

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX



ISSUE 189
NOVEMBER 2024
BIG FOR THE LOVE
OF STORIES

THE CURSE OF TIME

**A VERY SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY
FOR ONE PARTICULAR TRAVELLER
IN TIME AND SPACE...**

DOCTOR WHO: THE EIGHTH DOCTOR

THE STUFF OF LEGEND: LIVE!

**"FOR A FEW SECONDS, WE COULD
BELIEVE WE WERE ROCK STARS!"**





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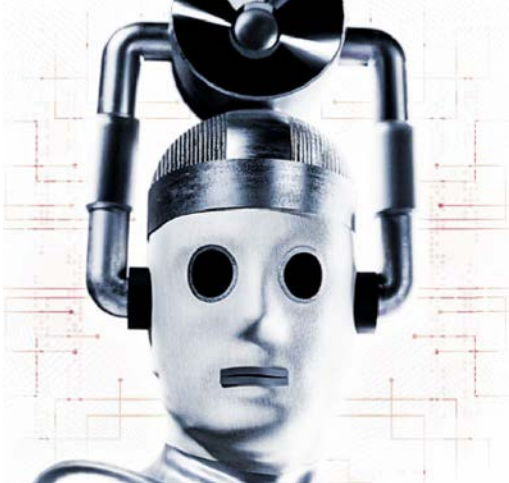
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CYBERGENESIS

BIG FINISH'S *Lost Stories* return in 2025 and reveal the origins of one of the Doctor's greatest enemies in *Genesis of the Cybermen*. This story comes from the mind of one of the Cybermen's original creators, Gerry Davis, the writer who first devised the Mondasian monsters with Kit Pedler.

Gerry pitched a story about their creation in the early 1980s but it was rejected by television series producer John Nathan-Turner. The adventure's existence was first revealed in the 1988 book *Cyberman* by David Banks.

A king lies dying in his castle. His eldest son Prince Sylvan is an artist with no desire to inherit a kingdom, while Prince Dega toils in his laboratory, dedicated to saving their dying people from extinction. They will all burn unless he succeeds. When the TARDIS arrives, its crew believe they can help. But this planet is Mondas. And this is the Genesis of the Cybermen...

Now, the story has been adapted by David K Barnes into a full-cast audio drama. *Genesis of the Cybermen* stars Peter Davison with Janet Fielding, Sarah Sutton and Matthew Waterhouse.

Producer and director David O'Mahony tells *Vortex*:

"The Cybermen have been one of the Doctor's greatest opponents throughout the ages. They are brutal, uncaring and dedicatedly vicious. Gerry's ideas about their origin never made it onto TV so it's a total pleasure to bring this story to life with the Fifth Doctor. Setting it before the TV episode *Earthshock* gives it the feel of a brilliant prequel to the impending Cybermen stories that we all know and love." **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO GENESIS OF THE CYBERMEN

- RELEASED: MARCH 2025
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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EDITORIAL

AS THE editor of *Vortex*, I have the honour of speaking with people involved at pretty much every level at Big Finish – from executive producers Jason Haigh-Elery and Nicholas Briggs, to the actors playing the Doctors and companions as well as guest cast members, writers, producers, directors, sound designers, musicians and cover artists.

Last year, I was invited to the **Doctor Who** convention Gallifrey One in Los Angeles as part of the Big Finish team, which was an honour and a pleasure. Whilst there, I met up with Matthew Jacobs, the writer of the **Doctor Who TV Movie**, having previously interviewed him for my own Eighth Doctor podcast.

Matthew knows all about Big Finish and its great releases, and mentioned that he'd be interested in writing an audio script for Paul McGann. So, knowing that Matt Fitton, the Eighth Doctor range script editor was also at the convention, I was able to bring Matthew and Matt together and let the conversations begin.

Matt asked Matthew to submit some story suggestions and a few weeks later Matthew and I had a Zoom call where he ran through 20 or so ideas; some were similar to stories Big Finish has already done – and others not. We narrowed the list down to a few outlines which Matthew presented to Matt. One of those shortlisted ideas, *Puccini and the Doctor*, is going to be released this December as the first story in **The Eighth Doctor Adventures: Deadly Strangers** box set. I'm absolutely delighted for Matthew – who no longer has just one line to credit his **Doctor Who** career! **VORTEX**

Kerry



It's time to celebrate a very special anniversary for one particular traveller in time and space...

50 FOURTH!

IT'S HARD to believe but it's 50 years since Tom Baker first donned his scarf and took Sarah Jane Smith and Harry Sullivan on a series of adventures in time and space.

To mark the anniversary, Tom stars alongside Sadie Miller as Sarah and Christopher Naylor as Harry in **The Fourth Doctor Adventures – The Curse of Time**, a story set between television episodes *Revenge of the Cybermen* and *Terror of the Zygons*.

After being dragged through a rip in the time vortex, the TARDIS returns the Doctor, Sarah and Harry to Earth, where something strange is afoot.

Producer David Richardson says: "Executive producer Nicholas Briggs asked me if I'd like to produce a special to mark the 50th anniversary of the Fourth Doctor, and I gladly accepted with the suggestion that the

anniversary aspect should be that it is a bonus story in the Season 12 arc.

"I've produced quite a few anniversary specials for Big Finish and I'd thought that *Once and Future* would be my last – but I could see a way of doing this without bringing in a flotilla of returning foes. I wanted to sneak an extra story in between *Revenge of the Cybermen* and *Terror of the Zygons* as there was room in terms of continuity and it gave us a chance to explore the Nerva Beacon arc a little more.

"We saw the cryogenic repository on Nerva in the TV episode *The Ark in Space*; we went to the post-solar flares Earth in *The Sontaran Experiment*; and went back to the earlier Nerva in *Revenge of the Cybermen*. Here we're back on the post-apocalyptic Earth again, many years after Field Major Styre visited."

How much of a joy is there bringing Tom together with Chris and Sadie?

