

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

# VORTEX



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BIG FOR THE LOVE  
FINISH OF STORIES

# SIRENS CALL

GOING BACK TO THE START TO MARK  
25 YEARS OF **DOCTOR WHO** AUDIOS...

**DOCTOR WHO: THE SEVENTH DOCTOR**

## **THE DOCTOR AND CARNACKI**

THE SEVENTH DOCTOR HAS A NEW –  
BUT FAMILIAR – FRIEND AT HIS SIDE...





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## THE CURSE OF TIME

**BIG FINISH** is celebrating a golden anniversary for the Fourth Doctor this December. The television Season 12 TARDIS crew of the Doctor, Sarah and Harry will be reunited in *The Curse of Time* marking half a century of Tom Baker's Doctor.

Alongside Tom are Sadie Miller and Christopher Naylor as companions Sarah Jane Smith and Harry Sullivan – originally played by Elisabeth Sladen (Sadie's mother) and Ian Marter.

This special four-part adventure written by Jonathan Morris is set immediately after the events of *Revenge of the Cybermen*, picking up on a story thread which began in *The Ark in Space* where the time travellers discover what happened to humanity long after the events of *The Sontaran Experiment*.

Producer David Richardson says: "Can it really be 50 years since the Fourth Doctor arrived in **Doctor Who** supported by the glorious Sarah and Harry? That really is something to celebrate, and I thought that the best way to do it would be to return to 1975 and add a new adventure into the mix. "Jonathan has written a smashing tale that fits perfectly into both the Nerva Beacon arc and the Hinchcliffe years. Happy anniversary to the Fourth Doctor!" **VORTEX**

### DOCTOR WHO THE CURSE OF TIME

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## EDITORIAL

### THE PASSAGE of time is a funny thing.

I was just thinking back to when *The Sirens of Time* was released in 1999. I was 25 and still living with my parents, single and working on a local weekly newspaper.

And now I'm 50, my parents have both passed away, I have my own family and am working for the NHS in communications.

But one thing that's been a constant throughout each and every single one of those years has been Big Finish's **Doctor Who** audios.

Listening to the Lucie Miller audio series got me through my mum's sudden passing (I told Sheridan Smith this and it made her cry). It's brought me an incredible group of friends from the people working on the audios. I've become good mates with many of the stars of the show I adore, and best of all, I have the honour of being able to write *Vortex* every month.

I remember buying *The Sirens of Time* on CD in Forbidden Planet in Glasgow. And after that I started to buy directly from Big Finish (remember, subscribers get more!). The Big Finish service has always been brilliant. I accidentally double-ordered *The Land of the Dead* by mistake at one time and was kindly offered an exchange on it for the next title, *The Fearmonger*. So here's to the next 25 years of **Doctor Who** on audio! **VORTEX**

*Kenny*



BIG FINISH IS MARKING 25 YEARS OF ITS DOCTOR WHO AUDIOS IN THE MOST WIBBLY-WOBBLY, TIMEY-WIMEY WAY POSSIBLE...

# THE SIRENS SING AGAIN

**I**T'S 2024. Jodie Whittaker starts recording audio dramas as the Thirteenth Doctor for Big Finish. It's 2021. The first Christopher Eccleston/Ninth Doctor stories are released. It's 2016. The first Tenth Doctor adventures with David Tennant go on sale. It's 2015. Sir John Hurt is back as the War Doctor, for your ears only. It's 2012. It's Saturday tea-time in 1977 all over again as Tom Baker dons his scarf as the Fourth Doctor with Big Finish. It's 2001. Paul McGann is back – and it's about time – as the Eighth Doctor returns to life on audio.

And then, it's 1999. *The Sirens of Time* is released as Peter Davison, Colin Baker and Sylvester McCoy star together in the first **Doctor Who** story from Big Finish. It's the acorn from which everything else has grown.

For a quarter of a century, Big Finish Productions has been releasing full-cast audio adventures set in the worlds of **Doctor Who** featuring Doctors and companions, villains and monsters from across every era of the television series.

**Doctor Who:** *The Sirens of Time* was the first instalment in Big

Finish's long-running **The Monthly Adventures** range. Written and directed by Nicholas Briggs, the stories brought together the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Doctors for the first time as they teamed up against a deadly threat to Gallifrey.

To celebrate this very special 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Big Finish is releasing *The Sirens of Time – Redux*. Remastered and re-edited from the original recording tapes, this is a new 'director's cut' of the story. Where the first three episodes of the original each focused on just one Doctor, the



Above (l-r), Colin Baker, Sylvester McCoy and Peter Davison

new version intercuts between all of them for a more narratively satisfying experience. *The Sirens of Time – Redux* also features new sound design and music.

Big Finish chairman Jason Haigh-Ellery – the only person to be credited on every single release over the years – says: “Can it really be 25 years since we recorded *The Sirens of Time*? It feels more like 25 weeks! I remember that first day very well. Would the Doctors all turn up? Would the studio hold everyone? And would the cast like the lunch? (They did!)

“At the end of the second day, Gary Russell opened the bottle of champagne I’d brought along for myself, Nicholas Briggs and Steve Cole to celebrate getting the first production in the can. The hope was we’d get six productions done a year for three years. Eighteen productions – and we’d have been more than happy. We’d have done our bit to keep *Doctor Who* alive for a few years longer. Little did we know that there would be thousands of releases to follow.

“It’s been an incredible 25 years since we began, and I can’t thank

## MAD, HARD WORK AT BREAKNECK SPEED, WITH FAR MORE PRIMITIVE EQUIPMENT...

NICHOLAS BRIGGS

our original three Doctors (Peter, Colin and Sylvester) enough for having faith in our fledgling company. Paul soon joined us, and we were privileged to be doing new adventures for the Eighth Doctor and his new companion in India Fisher’s Charley that saw Big Finish bring *Doctor Who* into the 21st century.

“We gave David Tennant his first *Doctor Who* role in *Colditz* alongside Sylvester and Sophie Aldred. He was so good that he returned repeatedly over the next four years until he was whisked

away to become the Doctor himself!

We were all so happy for him.

“And since then, Tom, Christopher, John, Jodie, David Warner and Jo Martin have joined us to play their different incarnations of the Doctor, and, of course, David returned to Big Finish as the Tenth Doctor on audio. It was a real delight to welcome him home.”

