### THE **BIG FINISH** MAGAZINE



### THE SEVENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES

# THE CLOCK IS TICKING FOR THE SEVENTH DOCTOR...

THE FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES

# METAMORPHOSIS

"IT'S ONE OF THE MOST WONDERFUL, GORGEOUS THINGS I'VE EVER READ. AND IT'S GOT A WOMBAT IN IT..."



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# THE WAR DOCTOR RISES

DID YOU really think the days of the War Doctor were over when Big Finish announced the end of The War Doctor Begins? Jonathon Carley steps into Sir John Hurt's gaiters once more, as his adventures continue in The War Doctor Rises.

Producer David Richardson says: "The younger War Doctor has now established himself and so we're heading into a different territory for this era. For **The War Doctor Rises**, I wanted the writers to take the lead – each box set will be one writer's vision where they give their own take on the War Doctor and the Time War.

"Each volume will feel like a vast sweeping movie for audio with richly developed characters and deeply imaginative worlds. There are no boundaries on creativity, no pressure to tie up a story within an hour. We've recorded two of them so far and they are fantastic."

Jonathon tells Vortex: "This is the next chapter! **The War Doctor Begins** is about the character finding himself and coming to terms with the choices he's made, which has been a fascinating story to explore – the identity crisis he's had. In **The War Doctor Rises** he has a harder edge because he's learned to let go of that past identity, and now he's on a mission to deliver what he set out to do." VORTEX

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# EDITORIAL

WHEN I was a wee boy, I remember discovering Blake's 7 on television. It wasn't quite as much fun as Doctor Who, but it had a very cool spaceship and two brilliant supercomputers!

I started watching Series C (as it's technically called) back in 1980 when I was nearly six-years-old, and became hooked on the adventures of the *Liberator* crew, battling each week against Servalan and her Federation cohorts (in their cool, but not as cool as *Liberator*, pursuit ships).

I didn't actually understand why the series was called **Blake's 7**, as I hadn't seen any episode with Roj Blake in them yet, but a friend at school told me he had curly hair and was the leader. So, when Tarrant appeared, I just assumed he was the chief but didn't want to be in charge any more.

I loved Steven Pacey's performance – a lot of dry wit, plenty of charm for the ladies, capable of handling himself in a fight – and he had a fantastic space gun. Tarrant was actually my favourite member of the crew.

So it's really exciting that next month Big Finish is releasing a box set all about Tarrant in his youth – just before *Liberator* and then after joining the crew. It's ticking all my boxes!

We also build up to the events of the **Doctor Who** *TV Movie* this month as we reach the end of the Seventh Doctor's life in *The Last Day* – *Part Two*. The first six episodes in *The Last Day* – *Part One* were epic in their scale and imagination, and anyone who thinks they know where the story will actually go is in for a great surprise! **VORTEX** 

The clock is ticking for the Seventh Doctor...

# SAVING THE BEST TILL LAST

THE UNIVERSE is in chaos. Friends and companions of the Seventh Doctor find their worlds are colliding. Ace is President of Earth (or is she?). Ace saves the Master. Bernice and Melanie have been thrown together. Something is wrong with Hex and Sally – and Lysandra. Hex and Sally's daughter Cassie faces an impossible choice...

And to make matters worse, some of the Doctor's old enemies including Kane, the Sontarans, Mother Finsey and Garundel are uniting, whilst the citizens of the Dark Universe are rising.

As the Seventh Doctor tries to put his feet up and enjoy some kind of retirement, things are not looking good. This month we return to the events of *The Last Day* written by Matt Fitton and Guy Adams, with *Part Two* of the 12-episode epic. Producer Emma Haigh says: "We pick up where we left off in *The Last Day – Part One*, weaving our way between the worlds of good and evil, dark and light, with our myriad cast of characters. Our companions are tested to their limits and need to work together more than ever.

"Matt and Guy have created a vividly colourful, complex and layered world and it's been so exciting to journey through it. I particularly enjoy hearing Cassie grow in this set, working with her parents and adjusting very well to the changing world around her."

So where are we as we return to the adventure? Matt explains: "It's very

Above (I–r): Bonnie Langfor Sylvester McCoy and Lisa Bowerman

much the natural progression of the Seventh Doctor's journey. As he ages, he sees there's a lot still to fix. There's much to do, so much danger to fight.

"He thinks, 'Is there a way to just get everything right, once and for all, so I can rest, sit back and be certain I've done my best?'

"So it's about him trying to reach that position. He feels older. He knows that his time is limited –he's only got so many days in his life. Being the Time Lord he is, he wants to know if there's a way that he can actually make a difference so he can leave the universe with a clear conscience."

"Things were set in motion, a long time ago. We join Ace again on a journey that started on television and we've progressed that to the logical end of her education and her time with the Doctor. We also look at

### IN OUR CULTURE OF FANDOM THE SEVENTH DOCTOR WAS THE FIRST ONE THAT REALLY ACCRETED THE WEIGHT OF OTHER MEDIA.

everything she's learned along the way, and afterwards too. This is a long time after they first met – both have learned a lot of things about the universe and about each other. **GUY BELIEVES** that the life of the Seventh Doctor should be celebrated for its trailblazing nature established more than 30 years ago with the original novels, and subsequently carried on and further developed by Big Finish. He says: "I think it's interesting for us as writers, and I think as fans too, that in our culture of fandom the Seventh Doctor was the first one that really accreted the weight of other media.

