Listeners are about to find out."

Roland tells *Vortex*: "I'm always pleased to be asked to write a series finale but when I read the plan for this series and knew where the arc of

the story ended, I was thrilled. *Devis* leaves us with lasting repercussions – I'm hoping it will surprise people.

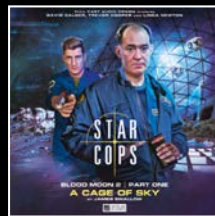
"Andrew told me the arc for the series *Blood Moon* so I knew the rough plan for each of the six episodes of the story. He's very inventive but he gives you just enough to spur your imagination without tying you into pages of pre-determined story. So there were probably about four lines on what he wanted to happen in the final episode – and then it was up to me to expand and work out how to hit those beats.

"The plot is a tricky one to sum up without giving too much away. It's the final confrontation as Devis tracks down the villain behind the events of *Blood Moon* – and it has tragic consequences that will change the regular characters forever."


The story title gives away the fact that Devis is front and centre in this tale! Roland says: "Devis is always great fun to write for. A little bit like Gene Hunt in space. On several occasions I found myself conferring with Andrew and asking, 'Can I have him say this?' because he's a character who is unreconstructed in a lot of ways (although he tries his best). With this episode though, his – shall we say, involvement – is slightly different to other Devis appearances..."

"I loved the structure of the episode – and the twists and turns in it. And it's a small point but I enjoyed titling it *Devis* as an homage to creator Chris Boucher's *Blake* – the last episode of *Blake's 7*. I think *Devis* has a similar finality to it..." **VORTEX**

STAR COPS: BLOOD MOON 2 A CAGE OF SKY



■ RELEASED: APRIL 2024
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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SPOILER WARNING!



The PATERNOSTER Gang

REGULAR VISITORS to the trio who live in Victorian London will know that things aren't quite right in Paternoster Row. In **The Paternoster Gang**

Trespassers 1: Rogues Gallery

which was released last year, we discovered something unusual happening with Madame Vastra (Neve McIntosh), Jenny Flint (Catrin Stewart) and Strax (Dan Starkey). And now we're about to discover more with the release of the next box set in the *Trespassers* series, *The Casebook of Paternoster Row*.

Script editor Matt Fitton says: "In this box set we follow up from the revelation that *Rogues Gallery* ended on where we discover that Jenny

might not be Jenny at all... Madame Vastra has worked out that they're up against some kind of shapeshifting enemy, without realising the enemy's already in the house.

"Vastra is flicking through old case files. There's an homage to the Sherlock Holmes style by having her go through past cases, but also keeping the current narrative alive to frame the whole set. And we'll start to progress towards an answer as to who the actual 'trespasser' of the series title is."

Anne of a Thousand Light Years by James Kettle opens the set.

Producer David Richardson says: "This is a cracking adventure about a titled family with a dark secret. And Tom Baker is in it as

the Fourth Doctor too! Quite how he weaves into the life of Madame Vastra is a closely guarded secret, but Neve was absolutely thrilled to bits to have scenes with Tom."

Matt adds: "We've got a bucolic setting with a love story between the Lady of the house and a humble groundsman. It's essentially got all of the ingredients of an Anthony Trollope novel, which Jenny is reading voraciously, all the way through. When I read it for the second, third and fourth time, I was still laughing out loud at certain lines in it, which is always a good sign!"

James says: "With any of **Doctor Who's** returning characters – and this goes for companions as much

as for villains or monsters – when you create a story you're getting a chance to play in a toy box that's been carefully assembled by another writer. You can play with Terry Nation's toys or Robert Holmes's – or in this case Steven Moffat's. And because all these are robust, multifaceted things you quickly get excited by the possibilities of the stuff you can do with them. But while you're trying to do something new with the toys, you're also treating them with respect, and doing something that's either sympathetic to the creator's original vision or subversive of it in a way that feels like a worthwhile expansion of the Whoniverse.

"Like more than one or two script editors from the classic series, I absolutely love Victorian novels. They've been so influential on defining what we think of as quintessentially **Who**. The mix of melodrama, intelligence and humour has become part of **Doctor Who**'s DNA. And Anthony Trollope is one of my fixations. He wrote tons of books, and like John Carpenter movies

THE SECOND adventure, *Pater Noster*, marks the return of a very familiar name to Big Finish listeners. David reveals: "Gary Russell is back! Everyone at Big Finish owes Gary a huge debt

of gratitude for his vast input into the early years of Big Finish and we were thrilled to bits to tempt him back to write a script for **The Paternoster Gang**. Expect monsters in dark tunnels and a mystery from the dawn of time."



Above (l-r): Dan Starkey, Neve McIntosh and Catrin Stewart
Below: Gareth Armstrong

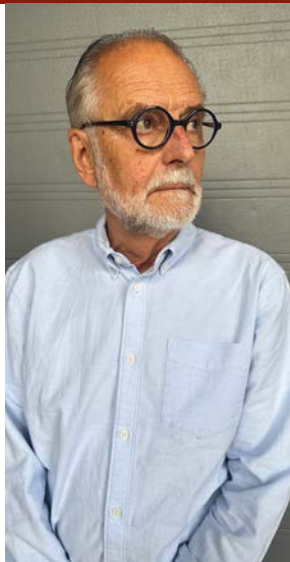
GARY RUSSELL IS BACK! EVERYONE AT BIG FINISH OWES GARY A HUGE DEBT OF GRATITUDE...