**VORTEX ASKS** Nick what springs to mind when he thinks of the original audio play. He says: “Mad, hard work at breakneck speed, with far more primitive equipment than I have now. And so much anxious tension during the studio sessions that I actually couldn’t eat lunch. If you tell anyone now that I didn’t eat lunch, they wouldn’t believe it! And Peter, Colin and Sylvester larking around and having a really good time.

“When the story was released, it was the beginning of an era when a *Doctor Who* audio drama was mostly just referred to as a ‘Big Finish’. “Have you heard the latest Big Finish?” people would ask – and they still do! So it was a hugely significant



Above (l-r): Gary Russell, Harvey Summers, Stephen Cole, Nicholas Briggs and Jason Haigh-Ellery

production for Jason, Gary and me. And I put into practice all the audio expertise I'd amassed at that time to create an exciting **Doctor Who** audio drama like no other before it – the reviews were great and we took off!”

The idea to do a redux version of *Sirens* had been floating around in Nick's head for several years, as he reveals: “One of our former sound designers and composers, Martin Johnson mentioned it to me ages ago. He asked me if I could loan him the original digital audio tapes because he wanted to soup it up with his orchestral music. But I said that my DAT machine was broken – but that I'd keep it in mind.

“Then years later, when Martin was no longer working for us, the Big Finish production team was having a meeting about what we should do for our 25th anniversary. And I ventured to suggest that I could maybe revamp *Sirens*, if I could find someone with a working DAT recorder. Luckily,

that person was Toby Hyrcek-Robinson who some of our readers may remember as the owner of Moat Studios and purveyor of Big Finish's fabled lunches, back in the day.

“When I finally managed to get the tapes to Toby and he converted them into digital files, it was quite a revelation listening to it. I hadn't heard it since 1999 and actually I thought it stood up rather well. I found myself starting to go through the same thought processes that I'd gone through when working on it before. The main thing that really hit me was that all the Doctors sounded so young and energetic!

“I'd already decided to create a new music score for it, but actually I thought most of the sound design was pretty solid. I elected to augment the sound design quite a bit though – adding rather than replacing. I did completely reconstruct one scene because one of the DAT tapes had become unplayable and

it contained the only copy. So that was a necessity. And there was one speech that I re-recorded concerning the death sentence for Sancroff the war criminal.”

**HOW GOOD** were the original tapes? Nick says: “The quality was perfect. I just had to do a bit of compressing to brighten it up a little and some adjusting of levels to make sure everything was clear. Toby warned that we'd ‘rescued’ them just in time. According to experts, DATs aren't meant to last even this long.”

Nick found that he had a lot of work ahead in restructuring *The Sirens of Time* as their storylines are woven together in the redux.

He explains: “My initial task was to work on re-ordering the production so that we switched neatly from Doctor to Doctor rather than just having one Doctor per episode for the first three parts. That was rather exciting

and I think it works better this way.

"It was very detailed work, but I sensibly set myself a very generous deadline. So I had plenty of time to go over and over each scene and episode. I had it as a background project going on throughout all my other work – it was really fun to return to every now and then. Composing a new score was a joy too, I think I've included a little less music than before. I loved the

## ALL THE DOCTORS SOUNDED SO YOUNG AND ENERGETIC!

NICHOLAS BRIGGS



Above (l-r): Peter Davison, Colin Baker and Sylvester McCoy



Above (l-r): John Wadmore, Mark Gatiss and Sarah Mowat

performances so much, my inclination this time was to let them breathe without music getting in the way. When you do that, the arrival of music in a scene then has more impact.

"I'd noticed that in an old TV *Zone* magazine review of *Sirens*, the reviewer had flatteringly but

incorrectly said that the music for each Doctor was very reminiscent of that Doctor's era. That wasn't actually true. The original score had a general style of its own, often using orchestral samples. But this inaccurate but generous comment gave me the inspiration to make the

music far more Doctor-era specific.

"So I used some Peter Howell-style sounds for Peter's episode, some Keff McCulloch orchestral stabs for Sylvester and some more discordant, Malcolm Clarke influences for Colin. That said, as the episodes build and it becomes clearer that something grand is happening, I brought in deep cathedral organ Time Lord sounds, and processed orchestral strings for the Sirens' dastardly plan. Eventually, all the styles mix together for the climax. I'm particularly happy with a very quaint-sounding piece during the sinking of the *Lusitania*, which was rather inspired by one of my favourite soundtracks for the film *Waterloo*."

Listeners should get ready for additions to the story too. Nick says: "Yes, there's loads of new stuff. Loads of it! And the new running order of the story makes even the familiar bits sound new. Senior Producer John Ainsworth said he'd totally forgotten the original so listening to my edits was like listening to a brand-new production. I'm hoping that's how it'll feel for many listeners."

"I'm very proud of it. I gave it plenty of time and thought, and worked really hard on it. I really loved doing it. A real time of rediscovery for me."

Jason concludes: "Producing a new version of *The Sirens of Time* has been a fascinating process. We can all look forward to hearing a story that many of us know inside out, told in an exciting and different way. I can't wait for everyone to hear something old and new at the same time! Here's to the next 25 years of **Doctor Who** at Big Finish!"

VORTEX

### DOCTOR WHO THE SIRENS OF TIME: REDUX



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The Seventh Doctor has a new – but familiar – friend at his side...

# GHOSTED

**I**N 2016, Big Finish released audio readings of **Carnacki The Ghost Finder**, the occult detective created by William Hope Hodgson in 1910. The six stories were performed by Dan Starkey – well known for playing Strax the Sontaran – with Joseph Kloska. And now the Sherlock of the supernatural returns as the Seventh Doctor is teaming up with the Victorian occult detective for three new tales.

*Ghost finder Thomas Carnacki deals with many uncanny mysteries that defy explanation. But throughout his life, a stranger keeps appearing. Whether*

*he is an ally or a rival remains to be seen, but one thing is certain. When the Doctor and Carnacki cross paths, death and danger are always close...*

In all of the original stories, Carnacki tells his assembled friends about a haunting he has investigated and the horrors he encountered. Now, the identity of one of Carnacki's friends can be revealed – it's the Doctor.