"For a **Doctor Who** fan of a certain age, Sylvester McCoy was the current Doctor for almost a decade, as after the TV show came to an end we read about him in book after book after book in *The New Adventures*. So many of us did, every month.

"Then there were the BBC Books, and then along came Big Finish which gave the actors

### DOCTOR WHO The last day 2

the chance to do more than they were able to fit in on TV.

"There was this sudden change in the cultural weight of the Seventh Doctor that lingered, expanded, grew and became sort of grown up. Well, it felt terribly grown up but of course actually it's the sort of grown up of the university common room!

"Now that we're all properly ancient, we can look back on *The* 

New Adventures and see the flavour of that storytelling is very much of the time – extremely political and angstridden 20-year-olds. That's not to say anything negative though, because they were fantastic reads at the time.

"Because of Big Finish, it now feels almost a given for every single Doctor to have existed for centuries, with a whole cast of people who really aged in the fictional universe – and



it's grown and grown and grown.'

Matt agrees: "Yes, there was a counter-culture. Controversialist. And now, knowing the number of lives the Doctor has had, at this point he is kind of in his adolescence, railing against what he should be doing and what everyone tells him should be up to. He thinks, 'I can do what I want – I know the right way and how to do it."

Guy points out: "And that is certainly the attitude of someone that spent some time in media studies. I absolutely loved *The New Adventures*. They were essential to me."

Natt concurs: "I followed The New Adventures, The Missing Adventures and then the BBC Books with the Eighth Doctor and the Past Doctor Adventures.

"I was really happy to actually have the chance to be able to write for great previous characters and have a little play with them all these years later."

### IN KNOWING THE NUMBER OF LIVES THE DOCTOR HAS HAD, AT THIS POINT HE IS KIND OF IN HIS ADOLESCENCE...

MATT FITTON

THE WRITERS admit that it's hard to explain what happens in this second set - which features appearances from companions created for *The New Adventures* in adjudicators Roz Forrester and Chris Cwej - without giving anything away. Guy tells *Vortex: "Part Two* solves all the problems of *Part One.* It's similar to the first set but things get worse."

Matt agrees: "Yes, like Part One with more death and dying! It's where the price is paid for everything that's gone before. We're tying together all the strands of the Seventh Doctor's life – the books are in there and Big Finish audios are in there from different ranges...

"So much of it can't be tied together,



anyway. I mean, look at Ace popping up in *The Power of the Doctor* – but we do kind of touch on that, which I've done before with the multiple fates of Ace."

Guy continues: "We<sup>7</sup>re embracing that, making sure that things have a sense of reality and stake because you could just decide, 'Oh, that's the Acc of the comics. That's the Ace from the books. That's the Ace of the audios.' Or, you can say that the universe genuinely is a thing that is constantly shifting. This singular universe is all about potentials and changes, and the weight of human experience is what makes something feel important, not a spreadsheet, not a chart, not a Wikipedia entry that tries to collate data.

"Human lives are not data, they're about emotions, experience and pain."

Matt concurs: "Yes, what you go through on a given day determines your emotions."

Guy adds: "That's the weight of this story and I think that is what's behind



all the best **Doctor Who** stories. The good stories are all about emotions."

**VORTEX ASKS** the writers what their personal highlights of working on this set were? Guy replies: "I had lots, and it was mainly character-based stuff. During the writing, I came to realise how little I'd written for the Master over the years. I've done quite a bit for the War Master before, which is always a joy because you're getting to write for the legendary Sir Derek Jacobi, but I hadn't written a proper Doctor/Master love story..."

Matt adds: "Yes, I very much enjoyed reading those. When Geoffrey was recording, I had a call from producer Emma as Geoffrey was asking about Mother. I then realised, of course he's never interacted with her – he doesn't know her, so I had to explain the whole storyline to him."

Guy continues: "Ha! His old girlfriend. The old girlfriend who



## HE'S A PROPER CLOWN. CLOWNS SHOULD BE VERY COMFORTABLE IN THE SHADOWS...

tried to shoot you, you terrible man! That relationship was

fantastic – I really enjoyed that one." And Matt says: "For me, my real highlight was getting to write for Sally and Hex again. I absolutely loved writing for them in **The Monthly Adventures** with the 'black and white TARDIS' arc and their subsequent stories in releases such as *Black and White, Afterlife* etc.

"During the course of writing this, I was also getting to find out who their daughter Cassie is. The more that I wrote for her, the more real she became. I was lucky enough to go into the studio as well where I got to meet the brilliant Lizzie Annis who is playing her. She is just great – exactly what I'd hoped for and so much more. "Hearing it all come together is an absolute joy. I love listening to Sylvester – he absolutely got it. He understood completely what we were doing with this story – well, at least he did on the day when I was there!"

**GUY WAS** particularly delighted to have written for the Seventh Doctor, giving Sylvester something he would enjoy working with. He concludes: "I think Sylvester responds really well to politics – I don't struggle to give Sylvester the sort of lines that might be shouted on the picket line somewhere. I think he enjoys that and the sparkle certainly appears, but I also think Sylvester likes darkness. He enjoys complexity of character Above (I-r): Bonnie Langford and Sylvester McCov

and he's a proper clown. Clowns should be very comfortable in the shadows and I think that's Sylvester to a 'T'. I always want to be prancing through cobwebs and tombs, so that's something we both have in common. It's fun!" YONTEX

### THE SEVENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES The last day: part two



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## TORCHWOOD ONE BEFORE THE FALL



TORCHWOOD ONE arrived at Big Finish in January 2017, with Tracy-Ann Oberman (Yvonne Hartman) and Gareth David-Lloyd (Ianto Jones) reprising their television roles, joined by Tim Bentinck playing Tommy Piece, the Head of Acquisitions.