David says: "They're just a lovely team. Chris loves Tom's era of **Doctor Who** anyway, so as well as being perfect casting as Harry he approaches every day with the joy and wonder of just being there playing the role. Sadie was terrific as Sarah Jane from the first day we recorded with her on the **Lost Story** *Return of the Cybermen*, and she's really grown since. Like Chris, she has so much respect for **Doctor Who** and for Tom; and Tom has said really lovely things to me about them both.

"It was two joyful days in studio with the added bonus that we had Terence Wilton as our guest star. Terence played Mark in *Invasion of the Dinosaurs* in TV Season 11. Strictly speaking he was one year out from appearing in Season 12, but it was close!"



Above (l-r): Christopher Naylor and Sadie Miller

THE STORY has been written by Jonathan Morris. Jonny says: "I was given a brief for the story by script editor John Dorney which was to write the 'final story of Season 12 that was never made'.

Because, as we all know, that season is only 20 episodes long, and the final four-part *Terror of the Zygons* was shuffled along to be the first story of Season 13.

"The brief was also that the story should be set on Earth but thousands of years after the solar flares when Earth has been recolonised. Also that it should have a partly sympathetic and colourful human villain working for a more powerful villain, as that was the format they used around that time. And the last part of the brief was to write something in harmony with the gothic era of Philip Hinchcliffe and Robert Holmes.

"Fitting another story into the continuity wasn't particularly difficult though I had to watch *The Ark in Space* and *The Sontaran Experiment* again to take a few notes of everything we are told about the solar flares and so forth. And that meant I could have a little fun, imagining that they would be re-using the ark sets once again, but this time to serve as an underground bunker. But generally, the trick was

TOM CAME UP WITH A RATHER IDIOSYNCRATIC PRONUNCIATION OF THE VILLAIN'S NAME...

JONATHAN MORRIS



Above: Tom Baker

to come up with something that developed the themes of that season, all these civilisations that have either

reverted to savagery, or are stuck living underground to survive."

Discussing the story, Jonny says: "My idea for the story was to do something that hadn't been done in Season 12, which was an adventure set in history. But my brief was to set it in the far future so that led me to the idea of having humanity revert to a sort of medieval society, where there could be a little twist that it turns out to be the future. And to tell a story in a sort of folk horror mode, all about haunted woods and ruined castles as well as village inns, creepy travelling players and sinister monks.

"And then, following my brief, I thought, 'Okay, the first villain should be a kind of evil circus ringmaster, Faustus Black, and he could be working for a villain who has fallen on hard times, shall we say'.

"The one thing I thought was important was to include a really strong female character because there weren't many of them in Season 12, but to make it an older lady like Ohica and Amelia Rumford, a bit sharp and a little bit eccentric. So that's where Cassava, the Mother Superior came from."

Jonny adds: "My main memory is that in his session Tom came up with a rather idiosyncratic pronunciation of the villain's name, Zaphiel Ixon, which meant that all the other actors had to be coached on using the same pronunciation.

"I could be grumpy about the change but to be honest I'm flattered and delighted that Tom put his own spin on it." **VORTEX**

THE FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES THE CURSE OF TIME



■ RELEASED: DECEMBER 2024
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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The Eighth Doctor, Charley and Audacity are ready to encounter...



STRANGER DANGER

LAST YEAR saw the introduction of Lady Audacity Montague played by Jaye Griffiths alongside the established dynamic of Paul McGann's Eighth Doctor and Charlotte Pollard played by India Fisher. And no one expected Audacity to be joining the Doctor in the TARDIS, particularly when given Charley's surprise appearance at the end of **The Eighth Doctor Adventures: Audacity**. But now, the trio are back for more adventures in **The Eighth Doctor Adventures: Deadly Strangers**.

Script editor Matt Fitton tells *Vortex*: "It's always a gamble when you bring a new character into

the mix, but we knew that Jaye had really good chemistry with Paul from our **Time War** series so casting her as Audacity was a great move from director Ken Bentley and producer David Richardson.

"Jaye and India get on like a house on fire – it's like they've known each other forever. And that all comes through in the interplay between Charley and Audacity. It's a sisterly kind of relationship they have, with them sort of steering the Doctor along the way as they look after one another. It's interesting as they're both historical companions but from different times. For Charley, Audacity is from an era that she has read about, so it's fun

to have that angle to it as well."

The opening adventure, *Puccini and the Doctor*, is the first script for **Doctor Who** by Matthew Jacobs since he wrote **Doctor Who: The Movie** (see boxout). Matt says: "One of the joys of planning this story was logging onto Zoom and having a chat with Matthew in LA and me in Oxford. He's a fascinating chap to talk with, and from those conversations we came up with a few ideas.

"I asked for a few different outline pitches for this Doctor and companion set, and then after discussing them with David, we just thought, 'It's got to be the Puccini one!' It recalls Paul's debut on *The Movie*, and it just fell together beautifully. It's a really lovely,



Above (l-r): Jaye Griffiths, India Fisher and Paul McGann

serendipitous comeback for Matthew. "He was very complimentary about everything that Big Finish has done with the Eighth Doctor, how far we've pushed the character. That's coming from an established and experienced TV writer, so it's quite satisfying to know that we're hitting the mark with a character that he created."

WOMEN'S DAY *Off* by Lisa McMullin is the second story on the set. Lisa also wrote *The Devouring*, the first adventure for Audacity. Matt says: "This is a historical story set during the women's strike in Iceland in the 1970s, when women around the world made a stand to say they are doing just as much work as men, but they are not given equal status, pay and rights. "There are elements within this story as the country falls into chaos which are based on historical fact. For example, there really was a fight in a butcher's shop because they didn't have sausages which was the



Above: George Watkins

easiest thing for the men to cook!" Lisa continues: "What a TARDIS team this is! Audacity will always have a special place in my heart because I wrote her very first story and that's such a rare privilege. And now she's off having adventures in time and space with the Doctor and

Charley, living her very best life!