**The Seventh Doctor Adventures:** *The Doctor and Carnacki* features three stories set at various points in Carnacki's life where he teams up with the Doctor (Sylvester McCoy) to investigate mysterious goings-on.

In the first of the three episodes, a young Carnacki is played by Joe Jameson (a part he portrayed in **The Paternoster Gang**). And in the second and third episodes, Carnacki is performed once again by Dan.

Dan admits returning to the part was rather unexpected. He tells *Vortex*: "It did come as a surprise, although we encountered a young Carnacki played by the estimable Joe in a **Paternoster Gang** adventure just a few years ago.

"I was delighted to be invited to revisit the character as I had such a blast narrating the original stories for Big Finish. Like the Doctor or Sherlock





Above: Dan Starkey

Holmes, I think Carnacki is one of those characters who arrives with a whole universe of stories to explore, and it is lovely to get to do that again.

“Reading the Hodgson stories is great as they’re rich with period detail, and they take the methodology of ghost hunting and the pseudoscience thereof very seriously. You get quite immersed in the Edwardian world of creaking houses that have seen better days, Irish castles, family curses and ‘supernatural’ events that turn out to have much more mundane origins. Hodgson’s prose style is quite distinctive – not unlike HP Lovecraft’s who would succeed him as a composer of weird tales – and I did grow to love his habitual turns of phrase going through the stories, exploring the ‘abnatural.’”

Dan is also delighted about getting to play a de facto companion. He agrees: “I love the Seventh Doctor and it’s great to be part of his gang. In this set we meet Carnacki at three different times in his life – the Doctor travels in time after all – and

*of the lake. Carnacki must discard everything he knows when he discovers that the estate’s hermit is the Doctor, and that time is being manipulated by an unseen force. The Doctor and Carnacki must work together if the mystery of Edgemere Manor is to be solved, the house saved, and the haunted residents find peace.*

Alexandra says: “I was thrilled to be asked to write for the Seventh Doctor and Carnacki. I’ve been reading Carnacki mysteries since I was around ten, and have always loved the mix of spooks and science. And I adore the Seventh Doctor!

“Carnacki and the Seventh are a gorgeous combination, with the Doctor’s enigmatic nature perfect for an otherworld mystery.”

Teasing her story, Alexandra tells *Vortex*: “Script editor Matt Fitton left

## I LOVED WRITING THE SEVENTH DOCTOR PRETENDING TO BE A HERMIT...

AK BENEDICT



Above: Joe Jameson

it’s quite moving seeing how his perspective changes along with his age and experience. No more or I’ll spoil the conclusion!”

**THE HAUNTER** of the Shore by AK Benedict opens the set.

*It’s 1897. Young Carnacki investigates a case at Edgemere Manor where the skeletons of tourists are left on the shore*

the brief open but gave me the option of having both the young and older versions of Carnacki and I ran with it, using that to build the plot and weave in themes of grief and growth. Setting the story in the Lake District meant I could really ingrain the remote, water-based location into the plot.

“When a young Carnacki is called to a strange case of disappearing servants, tourist deaths and strange temporal disturbances in a Lake District country house, he finds that a strange hermit is already investigating the phenomena – it’s the Doctor. I loved writing the Seventh Doctor pretending to be a hermit – as ever he is a wise fool dispensing advice with melancholy and a twinkle.”

**THE HOUSE** by Georgia Cook is the next encounter.

*Summoned in the dead of night to assist his friend Arkright, Carnacki is thrust into a long-buried mystery from his childhood, face-to-face with a man he hasn’t seen in years.*

*But what is 'The House'? Why does Arkright's touch transform his surroundings into the same rotting furnishings and wallpaper? Can a man really be haunted by a building?*

Georgia is delighted to be writing for this pairing. She says: "They're such an interesting duo to write for. A mashup of two quite different (and yet similar) genres and two very headstrong personalities with their own eccentricities to bounce off of. Along with two brilliantly vibrant worlds to bring together, it's been such a great writing challenge.

"I knew of Carnacki the character prior to coming on board for this set, but hadn't read all of his stories. So, before drawing up the outline for *The House*, I made sure to catch up on all of the original collection, as well as his previous outings with Big Finish. You could say I am now officially a fan.

"I was given quite a lot of free rein with this script but using the limited cast size of the two main leads. It was fun to play around with!

*"The House* is a classic haunted house tale with a twist, featuring characters from Carnacki's past who were never really explored in his original stories."

**THE FINAL** mystery *The Institute of Forgotten Souls* is by Jonathan Barnes.

*In the heart of England in 1936 there lies a home for wounded men. It is a strange, shadowed place, full of secrets. This is The Institute of Forgotten Souls where terrible beasts prowl the grounds, as if guarding something dreadful. Inmates are disappearing, picked off one by one, while a singular resident – a certain, now retired ghost finder – bravely staves off the darkness.*

Jonathan says: "Carnacki belongs to an era of literature (and history) which has always fascinated me. I've certainly read all the stories. They are of the sort which used to crop up in spooky anthologies all the time. I was also a big fan of Big Finish's take on the character – Scott Handcock produced some lovely, authentic readings.

"The brief was simple – what would happen when Carnacki met the Seventh Doctor? As soon as I heard that I knew that I wanted to tell the story of their last meeting. I find I'm often drawn to writing about the bittersweet.



Above: Sylvester McCoy

## I WANTED TO TELL THE STORY OF THEIR LAST MEETING. I FIND I'M OFTEN DRAWN TO WRITING ABOUT THE BITTERSWEET.

JONATHAN BARNES

"This is a love letter to the stories of William Hope Hodgson as well as to television Season 26 of *Doctor Who* and the stories in other media which came afterwards. There's a strong dash of Pat Barker's *The Regeneration Trilogy* in there too – the story of a man, broken by his experiences in the war, learning how to survive again with the help of the Doctor..."

Jonathan was further enthused by knowing that Dan would be playing Carnacki once more. He says: "Dan's a great performer and just right for Carnacki. There's a lot of room for an

actor to bring depth and nuance to a character who is (at least in part) a plot device... a bit like the Doctor!"

The writer says his highlight was: "Just getting to put together these two very different worlds which are nonetheless part of the same tradition. Carnacki is almost a proto-Doctor in some ways. This was a joy to do."