The series, overseen by producer James Goss, is set in the months before the arrival of the Doctor and Rose. *Before the Fall* introduces Rachel Allan and tells the story of her career with the organisation in three adventures: *New Girl* by Joseph Lidster, *Through the Ruins* by Jenny T Colgan and *Uprising* by Matt Fitton.

James reveals: "Torchwood One happened by happy accident. When Tracy-Ann came in to the studio to record her first Torchwood, we were all nervous! To explain, we were nervous of how Tracy-Ann was going to feel about returning to play Yvonne

### I TREATED IT AS IF IT WAS A TV SERIES SPIN-OFF THAT WAS HAPPENING AT THE TIME.

### Hartman – and not in a **Doctor Who** release but a **Torchwood** one.

"But then Tracy-Ann arrived, she was of course marvellous, and she made us fall in love with Yvonne even more than ever before.

"And so, after a long and joyous day, writer Joe, director Barnaby Edwards and I sat (along with a crocodile bag containing Tracy-Ann's spare high heels...) at a table in the Castle pub and agreed, 'We just have to do more with her'.

"Out of which came **Torchwood One**. Joe, who loves dates, worked out that *Before the Fall* could feature Ianto which immediately made the idea sizzle. Those two? Playing off against each other? Wow! A few weeks later he presented us with a fully-fleshed out document of everyone who worked at Torchwood One – a pitchperfect period piece that was Spooks Fight Aliens! And somewhere in the mix was a character called Tommy.

"And that's how we ended up with **Torchwood One**: Before the Fall. The idea that Yvonne accidentally hires her nemesis, gets hounded out of Torchwood and then has to fight her way back in."

Joe says: "It really was very exciting to help launch a new range like this. I treated it as if it was a TV series spin-off that was happening at the time. And I wrote the first episode with that very much in mind. It's set in the London of 2005/2006 so there are mentions of General Asquith and Bad Wolf. The idea – in my mind anyway – is that you should listen to it alongside watching **Torchwood** series one and two, ending with the TV episode *Doomsday*.

"It was a real joy working with James, Matt and all the writers to set up this whole new world. The storyline I was given wasn't easy – basically Yvonne in the first episode has to be hoodwinked – but I think this showed that the series was never going to be obvious. *New Girl* was just a total joy to write because I adore the characters – both Yvonne and Ianto but also all the new ones we created."

James adds: "Before the Fall is a very special release. It is the first of the five **Torchwood One** box sets [*I Hate Mondays* is out this month] and it also gave us the unbeatable trio of Yvonne, Ianto and Tommy. And it's *nuts* after all these years to think that the three of them never shared a second on TV together." **VORTE** 

### TORCHWOOD ONE Before the fall



THE DOCTOR, HARRY AND NAOMI ARE Set to face a couple of familiar FOES — OH, and wombats!

# FOURTH DIMENSION

FOES OLD and new await the Fourth Doctor in three fantastic adventures in the next box set of tales starring Tom Baker. The Fourth Doctor Adventures: Metamorphosis takes the Doctor and his companions, Surgeon-Lieutenant Harry Sullivan (Christopher Naylor) and UNIT secretary Naomi Cross (Eleanor Crooks), to the recent past and the far future, where they are caught in a deadly game.

Recently defeated on television by the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Doctors in **Doctor Who**'s 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary specials, the Toymaker is resurrected on audio played by Annette Badland. And Geoffrey Beevers returns to the role of the Master to face the Fourth Doctor for the first time since 2015's **The Fourth Doctor Adventures**: *Death Match*.

More big name guest stars feature too with casts including Lydia West (It's a Sin, Years and Years) and Olivier Award winner, Mark Gatiss (Sherlock, Dracula) in the three adventures: Matryoshka by Aurora Fearnley, The Caged Assassin by Matthew Sweet and Metamorphosis by Lisa McMullin.

Producer David Richardson tells Vortex: "It's strange to think that Jodie Whittaker was between her first and second seasons when we started planning Matryoshka – we were working that far ahead. We could not have known that five years later, a few months before the release of our story, that the Toymaker would be back on our TV screens in the dazzling *The Giggle*. Thankfully, our adventure doesn't contradict that brilliant episode. Though even if it did, we now know that the Toymaker has made a jigsaw puzzle out of the Doctor's life!

"How could it take us 13 seasons to bring in the fantastic Matthew to write a Fourth Doctor script? He's a match made in heaven. And, scoop of scoops, we have Mark – an actor who I believe is one of the finest of his generation – playing



Dante Gabriel Rossetti. It's a bonkers tale, and it's absolutely beautiful.

"The Geoffrey Beevers Master has faced off against the Fourth Doctor before at Big Finish but here he gets to meet Harry and Naomi too. I suggested Lydia as our guest star for this and executive producer Nicholas Briggs quickly agreed – and we were thrilled when she said yes. She recorded with us after the broadcast of Years and Years and just a few days before starting work on *It's a Sin.*"

MATRYOSHKA BY Aurora Fearnley opens the set. When a strange force drags the TARDIS to Earth, it's clear that the Doctor, Harry and Naomi are up against an incredibly powerful being. And when they encounter Lord Pearson, inventor of games and toys, searching for his vanished daughter... it becomes clear exactly who that being might be. Hide and seek is one of the simplest games devised by man... but in the hands of the Toymaker... it may also become the deadliest.