"Matt needed a historical adventure and I was quite keen to do a modern historical (if that makes sense). Many of my recent historicals have had real-life female figures at their heart. But with two fictional characters like Charley and Audacity to play with I thought it would be nice to take a real feminist event from their 'future' and drop them into it. "It's a story about solidarity and

WHEN YOU LOOK BEYOND HEADLINES AND CLICKBAIT - WHEN YOU DIG DEEPER - YOU CAN FIND HUMANITY BEING MAGNIFICENT.

LISA McMULLIN

the importance of having someone (even just one person) on your side. It's about the importance of treating people with kindness - helping people even if they're strangers. And it's about how fear fuels violence. The antidote to which is kindness.

"I love writing stories based on true events. Truth is always, *always*, stranger and more interesting than fiction *because* it's true. I get quite cynical watching the news and scrolling through social media - you can be tricked into thinking humanity is rotten. But when you look beyond headlines and clickbait - when you dig deeper - you can find humanity being magnificent."

THE FINAL story is *The Gloaming* by Lauren Mooney and Stewart Pringle. Matt says: "I just love Lauren and Stewart's work. They first caught my attention with *The Grey Mare*, a really spooky ghost story they wrote for *Torchwood*. But their writing can be very funny as well as I know from their writing for *The Paternoster Gang*."

Lauren says: "We were wrapping up our last Eighth Doctor story, *Lost Hearts*, when Matt asked us about writing an story for the range but

with Audacity and Charley, rather than Liv and Helen. We were asked to pitch ideas for stories on future earth, or a historical set in the more distant past. *The Gloaming* was an idea we'd been toying with for a while though it changed a fair bit between pitch and treatment. It was originally inspired by sleep paralysis."

Stuart continues: "I think it actually started as an entry I wrote for the Paul Spragg Memorial Opportunity back in 2017. It was called *Night of the Hag* and it featured the Seventh Doctor and Ace facing off against the

A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE CAN GO TO SIT OUT THE BAD TIMES...

LAUREN MOONEY



Above: Tim McInerney

sleep paralysis (which I've suffered from at various stressful periods of my life) entity referred to as the 'Hag'. It obviously didn't win, but the idea kept bobbing around and the core of it has ended up in this story. It's developed and changed quite a bit, particularly when Matt asked us if we could include a certain monster from the Doctor's past."

Summing up the story, Lauren says: "*The Gloaming* is a sleep clinic for the super-rich – a place where people can go to sit out the bad times and wait for the good times to come back. But there is something stirring in the darkness. Maybe the bad

"PUCCINI!"

Doctor Who *The Movie* author Matthew Jacobs is back writing for the Eighth Doctor again.



PUCCINI AND *the Doctor* tells the story of the composer and the Time Lord – partly hinted at in the 1996 film.

Matthew says: "Vortex editor Kenny put Matt Fitton, script editor of **The Eighth Doctor Adventures**, and I in touch. We had a chat and Matt asked if I'd like to pitch a story for Big Finish.

"My initial response to him was absolutely yes, but I didn't know whether or not I'd be any good at writing Paul's Doctor after his development with Big Finish as he's so much more rounded and a darker character than we started off with.

"I've listened to a lot of Big Finish and their audios are some of the most sophisticated **Doctor Who** that has ever been made. They have a tremendous complexity, and obviously the special effects are far better because it's mostly all in your mind!"

Puccini and the Doctor was chosen after Matthew submitted a number of pitches to Matt. Matthew explains: "I came up with around 20 ideas. Unfortunately as I was putting together the submissions, I had a kind of a blood clot that travelled up from my leg and clambered into my left lung, almost killing me. Vascular

surgeons pulled out the clot and it looked like a little hot dog! But that experience galvanised me, and I picked up from the story that's laid down in the *TV Movie* to doing an adventure with Puccini.

"I came up with this story about the first performance of *Madame Butterfly* in 1904

I'VE LISTENED TO A LOT OF BIG FINISH AND THEIR AUDIOS ARE SOME OF THE MOST SOPHISTICATED DOCTOR WHO THAT HAS EVER BEEN MADE.

MATTHEW JACOBS

which was a disaster when they opened it. It was only two acts long. Puccini wanted it to be shorter and everybody hated it. The writers went away for three months, added an act, and it became the *Madame Butterfly* that we know and love today. So I thought there might be a story there, especially as we know an earlier Doctor met Puccini around the time of his death. This story is set at a time when it feels like we've just closed the doors, more or less, on *The Movie* – it's only a few adventures later.

Matthew enjoyed the experience of writing for Charlotte Pollard and Lady Audacity Montague. He says: "Oh, yes they're great. They're more than supporting characters, they're like family, which is pure **Doctor Who**.

"I think Charley has a crush on the Doctor, and I really wanted to play with that. And the thing I love about Audacity is that she doesn't really like obeying rules. They're both great people." **VORTEX**



Above (l-r): Joye Griffiths, India Fisher, Abigail McKern, Paul McGann, Homer Todiwala and Graham Seed

times are going to find them out. "Gloaming is a lovely word (no longer much in use) for dusk – when it's growing dark but not yet dark. It seemed like the kind of thing a future mega-corp might call their sleep clinic – the end of the day, the nights drawing in, sleep approaching – but it also has a double meaning in the story that will hopefully become clear as you listen."

Stuart agrees: "Just such a great word isn't it? Byron uses it in his *Elegy on Newstead Abbey* but it's a much older word than that. An Anglo-Saxon word. So it felt exciting to push it into the far future."

DIRECTOR KEN Bentley enjoyed the experience of working with the three leading cast members in Paul, India and Jaye. He says: "They really are a huge amount of fun to work with. One of the jobs of a director can be to keep the energy up in the studio so everybody's actively engaged, but with these three I don't need to worry. They're so full of beans that



Above: Molly Harris

everybody else is swept along for the ride. Recordings really are a joy.