VORTEX

### THE SEVENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES THE DOCTOR AND CARNACKI



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# TREE-MENDOUS



## THE FIRST LADY OF BIG FINISH RETURNS FOR HER NEXT PAIR OF ADVENTURES...

**I**N HER adventures through time and space, Professor Bernice Summerfield has encountered many strange and interesting beings – Time Lords, Ice Warriors, Draconians and now... a tree! Benny is at *The Eternity Club*, a gathering place for the universe's greatest explorers.

Lisa Bowerman reprises her role, as Benny's adventures continue in the third release of this series featuring two stories written by James Goss, who is also the series producer.

This first story is *The Terrible Shame of a Tree*. *Missing for a thousand years, the Endless Arboretum has been found. Are the last survivors of Lucrece still alive? And who is hunting for them?*

James says: "It's an episode all about Derek, Derek the Tree played by Derek Elroy... beautiful Derek and how trees are sad. It also features a psychotic tree surgeon, a tree being and a forest full of trees in space!"

"There's a deliberate tone to these stories. Sadly the elephant in the room is the fact that David Warner is no longer with us. That's something we all feel deeply. Benny's adventures with David's Doctor were just so delightful. It seemed foolish to say, 'The TARDIS materialises, a different Doctor bounds out and off Benny goes having adventures with another Doctor.' That was terribly disrespectful to something that was absolutely lovely.

"But also, if you immediately went, 'We must do something very different and gritty,' that also seems like a terrible swerve. So, *The Eternity Club* adventures form a 'sorbet' mini-series.

"I've always loved anything which is essentially alien. Here we have the idea that Benny and her friends – and one of them is, of course, a pot plant – are being chased through a spaceship by a deadly menace."

Script editor Tim Foley says: "James said to me, 'Let's have some fun.' I think that was the driving force of *The Eternity Club*. We've talked of its cosiness and its lovable gallery of rogues. It's comfort listening that doesn't rest on its laurels as it still has emotional depth and cracking stories.

"Ultimately, we wanted a sort of a nice environment, a lovely new chapter, because Benny's life is built of beautiful chapters and I've loved everything that she's done in the past. And I'll continue to love everything she does in the future. I love Benny!"

James agrees: "I love Benny too. *The Eternity Club* exists to assure people that she's still having a good time."

**MR PYM** has an *Adventure* is the second story in the set where Lisa is paired with Nickolas Grace. *Secretary Pym has never left The Eternity Club. This will never do. Bernice Summerfield drags him on an expedition. What could possibly go wrong?*

James says: "Benny is so devoted to everything being amazing that she decides that Mr Pym should have an adventure because he's never left the asteroid – or if he has he can't remember ever leaving it. So she takes him on a trip to an alien planet where she's determined that he enjoys himself – and he has a horrible time!"

Tim adds: "But he doesn't realise he's having a horrible time! This is the joy that we've got with the humour of this episode, the interplay between the two of them.

"We have the delight of seeing a different side to Pym – his officiousness falls away as he doesn't quite know how to cope with this

environment. He really doesn't know what to do. He takes things literally, doesn't know how to be scared properly – I loved reading this script.

"As the script editor there wasn't much I needed to do – I mostly sat back and marvelled at the wonder that is James's writing."

James tells *Vortex*: "I adore this story. I adore Mr Pym. He's a lovable old fusspot and I think his whole approach to archaeology is possibly my favourite thing in it. Benny says, 'Look at this temple over here, it's a terrible ruin,' and he just has the robots get the vacuum cleaners out and Benny is absolutely appalled!"

"I think there's a real joy to what a fusspot Mr Pym is. And Nicholas gives a crotchety performance as he 'learns' to have fun, which is an absolute delight."

**Bernice Summerfield** has been running as a continuous audio series for over a quarter of a century now through Big Finish. James says: "We're now marking 26 years of **Bernice Summerfield**. It's the longest running science fiction series with a single character. It's the longest running drama series with the female lead in any medium. And it's the longest running science fiction audio series.

"What an extraordinary achievement. Big Finish has created this thing that should be listed in the Guinness Book of Records, three or four times. Well done, **Bernice Summerfield**. It's amazing!" **VORTEX**

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Once and Future's final episode brings Jo Martin's Fugitive Doctor to Big Finish...

# CRACKING THE CODA

**TO MARK** Doctor Who's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023, Big Finish created **Once and Future**, a seven-part adventure featuring the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Doctors – with cameos from others. In 2024, the story is given a final part, *Coda – The Final Act*, which is set during the Time War.

*Dealing with the repercussions of degeneration, the Doctor has a limited window of time to evade capture, recruit old allies, wage a war, and find out what's really going on. A warrior*

*is being hunted by a mysterious stranger in a TARDIS. A rogue agent has been assigned a mission to eliminate a dangerous foe. This is a fight between a war criminal and a fugitive. A fight between Doctors.*

Jonathon Carley stars as the War Doctor, as originally portrayed on television by Sir John Hurt. And Jo Martin makes her Big Finish debut as the Fugitive Doctor, the incarnation from long in the Doctor's past who was first seen in the 2020 television episode *Fugitive of the Judoon*. Lisa Bowerman also

features as Bernice Summerfield and Chase Masterson as the bounty hunter Vienna Salvatori.

Producer David Richardson says: "It's hard to say when the idea first came about, but *Coda – The Final Act* was very much a part of the **Once and Future** planning process and began to coalesce when we learned that Big Finish had the licence to make stories with the Fugitive Doctor. It was certainly developed in tandem with the Fugitive Doctor series, and was the final day of Jo's block of recordings.



Above: Jo Martin

“Given how **Once and Future: The Union** ends, it was great to continue the story for one more episode with the War Doctor – and even better to put him at odds with the Fugitive Doctor. In a way, they both belong together. Two ‘forgotten’ incarnations (at least by the Doctor), who do not possess such a strict moral code.

“The briefs on **Once and Future** weren’t very strict and were pretty fluid. We had the overall picture but certainly the writers were offered pieces of the jigsaw and had the freedom to alter it if they wished. It’s what I love about working with writers – you say to

**IN A WAY, THEY BOTH BELONG TOGETHER. TWO ‘FORGOTTEN’ INCARNATIONS (AT LEAST BY THE DOCTOR), WHO DO NOT POSSESS SUCH A STRICT MORAL CODE.**

DAVID RICHARDSON



Above: Lisa Bowerman

them, ‘How about this?’ And they always come back with something better than your original notion.”