Script editor John Dorney says: "A matryoshka is the correct name for a Russian nesting doll, often incorrectly termed the babushka. That kind



of gives you some indication of the layers that happen within this story.

"This is from a new writer to us, Aurora, who also directs short films and is on the way up – I don't know if we'll be able to get her back in the future!

> **"AURORA PITCHED** an initial idea and we realised it was a good fit for the Toymaker. We felt it would be a great idea to bring him back – and now it seems incredibly topical which

THERE AREN'T MANY ESTABLISHED FEMALE SCI-FI WRITERS FOR FILM IN THE UK SO I IMAGINE THAT MADE ME STAND OUT. AURORA FEARNLEY

it wasn't when we started planning for it back in 2018 or 2019.

"But it actually ties in well with the TV series. Some people have asked how this fit with the continuity of *The Giggle* because the Toymaker told the Doctor it was their second encounter. But back when it was planned, five or so years ago, we'd decided to do 'a thing' with the script which was pretty tiny, but it absolutely manages to fit in with *The Giggle* without actually trying!" *Vortex* asks Aurora how she came to write for Big Finish?

She explains: "I made a wild sci-fi short film called *Pulsar* starring Jessie Buckley and David Gyasi. It was released online to over two million views and drew a lot of attention and opportunity. There aren't many established female sci-fi writers for film in the UK so I imagine that made me stand out.

"John was incredibly open to ideas, and I had three or four competing concepts before we landed on one that fitted so well for **The Fourth Doctor Adventures**. The ones left unused still play on my mind, though I'm sure script and was intrigued from the outset by the idea of Russian dolls and changing personalities. The Toymaker is quite fascinating – complex, unpleasant, seductive!"

Director Jamie Anderson agrees: "Some of the Doctor's enemies have an I'm smarter than you' vibe about them and it's always fun to beat villains who really think a lot of themselves! I'm very glad that the Doctor has got another chance to come up against the naughty Toymaker."

Aurora was delighted to write for an iconic Doctor in Tom Baker. "It's a privilege to write for Tom



another Doctor has already roamed those worlds without me by now!

"This story treads into the genre of gothic horror while still keeping a playful tone. We find the Doctor playing detective in a manor house of a missing child, but this mystery conceals something darker at work."

Actor Annette Badland tells *Vortex*: "I really engaged with this as he has so much charisma, fun and intelligent curiosity. His Fourth Doctor has a clarity that can be heard in every line as I'm writing, making the process an absolute joy."

She concludes: "For me the highlight of the process has yet to happen, which is the story reaching its audience. Giving away an idea that has lived with me, to be claimed, enjoyed and expanded inside the mind of someone else is the best part."

THE CAGED Assassin by Matthew Sweet takes the Doctor and his friends back in time. It's very unusual to find a tiger in the TARDIS. But it's even more unusual to find one heavily dosed in radiation. But this is far from the most unusual occurrence the Doctor, Naomi and Harry are going to encounter today. Because they are about to meet Charles Jamrach, supplier of exotic animals to the rich and royal, who is unaware that his famous



menagerie conceals a deadly terror. A strange creature out for blood...

John says: "I got Matthew's script through and it's one of the most wonderful, gorgeous things I've ever read. And it's got a wombat in it, which always helps! There's a lot more to it than wombats, of course, but I'm half-Australian and the wombat is my favourite Australian animal. I made the mistake of mentioning this to my down under relatives and I've been receiving wombat memorabilia for 20 years now!

"There is a lot of historical detail in this script, especially about Jamrach's menagerie. It is very much a story which can be easily associated with Matthew and his particular writing skills as it features the amazing period figure of the poet and artist Rossetti.

"It's an incredible, witty, erudite script played by a fantastic cast. We really have an amazing set of actors playing these delightful roles.

"We recorded this set five years ago and I've been waiting for the



day I can talk about it. I'm really excited for everyone to hear it because it's an absolutely delightful script that is very much unlike anything else we've done."

Matthew tells Vortex: "What I mainly remember about this script are the conversations around the title, which made me realise that Big Finish is quite strict about this kind of thing – it had to sound like a title from Tom's time on the TV show. So Top the Wombat or Stop Top, which were my preferred ones, had to go into oblivion!

"Rossetti's wombats have been an obsession of mine for years and I've always wanted to use them in some way – and this was my chance. But I didn't expect them to be the villains of the piece!

"Rossetti had many animals. He wasn't really a good pet owner but he filled his house in Cheney Walk with all sorts of creatures – armadillos, ravens – many of which came a cropper, sadly.

# WELL, WOMBATS ARE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF GOD'S CREATURES AND THEY REALLY DO CUBOID POOS.

"Everything that you hear in this story that isn't science fiction is true. So, all of the deaths of the animals are correct and he did have a wombat stuffed and displayed in the hallway, the first named Top. I didn't have to do much research, really, as I've always been interested in that."

When asked to sum up the story, Matthew says: "I feel I've got away with something! A lot of the time I'm thinking of what might amuse Tom, amuse me and hopefully amuse the listener. I feel that's possibly a good place to start from. Obviously it could all go horribly wrong and people may think it's terrible!

"Humans have been around for a long time now, so something that feels a bit unusual and something that seems attuned to the Fourth Doctor seemed like a good one to go with.

"What can I say about the wombats? Well, wombats are the most beautiful of God's creatures and they really do cuboid poos. Rossetti's drawings of them are very beautiful, I think.

"It was a fun day in the studio and what I really remember was doing the wombat hymn, which again Rossetti wrote, a kind of wombat requiem. It's not quite right as a requiem but it really was meant to be sung to the tune from Rigoletto. I don't make any of these things up!"