"And it was a treat to work with Tim McInnerny again, I didn't realise it had been so long. Each episode in this box set was a reunion of sorts. Tania Rodrigues in *Puccini*, Kate Terence in *Women's Day Off* and Graham Seed in *The Gloaming*. It's

always lovely to find new roles for wonderful actors you've worked with before. I've worked with Homer Todiwala a few times but in *The Gloaming* he steals every scene he's in. And it's always great to work with new actors for the first time too. Molly Harris and Will Huggins are definitely both keepers!" **VORTEX**

THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES
DEADLY STRANGERS



- RELEASED: DECEMBER 2024
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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Big Finish fans were given the chance to see the magic happen in front of their very own eyes in September...

LIVING LEGEND

EAGER BIG Finish listeners descend en masse upon London on the 12th and 13th of September. *The Stuff of Legend* was the first Big Finish production to be performed live in front of an audience to mark 25 years of *Doctor Who* Big Finish audio dramas, attended by several thousand across the quartet of performances at the Cadogan Hall, Chelsea.

Writer Robert Valentine sat at the back of the theatre for all four performances, having also watched the two days of rehearsals beforehand. Rehearsal days are

something of a novelty for Big Finish and *Vortex* was also present as director Barnaby Edwards put the cast members through their paces, along with checking the music and sound effects.

The creative process was fascinating to behold as Barney and the cast and crew brought the script to life. My favourite bit from the rehearsal was Alex Macqueen being particularly keen to get the maximum humour possible from a cliffhanger. Several ideas were worked on before they settled on the perfect way to do it.

Big Finish chairman Jason Haigh-Ellery tells *Vortex*: "It was rather humbling to watch the first matinee performance on the Saturday with 900 *Doctor Who* fans who were (nearly) as excited as me to see the audio adventures of the Eighth Doctor come alive. "As I sat there watching the actors, director and foley operator take to the stage it took me back to the old BBC studios in Bristol where we recorded Paul McGann's first audio adventure with India Fisher by his side as the adventuress Charley Pollard. It was May 2000 – almost



Above (l-r): Paul McGann and India Fisher

half my lifetime ago – or a few moments ago depending on how you perceive time travel on audio!

“We’re 24 years on and so much has changed... yet so much is the same. That first recording session not only had Paul and India but also Nicholas Briggs and Barney – all four of them on stage in front of me now. We’ve remained friends all these years, bonded by this fantastic world we’ve created together.

“Paul had only had one television movie to show us his Doctor, and when that didn’t go forward as a television series it felt like he was owed his own series of new audio adventures. We were able

FOR A FEW SECONDS, WE COULD BELIEVE WE WERE ROCK STARS!

NICHOLAS BRIGGS

to bring back the Eighth Doctor because of the faith and support from fans in Big Finish who gave us the subscriptions we needed to finance those first recordings.

“Looking around Cadogan Hall as the excitement grew in the audience, I recognised many faces who I had seen at conventions and indeed sold CDs to all those years ago. Thank you for sticking with us for 24 years of the Eighth Doctor – we couldn’t have done it without you.”



Above (l-r): Nicholas Briggs and Gabriel Clark

WRITER ROB says:

“Watching *The Stuff of Legend* with packed audiences was an utter delight. The fans brought so much energy to the proceedings, and seeing the actors feed off it was electric.

“It was the perfect way to celebrate 25 years of **Doctor Who** at Big Finish, because without the listeners we wouldn’t still be having all these adventures in space and time.”

Nick, who impressed with his live switches of different Dalek voices, was delighted with the show.

He says: “The whole experience of doing this was, at the point of performance, exhilarating. And the welcome from the audience was

so tumultuous as to be instantly corrupting. For a few seconds, we could believe we were rock stars!

"*The Stuff of Legend* went down an absolute storm and the audience was with us all the way, spontaneously bursting into applause when a Dalek fell off a cliff or laughing out loud at sneaky references to *Withnail and I*. We all loved it." Alex, who rarely performs on stage, agrees, saying: "It was magical!"

Jason adds: "After the weekend, I was delighted by the wonderfully positive response to *The Stuff of Legend*. It was a great way for our

YOU'LL HEAR THE LAUGHTER, THE CHEERS, THE GASPS...

ROBERT VALENTINE

loyal Big Finish listeners, whether they've been with us since day one or more recently come on board, to see just what's involved, and the hard work and fun that we have.

"Our audiences across the four performances at the Cadogan Hall were wonderful and all got into the spirit of things very quickly.

"Director, Barney, and our wonderful cast led by Paul – India, Nick and Alex – all did sterling work, and I'm delighted that we've been able to showcase the talents of some of the many wonderful people we have in our Big Finish family.

"I hope everyone enjoys hearing the live version of *The Stuff of Legend* – it certainly captures the joy of the production."

The Stuff of Legend – Live is being released in December and will be assembled from the best moments from all four of the performances. The audience, too, will feature as part of the drama, having recorded moments which will be added into the sound design mix.

Rob adds: "There was a real party atmosphere at Cadogan Hall which was totally fitting for a birthday bash, and that's why I'm really excited about the release of *The Stuff of Legend – The Live Show*."

"The stage performances were effectively our 'takes', and from those we're cutting together the final audio production. You'll hear the laughter, the cheers, the gasps and all the audience participation – including the sound of thousands of Robomen – that made the run so magical." **VORTEX**



Above (1–2): Paul McGann and India Fisher



Above: Alex Macquoen




Above: Barnaby Edwards

THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES THE STUFF OF LEGEND: LIVE



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BOOK CLUB

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CARNACKI THE GHOST FINDER

THE SEVENTH Doctor is about to be joined on his adventures by Thomas Carnacki, the fictional occult detective created by English fantasy writer William Hope Hodgson.

Carnacki is the protagonist in a series of six short stories published between 1910 and 1912 in *The Idler* magazine and *The New Magazine*. Released on audio by Big Finish in 2016, the adventures are performed by Dan Starkey and Joseph Kloska.

Producer Scott Handcock says:

"The Carnacki stories are fantastic. Hodgson's writing is so wonderfully rich and evocative it made sense for us to bring them to life in a series of equally fantastic readings. The first six tales, especially, are incredibly atmospheric. A cross between Conan Doyle and MR James where Carnacki finds himself investigating supernatural happenings in the early twentieth century."