Writer of *Coda* Tim Foley tells *Vortex*: “I got a sneaky inquiry from script editor Matt Fitton about writing something special. I’d heard about **Once and Future** on the grapevine but thought it had long been done, so I was delighted to be brought into the fold to write the special coda!

“It’s Doctor v Doctor. And follows on immediately from the fall-out of **Once and Future: The Union**. The War Doctor has recently been through a degeneration – and that’s caught the attention of someone who’s after him. There are lots of friends and foes along the way – it’s a bit of a birthday party. I’m really glad Benny is along for the ride – she was my main request. Lisa is the First Lady of Big Finish and she’s a vital part of these celebrations.”



Above: Imogen Stubbs

**ACTOR JONATHON** was delighted to be asked to take part in *Coda*, revealing: "I recorded the surprise twist appearance of the War Doctor at the end of *The Union* but assumed that was it. I was chuffed just to be involved with that and thought it was very fitting for the hidden incarnation who it turns out was there all along!

"But then when I found out about *Coda* and who would be in it I was just giddy. The Fugitive Doctor, Bernice Summerfield, Queen Elizabeth and the Voord. All written by my good friend Tim. It's so brilliantly bonkers. It's not often the War Doctor allows himself to be frivolous."

Tim really enjoyed having the chance to pit the two 'secret' Doctors against one another: "It was great fun! They're both fairly atypical as Doctors and I knew that meant there'd be both opportunities for



Above: Jonathon Carley

conflict and common ground." Jonathon agrees: "It was perhaps obvious we had to pair these two secret incarnations together, but the way it's been done, let's say it deliberately takes

that antagonism of different incarnations to a whole new level.

"Jo's Doctor is really no nonsense and quite formidable. It was a journey of discovery to react to that when recording because we've seen so little of her Doctor on screen, it is really new and exciting. Jo takes everything on the page and just runs with it – it's my job to keep up. But by the end we have some great moments of

## WE SPENT WHAT FELT LIKE A GOOD CHAOTIC 15 MINUTES TRYING TO WORK OUT HOW TO PRONOUNCE A PARTICULAR WORD...

TIM FOLEY

synchronicity. All Doctors together.


"It was a very full-on recording day. It felt like an event, we barely had time to catch our breath really. There was one particular obstacle where we spent what felt like a good chaotic 15 minutes trying to work out how to pronounce a particular word – and even then we couldn't say it right!

"But also I can't not mention getting to work with Lisa as Benny who is just a delight and is of course celebrating her own milestone anniversary. It all added to the celebratory atmosphere."

David concludes: "Benny meeting the Fugitive Doctor is a real highlight. She's met incarnations that are infuriating and baffling, but she's never met one who carries a gun!" **VORTEX**

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# BOOK CLUB

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## DARK SHADOWS: THE DARKEST SHADOW



**AS HALLOWEEN** approaches, it's worth remembering how many creepy stories Big Finish has produced over the years, especially in its *Dark Shadows* range. The fourth wall-breaking *The Darkest Shadow* centres around making a movie, *The Curse of Collinwood* by Mr D Curtis. Apparently based on a true story about an old house in Maine where all manner of terrible things happen.

Written by Nev Fountain, he recalls the commission: "It was right at the end of a really full year for Big Finish. I'd already written a story for *Dorian Gray*, Fifth Doctor adventures *The Widow's Assassin* and *The Curious Incident of the Doctor in the Night-time*, a *Mervyn Stone* audio and an episode of *Vienna*.

"I think my previous *Dark Shadows* story *The Eternal Actress* was well received and producers Joseph Lidster and David Darlington asked me if I'd like to return to using the character of Amanda Harris, this time meeting up

**THEY ASSUMED I WAS TAKING POT SHOTS AT DARK SHADOWS - THE MOVIE STARRING JONNY DEPP. I'VE ACTUALLY NEVER SEEN IT - I WAS JUST AMUSING MYSELF SATIRISING 1960s HOLLYWOOD IN GENERAL!**

NEV FOUNTAIN

with Quentin Collins before their tragic end in the series. They'd pictured this as an 'event' story being released on a double CD.

"For *The Darkest Shadow* I watched all the episodes of Quentin meeting up with Amanda in the 1800s, and the contemporary episodes of him meeting up with Amanda once she'd assumed the identity of actress Olivia Corey.

"I was aware I was writing a 'bridging' episode set in the 1960s, between the 1800s and the 1970s, so I wanted to get where the characters were in their particular 'arc' spot on.

"I think a lot of listeners thought I was already more au fait with *Dark Shadows* than I was in reality because they assumed I was taking pot shots at *Dark Shadows* - the movie starring Jonny Depp. I've

actually never seen it - I was just amusing myself satirising 1960s Hollywood in general!"

There's some cheeky fun with a nod to "Mr D Curtis" with Dan Curtis having created the series.

Nev agrees: "Well, the whole story was an exercise in breaking the fourth wall. The premise has Olivia Corey being cast as herself playing Amanda Harris in a movie about Collinwood in the 1800s, so all the quips and nods flow from that Pirandello vibe, which also fed into the 1960s vibe of art eating itself, hence Andy Warhol in scene one.

"The use of Mr D Curtis... well if you have to name a writer of a movie about Collinwood, why waste time with coming up with a fictional name when there's one sitting right there to hand?!"


How did Nev enjoy the finished play? He concludes: "I was very pleased with it. It had a strong cast headed by David Selby and Donna McKechnie, and even though it was a large cast they still had to double up to create more characters, which gave it an epic feel. I think the multiple settings helped make it feel like a blockbuster movie. I thought the Dorian Gray cameo worked very well and I loved the multiple Andy Warhols. I think the whole thing held together beautifully.

"This was the first time they'd had a writer pen a *Dark Shadows* without an agreed synopsis, and it was also the first time the *Dark Shadows* people accepted a script with no notes, which is a constant point of pride on my part! They really liked it which was so gratifying." **VORTEX**

### DARK SHADOWS THE DARKEST SHADOW

- RELEASED: JULY 2014
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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Derek Jacobi is no longer  
in the night garden to  
share his tales of terror...