DAVID RICHARDSON

or Paul McCartney albums, even the ones that aren't that great have at least one utterly brilliant bit."

James says of his brief: "Matt asked me if the range interested me – not knowing about my incessant Victorian novel reading – and I immediately pitched a kind of warped version of a Trollope romance (the closest model is a book called *Lady Anna*). Taking the tropes of that rural Victorian story, all anxieties, frustrated yearnings and agonising about social status, and crashing it into a brightly coloured sci-fi story about blobby aliens on a mission to perpetuate themselves seemed a really fun idea!

"It's a classic tale of love, hate, reproductive cycles and horse manure."



Matt tells *Vortex*: "Working with Gary was a delight. He's so important in the history of Big Finish, a godfather figure, so to offer him a job felt slightly surreal! "But it was a really fun and easy process working with Gary. He knows **Doctor Who** inside out, knows what to do with a **Doctor Who** story, and so throwing him into the new series world was just a joy."

Gary says: "I thought this would be an interesting challenge because the Gang were not characters I knew particularly well, other than seeing them on television. And it was a very good experience. I found Jenny and Strax easy and very enjoyable to write for. They've got very distinct idioms

and humour, and I really liked being able to highlight the fun side of them.

"And Madame Vastra is just brilliant. She's an amazing creation and I love her because she's (a) Silurian, (b) a female Silurian, and (c) she's kick ass! So I had three strong characters to play with, and all I had to do was come up with an interesting Victorian story!

"I thought, 'Oh... sewers, monster in the sewers, children being eaten. Sounds perfect!' And off it went for approval. I think it's one of the quickest things I've ever written because it flowed so easily, and the back and forth with Matt made it an awful lot of fun. There was a lot of throwing creative ideas around, which was great.

"The notion of people living in the sewers is real. There used to be a lot of people who dropped



Above: Yasmin Mwanza

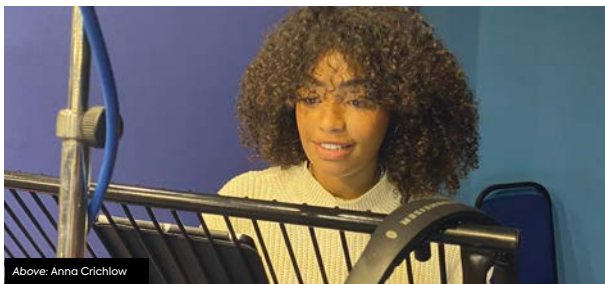
out of society and chose to live down by the entrances to the sewers. There were bricks there, which were raised up slightly, so they weren't sitting in the water.

"They built little townships. You would get two or three families come together. And they were very proprietorial about it and kept people away, saying 'No, this is our sewer!'"

THE GENTLEMEN *Thieves* concludes this box set, and David explains: "Lauren Mooney and Stewart Pringle are two of my favourite writers at Big Finish, and this dazzlingly witty

IT'S FAIR TO SAY WE HAVE A PREOCCUPATION WITH HORROR AND THE GOTHIC...

LAUREN MOONEY



Above: Anna Crichtow

yarn about an upper-class thief (with a difference) is full of great set pieces and glorious one-liners."

Matt adds: "Lauren and Stewart are very creative and they've written many stories for the Eighth and Ninth Doctor Adventures ranges. It was lovely to be able to give them the chance to let rip with **The Paternoster Gang**, where you can go a bit bigger, a bit crazier – and they really play this cloning idea.

"In *The Gentlemen Thieves*, there's a pastiche element again with a bit of Raffles. It has a lovely tone to it, there's something about it that feels quite *Jeeves and Wooster*. And it gives us a chance to finish the box set on another shocking moment..."

Stewart says: "It was so exciting to be asked to join *The Paternoster Gang* on an adventure! We're such big fans of Victoriana, Lauren and I bonded over the amazing Victorian sketch group 'The Penny Dreadfuls' so we've always felt a real affinity for that period. The TV episode

The Crimson Horror is a big fave of ours in terms of NuWho. The Gang have such distinct personalities, played by phenomenal actors."

Lauren adds: "It's fair to say we have a preoccupation with horror and the gothic, and of course this is set in a period brimming with those things.

"It feels like there are two strands of Victoriana: the one that relishes in it being a very dirty, filthy, miserable time, riven with child poverty, brutal murders and syphilis... But then of course there's this whole other, very separate strand of Victoriana that's more boys' own adventures, cricket and afternoon tea on the lawn.

"It's a dichotomy the Victorians created themselves, I guess, by trying to ignore all the poverty and worry about covering up their piano legs

instead! But the point is, this is a story that's firmly set in the latter camp – we've put all the horror back in the box and written something, frankly, Very Silly Indeed!" **VORTEX**

**THE PATERNOSTER GANG
TRESPASSERS 2: THE CASEBOOK
OF PATERNOSTER ROW**



■ RELEASED: APRIL 2024
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX



ISSUE 181
MARCH 2024
BIG FOR THE LOVE
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The PATERNOSTER Gang

TRESPASSERS 2
THINGS AREN'T QUITE RIGHT
IN PATERNOSTER ROW...

SONTARANS VS RUTANS

IN NAME ONLY

THE WAR DOCTOR JOINS THE CONCLUSION OF
THE SONTARANS VS RUTANS MINI-SERIES!