The stories released are *The Gateway of the Monster*, *The House Among the Laurels*, *The Whistling Room*, *The Horse of the Invisible*, *The Searcher of the End House* and *The Thing Invisible*.

Scott continues: "Carnacki is a supernatural investigator who travels the country debunking supposed hauntings, deploying the very latest gadgets in order to do so. The adventures are wonderfully atmospheric and ahead of their time, whilst still playing to the conventions of both detective and ghost stories from the period."

"The stories are full of charm and dread with Carnacki serving as a ready-made narrator as he recounts his tales."

When it came to casting, Scott



Above: Dan Starkey

ALL OF A SUDDEN THE PROSE BECAME A LOT BETTER IN THE WAY IT'S PUNCTUATED...

DAN STARKEY

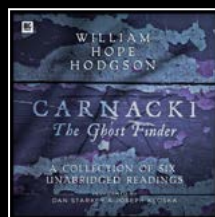
says: "Carnacki sits in that strange limbo between basic audiobook and enhanced reading. In terms of the sound design, we very quickly realised adding effects to this release would distract from Hodgson's language, so we wanted actors who could command the dialogue and bring it to life, and Dan was an obvious choice for our Carnacki."

"He's a fantastic actor, not to mention one of the best audiobook readers out there, so I knew he could tackle

all the challenges we threw at him. And, as chance would have it, we were working together in Cardiff when I happened to mention I was going to be taking these stories into studio, and he was incredibly excited by the idea. Not because he thought he might get work but because, knowing the stories, he genuinely loved the idea of them finding a wider audience. Channelling enthusiasm like that always gives these things a little extra something."

Dan tells *Vortex*: "I became aware of the Carnacki stories through a pretty tenuous connection – Andrew Cartmel – who had written a **Doctor Who** novella (*Foreign Devils*), years ago. "They're like Sherlock Holmes, but with added spookiness! Some of them are great ghost stories but some of them are people pretending to be ghosts. The prose style is very Edwardian, but what I found really fascinating when I was performing them in the studio, was that they change. After the first couple of stories, all of a sudden the prose became a lot better in the way it's punctuated – and it's far easier to speak. It's amazing how effective a good editor can be on the actual prose!" **VORTEX**

**BIG FINISH CLASSICS
CARNACKI: THE GHOST FINDER**



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■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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TWENTY GLORIOUS YEARS

IN A YEAR OF CELEBRATIONS AT BIG FINISH, WE MARK THE ANNIVERSARY OF SPIN-OFF SERIES GALLIFREY...

DURING THE recording of the **Doctor Who** 40th anniversary audio drama *Zagreus*, producer Gary Russell saw the potential in a series with Romana, Leela and K9 at its heart.

Within a year, **Gallifrey** was released with Lalla Ward, Louise Jameson and John Leeson reprising their familiar characters, augmented by a host of others including CIA Coordinator Narvin (played by Séan Carlsen, Cardinal Braxiatel (Miles Richardson) and Acting-President Valyes (Steven Wickham).

The series flourished under Gary, Scott Handcock and most recently Heather Challands as producers. To

mark the 20th anniversary, a special download only release is on the way.

Heather tells *Vortex*: “**Gallifrey: Echoes Through Eternity** is a collection of four short stories, narrated by stars of the range, that take place across the entire timeline of Big Finish’s output. From the early days of Romana’s presidency right through to the heart of the Time War. It’s a celebration of writers, actors and the eras that have helped make up the history of this whole grand adventure – and it’s a bit of a thank you to the fans as well.

“Séan Carlsen reads the first and last of the stories as Narvin. All the stories are in chronological order and there

was no better way of celebrating the series than by taking a character who has been there at the start and is still in the thick of it now. Especially one who has been through so much.

“The second adventure *The Questing Beast* is read by Miles Richardson, returning to the role of Braxiatel after about seven years. Miles is an absolute gentleman and it was a lovely thing to have him reading such a bonkers story! And then we’ve got *In Search of Lost Time* performed by Sophie Aldred. I really jumped at the chance of doing something with Ace, and Sophie reads so beautifully. It’s really ace!”

THE FIRST story is *Damned If You Do* by Gary Russell. Heather says: “Asking Gary to be involved was a no-brainer. When I took over **Gallifrey**, I was very aware of the history it had. There wasn’t



Above: Louise Jameson (top) and Lalla Ward

ever a time, when considering doing a celebratory release for the anniversary, that we weren't going to ask Gary."

Gary says: "I'm delighted to have been asked to contribute because it's my favourite thing that I did during my era at Big Finish. Everything came together during those first three seasons. The fact there's still **Gallifrey** releases going on, 20 years later, is nothing short of amazing. I'm over the moon and I couldn't be happier – it's in very safe hands with Heather producing.

"When I was given my brief by script editor Matt Fitton, he asked if I'd like to do two different Narvin stories, one to open and one to close the set, in two different time zones. *Damned If You Do* has similarities to *Erasure*, the **Short Trip** that I wrote which is set early in Narvin's career as a CIA agent.

"It is close to the start of the Gallifrey range, around series two, so Narvin is still quite arrogant and grumpy, and doesn't like Romana. He doesn't like Leela either, and he doesn't understand why there are aliens at the university."

IT'S MY FAVOURITE THING THAT I DID DURING MY ERA AT BIG FINISH.

GARY RUSSELL

The second story, *The Questing Beast* by Georgia Cook and Fio Trethewey, features the return of Braxiatel. They tell *Vortex*: "As fans of the series and writers on the most recent **Gallifrey War Room** set, it was an honour to be part of the celebrations for the whole **Gallifrey** series. It was particularly great to work together on this story. While we've both worked on the same box sets before, our stories have always been separate. It's been lovely to write an adventure that combines both of our strengths, for a series we love so much.

"Brax has fallen through the time vortex, and now he's faced with another version of Gallifrey.

A world more fantasy-based than he's accustomed to."

The third story, *In Search of Lost Time*, has been written by Una McCormack. She says: "It's always nice when people ask you to take part in a celebration. But I was particularly pleased to be asked to write for this – **Gallifrey** was, I think, my first Big Finish commission. And then to know that Sophie would be reading the story was an absolute thrill.