# THE MASTER STORYTELLER

**ONE OF** the most terrifying aspects of the War Master played by Sir Derek Jacobi is just how calm he manages to be, at all times. Whether threatened with death or making tea, his beautiful velvety tones portray a man who is in charge of pretty much every situation.

Scott Handcock, in his final role as producer of the **War Master** range, tells *Vortex*: “When we first started making stories with this character, we tapped in very much to the idea that the Master effectively fled the time when things got out of hand – he’s always been someone

interested in self-preservation.

“So, rather than doing big battles with Daleks and Time Lords, the adventures were always a little bit more off the beaten track and cerebral. With every box set we’ve tried to do something slightly different, particularly working with Derek as we wanted to give him a range of things to do.

“The idea for the next release, **The War Master: Future Phantoms**, came out of wanting to do something more traditionally spooky. When I was in my 20s I listened to Derek narrating MR James for BBC

Audiobooks and there’s something wonderfully delicious about his voice reciting those old stories. The memory of that inspired this set – what if we devised a scenario where the Master is recounting tales in the style of MR James that have a slightly supernatural science fiction flavour to them?

“So, we have Derek Jacobi recounting tales of terror with a sort of giddy, full sadism!”

*For decades there have been rumours at St Simeon’s College: whispers of a door that somehow appears, once a year, in the depths of the building.*





Above (l-r): Annette Badland, Lorne Macfarquhan and Maya Saroya

Scott says: “The first story, *His Close Companions* by Jonathan Barnes, is possibly the most traditionally MR James of the stories. It’s about a young student recalling tales from his school days with a sinister entity plaguing him and his classmates.

“What’s lovely is it sets up the idea that the Master, while telling these stories to his own sort of undergraduate followers, gets to adopt a variety of guises.”

Jonathan admits to admiring MR James’s work: “Yes, I’m a huge fan! I’ve written quite a bit about him, and in his tradition and voice. For my money, in *Oh Whistle and I’ll Come to you, My Lad* he wrote one of the greatest short stories in the English language.

“Scott was looking for pitches to riff off the whole Oxbridge don telling spooky stories thing and I was keen to reflect one of MR James’s lesser-known tales – *A School Story* – and so I pitched something slightly inspired by that.

“It’s the first story in *Future Phantoms* so it had a fair bit of atmosphere to generate and set-up to provide... It’s a study in quiet menace, hopefully, I know there’s more terrifying stuff to come! A couple of students stumble on a room that isn’t always there, and a man inside who isn’t quite a man...



Above: Steffan Cennydd

He has a story to tell them – about schooldays and secrets kept and awful bargains struck – but there is a dreadful motive behind its telling...”

**SCOTT CONTINUES:** “The second story, *The Foxglove Cylinders* by James Goss, is set slightly further on in time and plays with the idea of an extra-terrestrial creature communicating with people through an ancient carving, the *Foxglove Cylinder*.

“It’s a story about obsession as well, with a young student being doggedly determined to make a great discovery and the terror he unleashes by succumbing to that.”

James says: “MR James mostly writes about upper class dons having miserable holidays, and I was wondering if there was mileage in having some MR James’s nastiness happen to a middle class undergraduate going to Oxbridge and having a miserable time. I accidentally seem to have

## IT’S SORT OF SALT BURN, IT’S SORT OF EVELYN WAUGH MEETS CTHULHU.

JAMES GOSS

written *Saltburn* with ghosts!

“It’s about a normal guy at university in the 1920s, surrounded by bright young things who are effortlessly successful at everything. He’s a plodder and he makes a discovery in the college library which brings him into conflict with the librarian. The two reluctantly embark on an adventure to decipher the mysterious cylinders he’s found – are they ancient pots or are they the keys to a lost civilisation that’s waiting to come back?”

“So yes, it’s sort of a ghost story, it’s sort of *Saltburn*, it’s sort of Evelyn Waugh meets Cthulhu. It’s nice to write something where the War Master takes a back seat to a very different character who may really be a slightly fusty librarian. Unless, of course, he has a terrible agenda all of his own...”

**THE SITTER** by Lizzie Hopley is the third tale in the set.

Scott says: “This was very much influenced by my love of BBC Sounds’ *The Battersea Poltergeist*. It was a brilliant docudrama which I recommend people check out if they’re able to. You have a modern-ish industrial estate,

kind of unassuming, the sort of place you don't expect there to be a haunting. But there's a very malevolent force inhabiting a domestic property and the Master comes to investigate."

Lizzie says: "I actually wrote *The Sitter* as a ghost story a few years ago for an Edinburgh Festival open night and never used it. It is utterly based on my old house and a waking nightmare I had going downstairs during the night. It's a relief to share

## IT'S BEEN GREAT TO EXPLORE THE CHARACTER OF THE MASTER SEPARATE TO THE DOCTOR

SCOTT HANDCOCK

the horror with others rather than have it just torture me – sorry!

"This is one of the creepiest stories I've invented, it gives me shivers just imagining Derek's voice saying the words. I've written for Derek many times now and it's astonishing what he can do with silence, never mind dialogue. His delivery is so personal, it seems just for you. Also, having met him, how can someone be so nice and yet be so scary?!"

Lizzie adds: "It will be brilliant hearing my old house feature in a Big Finish audio. I'm hoping it'll become notorious. Maybe featuring on ghost walks of London?!"

**SIGNAL AND** *I'll Come To You* concludes the set. Scott says: "The final story by Tim Foley is one of my favourites – mostly because of the cast! I finally got to work with Robert Glenister who's been on my casting bucket list for ages. I think he's an incredible actor.

"*Signal and I'll Come To You* is set on a broken-down train and is very claustrophobic. Train stations, tunnels and signal boxes are hugely evocative, particularly with the framing narrative. It starts off as one thing and ends up



Above (l-r): Celine Buckens and Jason Imlach

as something very, very different. It's typical Tim and it's why I love working with him. He's great."

Tim concludes: "We went into this knowing it was Scott's final set as the producer. It's a credit to him that we end not with a great big shebang but with character-driven ghost tales. I had a lot of fun with this one.

"My story is a mix of MR James and Charles Dickens. We're on a railway line at the site of a former accident. And I can't believe Robert is in one of my scripts. I love the actor so that's very special!"

**AS HE HANDS** over the reins to Robert Valentine as producer of *The War Master* range, Scott says: "My greatest pleasure, if I'm honest, is being able to establish a range with a villain as the protagonist. There is a sort of formula to it, I suppose, that the Master dupes people at the very last minute having pretended to be after one thing, and misleads people.