Matthew adds: "There were a few things that didn't make it to the final recording such as a bit with a tiger under anaesthetic which Tom wanted to turn into an advert for Doctor Collis's Chlorodyne. Again that's real, and is what Rossetti was rather addicted to.

"So yes, it was great fun larking about in the studio with Tom and Mark playing Dante in an ill and enervated kind of way."

THE SET concludes with Metamorphosis by Lisa McMullin. The people of the planet Jaxus are vanishing. When the Doctor and his friends land, Naomi is snatched away by a mysterious fog and taken to a prison run by a very old foe of the Doctor's. The Master is here and he has, as ever, a sinister scheme underway... but neither Naomi nor Harry know who he is... Can the Doctor stop his plans and rescue the prisoners? Or will his companions inadvertently aid his enemy's plans?

John tells Vortex: "If I remember correctly, the actual brief for this was simply we haven't done a story with the Master and the Fourth Doctor for some time, so let's do one!

"There's something fun to be had in that, as neither Harry or Naomi are familiar with who the Master is and that gave us plenty of potential. "And it was great to get Geoffrey

VORTEX | PAGE 13

Above (I–r): Geoffrey Beevers and Tom Baker

Beevers back. We haven't had his Master showing his decayed face for a while."

Lisa says: "The Master is trying to make himself a rejuvenating elixir and doesn't care if he has to enslave people and destroy a planet's ecology in order to do so. Luckily the Doctor, Harry and Naomi are on hand to try to stop him. Well, the Doctor and Naomi are, poor old Harry accidentally befriends the Master and ends up on the wrong side!

"This is the first Fourth Doctor script I've written. It was brilliant. I could hear his magnificent voice in my head as I wrote.

"Tve written for both Harry and Naomi a few times since but this was the first time I'd written for them, the others have actually already been released. They're fun to write for in very different ways. Naomi is sharp, sparky and ready for excitement whereas Harry ends up in adventures despite his very best efforts – and his reluctant, bumbling hero is always a delight to play with."

Lisa's highlight was: "Definitely getting to go to the recording. What a fan girl dream to spend the day with Tom and Geoffrey and hear them

# THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT WORKING ON AUDIO THAT'S REALLY POWERFUL, AND THE PRIVILEGE OF WORKING WITH TOM IS JUST DREAMY!

perform your story. And the anecdotes in the Green Room were every bit as good as you might hope them to be. Ifelt like I'd won a competition. And I got Lydia West for my guest actor – she was telling us about a new TV series she was about to be in ... written by a certain ex (and now current) **Doctor Who** showrunner..."

Guest star Lydia says: "It's great to work with Big Finish again – there's something about working on audio that's really powerful, and the privilege of working with Tom is just dreamy!" We know the Doctor's companions are destined to meet UNIT and the Seventh Doctor in the future, but this isn't their final journey as yet. John explains: "There's still more to come with the Doctor, Harry and Naomi. There's the forthcoming box set, **The Fourth Doctor Adventures**: Dominant Species, but I couldn't possibly say who the monsters might be..." **VOREX** 

### THE FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES Metamorphosis



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# VORTEX MAIL



### **BLAKE'S RECASTS?**

We've had at least six Doctors and three companions being played by different actors, and we've just had an all-new cast for **The Avengers**. Would Big Finish considering recasting and do new adventures box sets for **Blake's** ?? I would love to hear Gan return or travel again with Slave and Soolin! We're getting a *Tarrant* solo release soon, so clearly there's still a market for the show! Is there any possibility of this happening? **'Cowiesh Bebop'** 

### Nick: Recasting is always a sensitive issue and we largely go by the gut feeling of the creatives involved in making the series for us. So, as with many things, I wouldn't personally rule it out but I'd have

to have a serious discussion with the **Blake's 7** fans on our team.

### **MORE TRIPS OF A LIFETIME?**

Are the any plans for Christopher Eccleston and Billie Piper to record a Big Finish story featuring the Ninth Doctor and Rose ? Chris has stated at a **Doctor Who** convention that he would enjoy working with Billie again on a Big Finish adventure. **Stuart John Pearson** 

Nick: It's obvious to all concerned that this would be a fabulous idea. But sometimes working out the finer details is more complicated and timeconsuming than one might think! Just imagine!

### **FINAL SHADOWS?**

There seems to be no news of any upcoming **Dark Shadows** series. Has Big Finish lost the rights to produce these and/or are they no longer being bought by enough buyers/fans? I was looking forward



to the **Dark Shadows** mini-series that had previously been hinted at. **Charles Mento** 

Nick: We still hold the rights for audio productions based on **Dark Shadows**, Charles, but there's been a bit of a hold-up with the creatives working on the range. We're endeavouring to get to the bottom of this.

### **MASTER PLANS?**

I've really enjoyed listening back to your various ranges featuring the Master of late. I hope I don't sound greedy, but I would love to hear from more of John Simm as the Saxon Master, especially after hearing him working with Sir Derek Jacobi in *Masterful*. And could we possible hear more from Alex Macqueen one day? I miss his unique take on the part! **Ionathan Geddes** 

Nick: I'm pretty certain that John regarded his Masterful appearance as a one-off, Jonathan, but that doesn't rule out our asking him to return. No current plans, but it's certainly worth looking into. As for the amazing Alex, I have so many brilliant memories of working with him. It would be lovely to get him back one day too. VORTER



# Steven Pacey is back in The Worlds of Blake's 7



#### SOLDIER, FEDERATION

Space Commander, smuggler, freedom fighter. Del Tarrant has challenged convention throughout his many careers in <u>a hostile</u> galaxy.