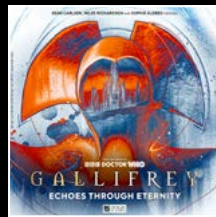
"As I recall, my brief was a single line about Ace being trained or used as an operative in the field. And I stretched that brief about as far as it was possible for it to go."

Of the story, Una says: "Old operatives never die, they just wait until they're needed again."

Damned if You Don't by Gary concludes the set. He says: "I had to jump forward for this one to the Time War. My approach was to write for Seán as a real person – he comes over for coffee every so often. I'm hearing that side of his voice – his and Narvin's are quite different. Narvin is a definite performance by Seán but I suspect as the years have gone on, the lines between Narvin and Seán Carlsen have blurred considerably!

"I should point out that Narvin is very much Alan Barnes's creation. He wrote him. I had nothing to do with the writing of the first season other than the fact that I said to everybody, "Alan has written this first story and we should be putting Narvin in as a regular because the character is really, really good." Narvin's not my baby – maybe I wet-nursed him – he's Alan's baby!" **VORTEX**

GALLIFREY ECHOES THROUGH ETERNITY



■ RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2024
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TWO-FACE

THE PATERNOSTER GANG ENCOUNTERS ANOTHER ALIEN RACE AND A NEW INCARNATION OF THE DOCTOR...

JENNY FLINT is in two places at once. She's been captured – but apparently by herself. And one of the Gang has just been shot.

The Paternoster Gang returns for the third box set in *Trespassers – No Place Like Home*.

Script editor Matt Fitton says: “In *Trespassers* volume three, we find out a lot more about the trespassers and who it is that’s following in the Gang’s footsteps. The opener, *Doppelgängers*, picks up right after the cliffhanger ending of the previous set where we know there are two Jennys in play – one of them good, one of them bad.

“And when we find out that there’s a shapeshifter on the loose within Paternoster Row and they can take on the form of any of the Gang, that leads to a classic farce.”

Doppelgängers is written and directed by Ken Bentley. Ken says: “All Matt told me was that I’d have to deal with the volume two cliffhanger and address the double-Jenny problem, and then end the

THE THING I WANTED THIS EPISODE TO BE FIRST AND FOREMOST IS A HUGE AMOUNT OF FUN. I’VE AIMED FOR A COUPLE OF BELLY LAUGHS...

KEN BENTLEY

episode with Vastra having been poisoned. And that was all I needed!

“Having directed the earlier episodes I’d already been imagining how much fun it would be to do a farce about mistaken identity like *The Comedy of Errors* or *The Servant of Two Masters*.”

“It’s a bit bonkers, isn’t it? I suppose the thing I wanted this episode to be first and foremost is a huge amount

of fun. I’ve aimed for a couple of belly laughs and hopefully they’ll land!”

Story two, *Jellyfish!*, has been written by two of the stars of the series, Neve McIntosh, who plays Madam Vastra and Dan Starkey, who brings Strax to life.

Matt says: “Neve is full of ideas for where she might take Vastra, so we got together and worked out a storyline with Vastra, Jenny and Strax taking a break by the sea.

“There’s something lovely about the fact that the people who inhabit these characters are also writing for them as well. They know what they might say and how they would say it. Neve and Dan came up with a great script.

“I remember Neve was keen to get them out of their usual confines, cut them loose, and have them running through the night and dipping in the sea. *Jellyfish!* is a great romp.”

Matt has written the final story in the box set. He says: “In *The Houseguest*, we return to Paternoster Row and find another trespasser squatting there in the form of the Second Doctor. This was particularly great for me as I can now tick off the Second Doctor from my list of Doctors I’ve properly written for!

“But the thing is, is it really the Second Doctor? We know there are shapeshifters, interlopers and trespassers on the loose. How does it all fit together? We know it’s a later Doctor who first meets Vastra and the others, so there’s a puzzle to be solved with the Gang working out who is on their turf and taking over the criminal underworld in London.” **VORTEX**

THE PATERNOSTER GANG
NO PLACE LIKE HOME



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Above: Tim Treloar

REMARKABLE RECASTS

Traditionally being resistant to recasting, it took me a while to try out **The First, Second and Third Doctor Adventures**. Having done so I've been impressed by Stephen Noonan who, whilst not sounding just like the great man himself, certainly captures the essence of the performance complete with intentional 'Billy Fluffs'. Michael Troughton was always going to be fantastic. The real surprise though is Tim Treloar who at times sounds just like a lost Jon Pertwee recording. And no-one can say Lauren Cornelius doesn't sound like Dodo when Jackie Lane's accent changed on a weekly basis. One question though: any

chance of output being increased for the First and Second teams?

DAVID CANFIELD

*Nick: Glad you've come on board with the recasting, David. I know what you mean - I would have taken time to adjust if I'd been in your position. There are certainly plans to increase **The Second Doctor Adventures** frequency.*

LOVING THE LOST

I've been interested in **Doctor Who's Lost Stories** ever since I first came across them in the ancient early days of the internet. From the philosophical *Master of Luxor* to the slapstick *Prison in Space* to the original *Ark in Space*, and of course the cancelled Season 27, it is just incredible to see

what almost was (or wasn't). But the one that drives/obsesses me is the unmade Season 23. We missed out on the return of the Toymaker and my all-time favourite monster the Ice Warriors. Thanks to Target and Big Finish we at least got to read/hear it if not actually see it. Will *Yellow Fever (And How To Cure It)* or *The Children of January* ever be adapted?

BERNIE O'HARA

Nick: On those last two titles, Bernie, my understanding is that those who were running that range felt there wasn't really enough in those stories that had merit to justify reviving them.

CONTINUING CONTINUES?

I am a huge fan of the direction you have taken the **Torchwood - The Story Continues** range. *Among Us* was one of my most anticipated listens of 2023. With these characters appearing more in the **Monthly Range** (Mr Colchester in particular), is there a chance of another series following the events of **Torchwood: Among Us**?