"But that's no different in a way from the formula, as it were, of the Doctor arriving somewhere and saving the day. It's been great to explore the character of the Master separate to

the Doctor and show how brilliant he is when he's not being thwarted.

"But, of course, it's an even greater honour to be able to revive the Derek Jacobi Master incarnation. He was seen so briefly on screen, and to give him a full lease of life and honour what we saw in *Utopia* has been just brilliant.

"I'm really curious to see where Rob takes this range now. It's lovely to know that the War Master lives on." **VORTEX**

### THE WAR MASTER FUTURE PHANTOMS



■ RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2024  
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# VORTEX MAIL

## THANK YOU

I just wanted to write in to give an email of appreciation to the Big Finish team. I know things have been really challenging for you all lately with the new website not working out, and with the amount of emails and social media responses coming in, I can imagine it has been really tough. I did want to thank you all for bringing back the old website, even if it's a temporary measure – it's like seeing an old, reliable friend again and I eagerly look forward to making some purchases again soon. So here is a thank you to Jason Haigh-Ellery, Nicholas Briggs, John Ainsworth, Kenny Smith, Chris Allen, Cheryl Bryant, Heather Challands, Sue Cowley, Emily Davis, Jackie Emery, Carly Fordyce, Sufyan Javaid, Karen Parks, Hannah Peel, Alfie Shaw, Oli Sinden, Scott Talbot, Jack Townley, Lizzie Wordsell, Stephanie Hornett, Mark Plastow, Steve Berry, Reanne Hawkins, Deanna Shore, Brenda Smith, Allison Taylor and I'm sure many, many more people involved with Big Finish who aren't mentioned in *Vortex* magazine (for the record I didn't copy and paste I actually typed them out in this email as you guys deserve the effort). Thank you all again and I hope that things will get better and easier for you all soon.

### ADAM ROSS

*Nick: Thanks so much, Adam. It's been a pretty traumatising time for all of our lovely, loyal customers and us alike. I'd certainly like to join you in your appreciation of everyone at Big Finish who has worked so hard, going above and beyond the call of duty at this difficult time.*

## MORE MILLER TIME?

With the Eighth Doctor soon to be sinking deeper into the Time War in *Uncharted 1* this October, I found myself thinking back to



that pledge he made himself at the end of *To the Death* about how “One day, [he] shall go back” and change Lucie Miller's fate. With old faces from the past soon making reappearances, but not quite who they appear to be, might a time be on the horizon for the Doctor to make good on that promise?

### JAMES BELCHER

*Nick: Hmm... a tricky one, James. I've always felt that going back and preventing Lucie's tragic fate would be kind of cheating and would undermine the impact of that final episode. But, I suppose, there are alternative timelines and of course the millions of adventures Lucie and the Doctor had that we haven't heard yet.*

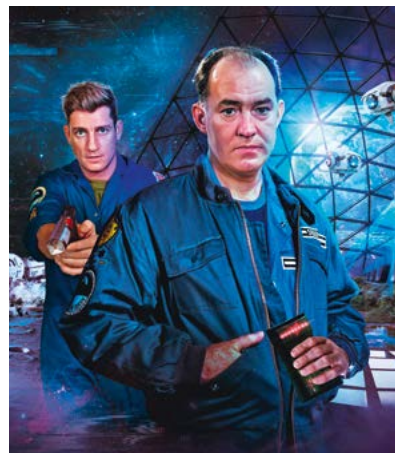
## NEST COTTAGE, JAGO AND LITEFOOT

Has Big Finish ever thought of expanding on the Nest Cottage stories? I love Mrs Wibbsey and the Fourth Doctor together. I know that you didn't create her (she has been mentioned in Big Finish stories, as has Hexford), but I'd love to hear Susan Jameson at Big

Finish again. Maybe Paul Magrs could write a one-off conclusion. Also, **Jago & Litefoot** may be the best *Doctor Who* spin-off Big Finish has ever done. It seems a shame that we can't get more audiobook series, I'd be the first to buy **Jago & Litefoot: Short Corks – A Short Story Collection**. It's just an idea, to keep the characters alive.

### MICHAEL MCGINLEY

*Nick: I have to admit that I was unaware that Mrs Wibbsey has been mentioned in Big Finish stories, Michael, I've never quite been able to see how that character fits into the continuity of the Fourth Doctor era. But, admittedly, I haven't listened to any of those Nest Cottage stories — a fabulously zany alternative take on the Fourth Doctor I believe.*



## (NATHAN) SPRINGING BACK?

I really enjoy both your **Blake's 7** and **Star Cops** offerings. Will there be further **Star Cops** stories?

### TIM

*Nick: I seriously hope we'll be doing more **Star Cops**, Tim. This last run has been very popular, so I'd be all in favour of that!* **VORTEX**



# AGAINST THE CLOCK

**HALLOWEEN IS** fast approaching which means it's the perfect time for a story to scare you to your core!

The October release in the **Torchwood** monthly range is *Widdershins* written by Guy Adams.

*One night, long ago, Iain tried to raise the devil. He walked the wrong way round an ancient stone in the village graveyard. He didn't think anything would happen, not really. But something did. Something far worse*

*than the Devil came to Llandyfh. And now, many years later, Iain's trying to work out what really happened that night. Did Torchwood ruin his life?*

Widdershins is a term meaning to go counter-clockwise, anti-clockwise or left hand-wise – or to walk around an object by always keeping it on the left.

Writer Guy tells *Vortex*: "Producer James Goss had been watching a programme on people recounting their experiences of alien abduction,

witnessing UFOs or experiencing unusual events and he thought there was probably something in those first person accounts with all of their inconsistencies and biases.

"He reckoned there could be a fun drama built around that and when James emailed me I agreed – I thought it was an interesting conceit – and *Widdershins* was built up from there."

Guy also added the meaning of the story's title into the mix as well.

He explains: "I can't remember

what I'd been reading – I think I was stuck in an Iain Sinclair loop on psychogeography and plugging into the land to try and understand the world by walking in it. Sinclair is particularly famous for his walks around London, constructing

and reanimating the history of the city via long foot journeys.