The Worlds of Blake's 7: Tarrant places Steven Pacey's character, who featured throughout television Series C and D, front and centre. Tarrant tells the stories of his choices and challenges, his friends, family and foes, on an unpredictable journey to the Liberator and beyond.

Producer Peter Anghleides says:

"T ve wanted to make more Tarrant stories ever since I started working on this range. I wrote *Incentive* for **The Liberator Chronicles** 10 years ago, the first Big Finish audio in which Steven returned as Del Tarrant. He was terrific, a warm and positive contributor to the studio recording and cast. It's fantastic to have him back for three brand new adventures along with the wonderful Yasmin Bannerman reprising her role as Dayna Mellanby. "Tarrant's arrival with Dayna

gave a new dynamic to the third

TV series. And any disappointment I may have had at the time about losing Blake was forgotten once I saw Tarrant in action. Some of that was the scripts: they re-established the element of distrust among a crew thrown together by circumstances rather than by choice. But much of it was Steven's performance in the role, seizing the character from his very first line to Avon, 'Summary execution is the usual punishment for boarding a Federation ship without authority. What are you doing on my ship? Just brilliant!"

block a few times – and then blown up the block! That didn't quite fit with how the character was written.

"I found all the contradictions fascinating. Sometimes Tarrant just goes to Space Command or is a flight commander at Space Command. There's a jumble of titles, letters and job descriptions that he has that don't quite fit or tie together.

"With all of these differing scenarios, how do you solve them? I thought, 'What if Tarrant is like those people who slightly fudge their CVs?' We've all worked with them! And we're all vaguely aware that when you ask, 'Are you absolutely sure you lectured at Harvard Business School?' and they answer, 'Yeah,' and you say, 'I think I have a friend who was there,' then they backtrack, 'Oh, no, no, no, no, no!'

"There's an element of that with Tarrant, where perhaps instead of these being a series of contradictions, Tarrant's back story is basically a series of half truths that he's arranging into an almost plausible order. Maybe he did do all of this, or maybe he did do some version of it. Perhaps he's actually on the run from his past, just in the sense that all the lies he's told are going to catch up with him at some point. So, that was what I wanted to address, or at least get to the stage where you could almost submit the stories as accounts."

**TO HELP** solve these issues, James returned to a species he created years ago. He explains: "My way of doing it was to use the Dream Makers who are an entity that I used in a story called *Spoils* for **The Liberator Chronicles**.

"The whole point of *Spoils* is the idea that Blake tries to find out what would happen if he wins and he's told it goes disastrously – but it's all already been arranged. It's told to him through these avatars called the Dream Makers who basically have the ability to see into the future by looking into your soul.

"Now Tarrant has come to them and said, 'Well, instead of looking into the future, I want you to look into my past and work out what makes sense'.

"I realised this was going to necessitate a very, very large cast so I came at it from the angle of using the Dream Makers, the Man and

Above (I–r): Steven Pacey and Yasmin Bannerman

This new box set has been brought to life by a trio of experienced scribes with *The Authorised Version* by James Goss, *Behemoth* by Andy Lane and *Bomb* by Gary Russell.

**THE AUTHORISED** Version by James Goss features a young Tarrant. Gamblers, lovers, presidents. All have sought out the Dream Makers demanding they decide their future. Del Tarrant has come to ask them to help decide his past.

Peter explains: "For the first adventure I was looking for something about Tarrant at the Space Academy – how he got out of it, why he got out of it, or whether he was ever really in it – and also establishing a nemesis from his past.

"James and I talked about it being an elusive shaggy dog story so that we're never quite sure we know what truth he's telling, and maybe he doesn't know either because there are those ambiguities and puzzles about Tarrant's background in the TV series.

"It's fun to play with those uncertainties. James originally wondered about finding a way of there being an older Tarrant narrating or leading the story with WE THOUGHT THAT TARRANT SOUNDS LIKE THE KIND OF PERSON WHO CHEERFULLY ADDED HIS OWN PAST TO SUIT HIMSELF. PETERANGHLEIDES

someone else playing a younger Tarrant. He had to find a valid story reason for it without going as he said, too magical realism, because we thought that Tarrant sounds like the kind of person who cheerfully added his own past to suit himself."

James says: "Peter basically sent me a list of all of the continuity contradictions in Tarrant's TV life. The only thing I was really aware of (because I'm not a fan at the level of Peter!) was that Tarrant was supposed to be an older actor. But they then cast a strapping youth straight out of drama school when all the scripts suggested that he'd been around the THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S T Tarrant



Woman, so you have people who can inhabit various different bodies, accents and lifestyles, and therefore you get a real sense of resonance."

**BEHEMOTH BY** Andy Lane is the second adventure in the set. When hunting down Blake and the Liberator, Commander Del Tarrant's Federation pursuit ship encounters a vast abandoned space vessel. What dark secrets does it contain about the Federation and alien life? And can Tarrant save his crew and himself before it's too late?

Peter explains: "Behemoth was originally pitched to explore how Tarrant got to the *Liberator* in the TV episode Powerplay. He explains that he's been on the Federation wanted list for quite a while, had his own ship, was running contraband, getting mixed up in people's wars and so on.

"He'd heard about Blake and Avon, and then got to the *Liberator* by being picked up by a Federation ship and masquerading as a Federation Space Captain. But to be honest, that was a bit of a straitjacket for Andy!