CHAZ H

*Nick: The mysterious future of **Torchwood** is entirely under the control of producer James Goss so I'm afraid I'm not qualified to answer this one, Chaz. Glad to hear you are enjoying it though.*

YES, M'LADY?

I've recently re-listened to the excellent two series of **Lady Christina**. I'm a massive fan of both box sets and didn't expect to love them as much as I do but they really are such fun! Are there any plans for further adventures with Lady Christina? I really hope so! Michelle Ryan is great on audio. And if not in her own range, maybe in others? I particularly feel the character would slot very nicely into the Thirteenth Doctor's era for an adventure...

RYAN DENYER

Nick: That's an interesting suggestion, Ryan. As I often say, I wouldn't rule it out, but there are currently no plans for that. **VORTEX**

Bernice Summerfield is about to discover the secret at the heart of The Eternity Club, and a member who's the...



OLDEST AND BOLDEST

SPOLIER WARNING!

PROFESSOR BERNICE

Summerfield has had an interesting time of late, since arriving at The Eternity Club under circumstances she can't quite remember. We've now reached the final two parts of this eight-episode series, both of which have been written by Tim Foley.

The first adventure is *Sanctuary*.

A battlefleet has breached the defences of The Eternity Club, demanding the surrender of The Death. Only Bernice Summerfield knows what this is – and even she cannot believe it.

*And the final episode is *Liturgy of Death*. The Eternity Club has fallen. How long can the survivors endure? The time has come for three members to reveal their true identities.*

Lisa Bowerman – the First Lady of Big Finish who has been playing Bernice Summerfield on audio for 26 years – describes The Eternity Club: “Like an old gentleman’s club but not exclusively for gentlemen. But it is the universe’s club for its most exclusive explorers. Bernice finds herself there but she’s still an outsider – it’s a long-term club for long-term members.

“Bernice doesn’t know how she’s got there or why she’s there, and finds herself in a position that’s subservient. They’ve decided she’s not quite one of them.”

Benny quickly establishes a rapport with the club secretary, Mr Pym, and shows him sights and wonders he has never seen, before returning to the club with him at the end of episode

six to find things have changed.

Lisa explains: “Nickolas Grace is perfect for the role of Mr Pym, who is slightly pedantic, and there’s a lovely transition during the course of events where we discover he’s never actually left the club. It’s very touching hearing his amazement at sunset and sunrise, the colour of the sea and so on. It’s great to play opposite Nickolas. The man is a legend, ever since *Brideshead Revisited* and of course *Robin of Sherwood* as well.”

AT THE end of *Mr Pym Has An Adventure*, we learn more about Benny’s thoughts on the Oldest played by Niamh Cusack who, way back in episode one, apparently disappeared into a



Above: Lisa Bowerman

TARDIS after her first proper conversation with Bernice.

But who is the Oldest One of The Eternity Club? Producer James Goss says: “We looked at the set-up of The Eternity Club and thought there should be someone else pulling the strings. We mulled on bringing in an existing Master or even a befuddled Doctor, and then created something different – the Oldest or the Oldest One.

“The last survivor of their universe, placed in purgatory at The Eternity Club by the Time Lords as they try and work out if they were their universe’s Master or its Doctor. I think it sets up an interesting idea – that at the end of every universe, either the Doctor or the Master will be the last being standing.... and what happens next?”

“I’m thrilled that we’ve got an acting legend to play this most mysterious character.”

Director David O’Mahony was intrigued by the character. He says: “The Oldest is supposed to be completely enigmatic. We purposefully put lots of moments in place to leave their identity open ended. Listening to the finale of episode eight of *The Eternity Club*, I was so proud that, even to the

MAYBE THE CORRECT PERSON IS STILL OUT THERE... LURKING.

DAVID O’MAHONY

bitter end, the audience are never completely certain who is telling the truth about the Oldest’s identity.

“Are they the victim of mistaken identity and protesting their innocence? Or are they incredibly good at concealing their true, evil and dastardly identity?”

“In casting this role I wanted to make sure that I didn’t make it obvious. The inference of who they are supposed to be (without giving anything away) could have led to casting someone of a certain age, a certain sex and a certain voice type (hint, rhymes with Jerek Dacobi) – but I actively wanted to cast against ‘type’.

“If I had followed the canon pattern of who had played the role that the Oldest *might* be (gosh! I’m tying myself in knots trying to keep the secrets!) then I think the audience

would have been able to say: ‘Well, of course they are who Benny and the Nurse believe them to be – why else would they sound like that?’

“I wanted to make it believable that Benny and the Nurse *could* have the wrong person. And maybe the correct person is still out there... lurking.”

When it came to casting the Oldest, the task fell to David. He says: “I’ve been a lifetime fan of the Cusack dynasty, and Niamh possesses such an incredible softness and power. She has presence and poise without being overbearing. She exudes confidence in her performances with a human and fallible flavour, and that was the exact ambiguity that I wanted the Oldest to have.

“It’s a credit to her and a benefit to us that she is such a generous performer and a lovely person.

“I found myself caring for the vulnerable person, entrapped in a chair, not even able to adjust their own blanket... and found myself questioning that characterisation as the episodes unfold. Niamh has allowed the audience to finish listening to the eighth episode and question whether the Oldest is a poor, frail, downtrodden victim of mistaken identity... or they need their own spinoff show! Answers on a postcard please...”

Lisa adds: “I heard Niamh on the radio recently doing some Shakespeare readings – she’s a theatrical legend, really. She comes from a family of great actors and it was a real privilege to work opposite her. Such a joy!” **VORTEX**

BERNICE SUMMERFIELD THE ETERNITY CLUB 4



■ RELEASED: DECEMBER 2024
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THE WAR DOCTOR'S BEEN RECRUITED TO JOIN A TEAM INTENDED TO END THE TIME WAR...



DESTINATION: UNKNOWN

SO FAR in the Time War series, various solutions have been put forward by both the Daleks and Time Lords to bring a final end to the conflict.