"I'd heard about the notion of walking widdershins – such a wonderful word – both rhythmically and aesthetically, it's just brilliant! And that notion has been stuck

in my head for some time.

"It was believed that walking opposite to the direction of the sun was unlucky, moving against the natural order of things. Or the idea that walking in a particular direction around a churchyard could have some kind of occult effect – a spell of the feet. But there's no general consensus as to what walking widdershins might do. Does it reanimate the dead? Does it invite the devil into your soul? Does it wear down one particular side of your gravel churchyard path? But the idea of it is interesting, it feels eerie."

Guy continues: "Psychogeography



Above (l-r), Charles Dale, Cerith Fynn and Catrin Powell

**IT FEELS IMPORTANT TO FIND NEW ANGLES ON HOW TO TELL STORIES OR HOW TO WORK WITH SOUND.**

GUY ADAMS



is a hard one to explain but in a basic sense it's the idea that we are affected by our environment. That the walls and streets are resonating with the ghosts, metaphorically speaking, of things that have happened there, and that in turn affects us as we move through them or we inhabit them so you end up with this circular feeding history of location and the people that live within it.

"It inclines towards the bizarre and absurd, and slightly kind of woolly thinking at times, but that's also creative, interesting and fun – as long as you don't apply it too heavily and seriously to your life.

"I think there's certainly a basic truth that we are affected by the environment that we exist in but we're never quite able to elucidate that in a manner that doesn't sound slightly strange – such as when you hear people say that a house has bad energy. These are obviously ways of trying to express some kind of psychological response to the

environment you're in and framing it in a language that makes sense to the person using that language."

The story also liberated Guy to try some experimental writing. He says: "I'm always looking for the

*at the end of the call. Never before has staying on the end of the line been so important for one man...*

Aaron says: "Unusually, there wasn't a particular brief for this one. *Bad Connection* came from an



Above (l-r): Jason Watkins and Indira Varma

thing I haven't done. I've written a lot of Big Finish adventures now and I've always enjoyed playing with the format. It feels important to find new angles on how to tell stories or how to work with sound.

"I adapted *Children of the Stones* with my wife, Alexandra Benedict, for BBC Sounds and that played with the notion of a documentary feel. There was a little seed in that and it's kind of grown into this. It's properly letting go of a lot of the reassuring elements of audio drama, such as a cast of actors that play themselves as opposed to three strange people playing all the parts. There's an artifice to that which I think is unusual, fun and interesting."

**NOVEMBER SEES** the release of **Torchwood Bad Connection** by Aaron Lamont.

*When Emlyn answers a call in a phone box on Penarth Pier, he finds Suzie Costello*

idea I had in the middle of another script that's been hanging around for about two years! I think I said to the script editor something along the lines of, 'What would be the most Aaron Lamont idea ever?' And *Bad Connection* is it. It's also probably the most high-concept idea I've ever had.

It started off as '*The Mist* in a Phonebox' but perhaps it's better described as '*Alien* in a Phonebox', specifically the scene where Sigourney Weaver's trapped in a cupboard with a big nasty monster looking in on her. And that's probably all you need to know!"

Indira Varma reprises her role as **Torchwood's** Suzie Costello after her recent appearance as the Duchess in **Doctor Who** on TV.

Aaron says: "I'm still not sure I really understand Suzie. I think she thinks she's a good person – and maybe she is. I suppose the question is how much of what she

becomes is because of Torchwood and how much is already there?"

*Vortex* asks what makes her so interesting to write? Aaron explains: "The fun comes from putting her up against someone who isn't going to kowtow to her every instruction. And trying to understand her. And from Indira who absolutely brings out every complexity in her. I may not get Suzie but Indira makes me both sympathise and hate her – sometimes in the space of a single line."

The story features Jason Watkins as Emlyn. Aaron tells *Vortex*: "I didn't actually know that until you just said it (it's not uncommon

## ALIEN IN A PHONEBOX, SPECIFICALLY THE SCENE WHERE SIGOURNEY WEAVER'S TRAPPED IN A CUPBOARD...


AARON LAMONT

for us writers not to know the casting until the press release goes out!). That's brilliant. He's brilliant. Indira Varma and Jason Watkins... that's quite a starry cast, isn't it?"

"The highlight for me is always being asked to write something. And on this one successfully using the title from an old Yazoo song without James overruling it...!"

### TORCHWOOD WIDDERSHINS

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*The Quintessence* (BOX SET)

DW | THE NEW ADVENTURES  
OF BERNICE SUMMERFIELD  
*The Eternity Club 2*

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*Saving Time* (BOX SET)

VAM PD  
*Volume One* **DLO**

TORCHWOOD *Widdershins* (88)

## NOVEMBER 2024

DW | SPECIAL RELEASES  
*The Sirens of Time: Redux* (VARIOUS)

DW | THE SEVENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES  
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*Coda: The Final Act*

DW | ONCE AND FUTURE  
*Coda: The Final Act* (SPECIAL EDITION)

DW | THE WAR MASTER  
*Future Phantoms* (BOX SET)

DW | THE NEW ADVENTURES  
OF BERNICE SUMMERFIELD  
*The Eternity Club 3*

TORCHWOOD *Bad Connection* (89)

## DECEMBER 2024

DW | THE FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES  
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DW | THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES  
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*Unknown Soldiers* (BOX SET)

DW | THE PATERNOSTER GANG  
*Trespassers 3: No Place Like Home*  
(BOX SET)

DW | THE NEW ADVENTURES  
OF BERNICE SUMMERFIELD  
*The Eternity Club 4*

TORCHWOOD *Reflect* (90)

## JANUARY 2025

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DW | THE FUGITIVE DOCTOR  
*Most Wanted* (BOX SET)

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TORCHWOOD *Ianto's Inferno* (91)

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THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

# VORTEX



ISSUE 188  
OCTOBER 2024  
**BIG** FOR THE LOVE  
OF FINISH  
STORIES

# ONCE MORE

**ONCE AND FUTURE'S FINAL EPISODE BRINGS THE FUGITIVE DOCTOR TO BIG FINISH...**

**DOCTOR WHO: THE SEVENTH DOCTOR**

## **THE DOCTOR AND CARNACKI**

**THE SEVENTH DOCTOR HAS A NEW – BUT FAMILIAR – FRIEND AT HIS SIDE...**