"When he responded to my request for an outline, he had a much better idea which was to put Tarrant right into the action during his time as an officer when he was really in the Federation.

"Behemoth is a great combination of things, the evolving relationships of the crew on the pursuit ship where we see Tarrant taking charge, the mystery of the alien ship, the horror of the deaths, the countdown element as the Federation destroyers are en route. What a mix!"

Andy says: "I've written a **Blake's 7** script previously for **The Liberator Chronicles**, basically a single voice, Avon, with a little bit of Cally coming in. Single voice stuff is always tricky because you've got to find a reason why they're telling the story. So, given the chance to write for a full-cast **Blake's 7** audio was lovely.

"I've watched **Blake's 7** since the start and I can remember the *Radio Times* feature from before it was shown and I've been a fan ever since. Some fans at the time thought Tarrant was a second-hand replacement for Blake. But when you look at him in his own right, Steven does a very, very carefully calculated piece of acting. He's not Blake as he's brash, he's sarcastic, he's cynical. But there's something underneath and he is a decent person.

"Peter told me that this box set was going to take place over Tarrant's life covering early, middle and then his time on the *Liberator*. Peter asked which one I'd prefer to do, and I Steven Pacey and Raj Ghato

thought, 'Well, early is basically going to be him as a young fresh-faced Space Command cadet or something. And I didn't really want to set one during the **Blake's 7** period, so I decided I'd like the one in the middle where he's in Space Command.

"Tarrant's been promoted a couple of times but he's begun to realise what he signed up for. It's a bit like in the *Star Wars* expanded universe where you know Han Solo was an Imperial pilot. Nobody really talks about that very much. He was at the Imperial Academy but then left with Chewbacca, and I wanted to do the same thing with Tarrant. What did he see? What happened to him that made him realise it was not a good career move?"

The tale is set on an alien spacecraft, and Andy explains: "Picking the setting was easy. It's pretty much Alien! In my head, I've gone back to the original Chris Foss designs. In the film we saw a fairly small industrial spacecraft. The original Foss illustrations, which he basically recycled from his version of Dune, is a massive ship which incorporates huge great gas tanks for the mining stuff that they're doing. It was called the Leviathan before it was renamed PICKING THE SETTING WAS EASY. IT'S PRETTY MUCH ALIEN! IN MY HEAD, I'VE GONE BACK TO THE ORIGINAL CHRIS FOSS DESIGNS.

the *Nostromo* in the finished film. I wanted to do something on a big, probably alien, spacecraft so it's not standard corridors and ducts.

"I called it the *Behemoth* by way of acknowledgement to the *Leviathan*. The ship had to have a personality, it needed creaks, groans and strange alien noises in it."

> **BOMB BY** Gary Russell concludes the set. Tarrant and Dayna's rendezvous in an abandoned Federation refinery puts them in unexpected danger

when their broker changes the terms of the deal. Can they survive until the Liberator returns for them? And why is an old nemesis lurking in the shadows?

Peter says: "How wonderful to have Yasmin Bannerman back as Dayna in this episode. I loved her earlier stories and it's the first time I have worked with her on **Blake's 7**.

"My brief to Gary was to involve Dayna for a TV Season C story, in a side adventure for Tarrant. I did toy with the idea of doing a Season D story with the two of them on an away mission, but clever Gary said it was much more interesting dramatically to feature the two characters in that sort of early 'getting to know each other', slightly distrustful phase.

"They're recognising that they're both new to the *Liberator* and working out whether they can trust Avon and the others. In these **The Worlds of Blake's 7** episodes you can focus in much more on one or two of the principal characters than you could on the telly where you needed and wanted to have something for all the principal cast."

Gary says: "I really like Tarrant and writing this made me go back and watch Season C. I particularly wanted to see where Tarrant joined and that very much gave me the hook into this story.

"I told Peter that I wanted to do something that's very, very early on in his time on *Liberator*, sort of around the episode three/four period where Tarrant and Dayna don't really know each other. They've both come aboard *Liberator* and everyone expects them to be chummy and friendly because they're the new kids, but actually they don't know each other very well at all.

"More importantly, neither of them know, like or trust Avon, and I thought that was an interesting time to set a story, where you could have that moment of them just thinking, 'Have we been dumped? Have we been kicked off Liberator? Have we been sent on a mission because we're the new ones and therefore we're expendable? Avon's worked with Vila and Cally for a long time. Has he sent us on a dangerous mission with the assumption (probably rightly so knowing Avon) that if we get killed no one's going to bat an evelid?' I thought that was an interesting scenario to put them into. THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S T Tarrant

Above (1–r): Joe Jameson, Tania Rodrigues, Ian Brooke

"While there's a little bit of aggro for Tarrant, Dayna's off having an exciting adventure with guns and bombs, and doing what she does best which is knowing weapons and flirting outrageously with naked men chained to tables. So, you know, an average day in **Blake's 7** really!"

Gary's initial storyline was amended after the producer realised there was a similarity in settings between two of the box set's scripts.

Gary explains: "Bomb originally started off being set on a big spaceship and the play was called Dreadnought. Then Peter said, 'Oh, Andy's play is also set on a big spaceship' and asked if I could set mine on a planet and make it a refinery? So I sort of combined the two and suggested that lying on this planet was an old crashed Dreadnought converted by the Federation into a refinery. The atmosphere is completely toxic outside so you can only live inside this rusting hulk of a building. Everywhere it leaks the atmosphere gets in and blows it up,

IT'S NOT LIKE IT'S GOING TO BLOW UP IN THE NEXT COUPLE OF YEARS, BUT EVENTUALLY THE BUILDING IS GOING TO GO...

and so it immediately adds a kind of countdown element, I suppose.

"It's not like it's going to blow up in the next couple of years, but eventually the building is going to go, so on top of that we then throw in a man with a bomb!"

Peter concludes: "A personal highlight of this set was getting back into the recording studio. Our more recent **The Worlds of Blake's 7** releases mostly had people connecting in from their homes. This time, all of our cast members were together each day with just one exception when a rail strike prevented one actor getting to the studio in time. The cast's enjoyment of each other's company face-toface, as well as the fantastic scripts, meant we had three very happy and productive studio days." YONTER

### THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S T Tarrant



TORCHWOOD'S ANDY DAVIDSON AND NORTON FOLGATE ARE HEADING BACK IN TIME AGAIN – FURTHER THAN THEY'VE EVER GONE BEFORE!

# Ristory Boys

YOU CAN'T help but pity poor Sergeant Andy Davidson. His life as a police officer has never been the same since his colleague Gwen Cooper left his side, swapping being on the beat in Cardiff for a new job with Torchwood.

Andy, played by Tom Price, has regularly been put through his paces during the course of his police duties. He's had to deal with Corpse Day alongside Owen Harper, gone under cover in prison, fallen in love with an alien woman and had a brief relationship with Yvonne Hartman from another dimension, who arrived in Cardiff and took over Torchwood Three.

And as if that's not enough, there's also his <u>encounter with</u>

the Eighth Doctor, Liv Chenka, Helen Sinclair and Tanya Bell in the four **The Eighth Doctor** Adventures *Stranded* box sets.

Andy's most enduring relationship with Torchwood, however, has been through his relationship with Norton Folgate (Tony-nominee Samuel Barnett). The pair first met when Norton - a 1950s Torchwood agent - claimed to be assessing Andy's suitability to join the organisation. They have worked together several times since, with Andy being pulled back in time to join Torchwood Soho.

The next **Torchwood** adventure in the monthly range sees Andy and Norton pulled back further in time in *The Restoration of Catherine*. The duo find themselves dragged back into history in the midst of a very unusual crisis, trapped inside a house in the seventeenth century. *The Restoration of Catherine* also stars Ebony Jonelle (as Catherine

stars EDONY Jonelle (as Catherine de Winter), Shai Matheson (Sir Reginald Hardgoing) and George Naylor (Squire Edmund Dashington).

PRODUCER AND writer James Goss tells *Vortex*: "We've had nearly a decade of Andy and Norton. They've not aged a day but I have! What's great about the two of them is that Andy is the perpetual innocent (but is he?)

and Norton is the habitual schemer (but is he?), and so Andy's always on the back foot as he's dragged through one of Norton's capers (or is he?)!

"It's been a while since these two have had an adventure together.



Above: Samuel Barnett

They've dealt with hauntings in Cardiff (Ghost Mission), Martian war machines in London (Goodbye Piccadilly), and we last encountered them in **Torchwood Soho**: The Unbegotten. And now the two of them find themselves in the 1660s and one of them has to get married before all time falls apart."

Since Norton's first appearance in *Ghost Mission* back in May 2016, the character has become incredibly popular with fans of the series.

James says: "It's fantastic that people love Norton so much – there's a tattoo, a cat called Norton Folgate and I've even met a Norton cosplayer. It's mad that Sam wrapped in one of my suits held with bulldog clips has become A THING that people dress up in! I think listeners respond to Norton's shameless anarchy and also to Sam's stupendous performance."

James was keen to give the pair something different to do in their latest escapade together. He says: "We've joined Andy and Norton in the present and in Norton's time, so I thought, 'Let's throw them into the distant past where theoretically neither of them has the upper hand and see how they get on'. IT'S FANTASTIC THAT PEOPLE LOVE NORTON SO MUCH – THERE'S A TATTOO, A CAT CALLED NORTON FOLGATE AND I'VE EVEN MET A NORTON COSPLAYER.



"I'm a huge fan of Restoration Comedies – bawdy nonsense careering between farce and poetry where it's up to a cunning yet honest servant to sort everything out. Only in this case, Norton's the servant.

"The plot is reasonably simple. It's the 1660s and Catherine de Winter must choose a suitor by midnight. Her options are pretty bad, and then Norton and Andy stagger out of the storm. They've no idea how they got there and steadily realise that time is collapsing – can it all be because of one woman's meagre matrimonial choices? Or is something more sinister at work? Andy comes up with a very pragmatic solution, and Norton comes up with a truly original one."

James adds: "It's a messy tribute to Restoration Comedy, with Andy in the role of The Nobly Dim Hero and Norton as His Duplicitous Servant.

"The highlight was getting everybody in the mood for bawdy Restoration acting – there was a lot of thigh slapping! The problem came that as the day went on people started to go a bit too far and we had to tone it down in the edit. Theatre of the period is famous for its rather elaborate innuendos but there were moments when the cast just ran away with things.

"But also, for plot reasons, Sam has to spend much of the play putting on a terrible cod French accent. I'll treasure that! Things get very messy, especially as the guest cast really, really decided to go for it. No scenery is left unchewed. Huzzah!"

### TORCHWOOD The restoration of catherine



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# THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S 7

### SOLDIER, SPACE COMMANDER, SMUGGLER, FREEDOM FIGHTER.

THE SEVENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES

THE LAST DAY 2

THE CLOCK IS TICKING FOR THE SEVENTH DOCTOR...