In **The War Doctor Rises** – *Unknown Soldiers*, another solution is made. As the *Time War* rages across the cosmos, an unlikely crew of outcasts form a pact to end the conflict once and for all. Their target: a legendary warrior, whose assassination at a precise point in history will create a chain reaction that sets the whole universe free...

Unknown Soldiers is a writer-led concept box set by Timothy X Atack, returning to the Time War to give an imaginative take on the conflict.

This is the second **The War Doctor**

Rises box set to be written by just one person. *Vortex* asks producer David Richardson if this is the way forward for the series. He explains: “Yes, that’s absolutely my intention. The main reason being that the Time War is such a crazy maelstrom for storytelling and I want to give writers the time and freedom to develop their own take on it.

“Of course, each box set must tie into the overall continuity of the series and **Doctor Who**, but this seems like a prime opportunity to let creatives just create. I think *Unknown Soldiers* shows the real benefit of that – it’s Tim unshackled and given three hours to build worlds and let his characters develop fully. One writer’s vision. That’s how I’d like

the series to progress for now.”

There are three stories in this set – *Ready, Aim and Fire*.

David explains: “*Unknown Soldiers* is full of contrasts. It’s dark and dramatic, and yet it’s also funny and wild. There are brilliant mysteries, exciting pivots and huge stakes. Tim really is a very special writer indeed.

“We are so excited to have Isla Blair playing a main guest role as Pars. It’s a very weighty role and Isla is someone with a huge amount of experience who brings real gravitas to the role.

“She’s also very respectful of the genre. Her husband Julian Glover guest starred in the **Doctor Who** television episodes *The Crusade* and *City of Death*,



Above (l-r): Amanda Shodeko, Isla Blair, Andrew James Spooner, Jonathon Carley and Philippe Boshier

and Isla appeared in *The King's Demons* – as well as episodes of *Blake's 7* and *Space: 1999*.”

TIM PREVIOUSLY wrote three scripts for *The War Doctor Begins*. He says: “It was a real honour to be given the opportunity to write for this series, especially to do something with an entirely new set of anti-heroes.

“After creating lots of one-off companions for other Big Finish episodes I loved being able to go on this longer journey. I really believe if you’ve got interesting characters who people want to spend time with, you’re halfway to a great story.

“I had this idea for a Time War band of rogues, all of them outcasts, traitors, unforgiven. What would it mean for a bunch of reprobates like that to be given the opportunity to make a real difference?

“For a while it was going to be a team led by the War Doctor, but then I thought, ‘No, what if he’s their target?’ And it all bloomed from there. I wanted a thoroughly motley crew, lots of twists and turns in allegiance which is something I think war stories are great for. Amidst the chaos you find

yourself teaming up with unlikely people in unexpected ways.”

How much did Tim enjoy writing these War Doctor adventures given it’s a slightly different incarnation of the Time Lord he has to work with?

He admits: “I’ve had a blast with this incarnation of the Doctor, partly

I WANTED A THOROUGHLY MOTLEY CREW, LOTS OF TWISTS AND TURNS IN ALLEGIANCE...

TIMOTHY X ATTACK

because he remains mercurial. My personal take on the difference between the ‘young’ War Doctor and the ‘middle-aged’ War Doctor is that he’s moved from a driven warrior to a kind of desperation.

“Eventually that will lead to the tired and broken figure we saw in the special TV episode *Day of the Doctor* but for now he’s still convinced a better answer to the Time War is out there, somewhere. He just knows it’s going to be one heck of a search.”

SCRIPT EDITOR Matt Fitton much admires Tim’s previous work so was delighted to have him writing for *The War Doctor Rises*. Matt says:

“*Morbius the Mighty*, the first *The War Doctor Rises* box set, was an epic story of a battle with one main nemesis. *Unknown Soldiers* is more of a *Dirty Dozen* with the War Doctor and an assortment of misfits, outcasts and mercenaries caught up in the Time War.

“They are on a particular mission that they think is going to make a huge difference, and so it’s worth them pitching in and working together. They’re led by a super-advanced malfunctioning Movellan putting together a team to end the Time War, recruiting the War Doctor along with an assortment of other rogues and aliens.

“It’s really cinematic and huge in scope. It felt like no other War Doctor script and it’s one of my favourites of everything I’ve done for Big Finish.”

What sort of briefing did Tim get from Matt? Tim explains: “Three hours of War Doctor: go! I think Matt said I could consider it a Time War concept album. Which made me think, ‘What if the story never stops moving? What if at every



Above (l-r): Simon Kane, Jonathon Carley and Adam Martyn

stage there's something that trips everyone up, changes the game?"

"We're on the fringes of the Time War, amongst its jaded veterans, the vengeful and disempowered. You've got an emotion-spliced Movellan (a rejected experiment) with a crazy plan. She contacts a source of funding in the shape of a silicon-based king – deposed by his own people for negotiating with the Daleks – as well as an ex-Time Lord spy, a traitor to Gallifrey, who becomes the group's fixer. They employ Ogron twins as muscle, and it's all leading to a mid-vortex hijack of a TARDIS. And that's all I'll say for now!"

DONNING THE War Doctor's gaiters once more is actor Jonathon Carley. He points out: "I only recently clocked that having recorded the first **The War Doctor Begins** in 2020 I've been playing the War Doctor now for four years. That's longer than most Doctors on TV! Obviously the pacing and medium are very different, we do a few days every few months rather than recording for six months a year.

I'VE BEEN PLAYING THE WAR DOCTOR NOW FOR FOUR YEARS. THAT'S LONGER THAN MOST DOCTORS ON TV!

JONATHON CARLEY



Above: Phillippe Boshier

"But it's become a very significant part of my working life. To play any role for that long is tremendously rewarding and it's probably fewer actors than you'd think that get this opportunity. Despite it being the same role, it feels like we've never done the same thing twice."

Jonathon is enjoying the new format for these box sets. He explains: "The long-form stories have been a great new direction to give things a different sense of scale, progression and completeness. You really get to grow and develop things, plot-wise as well as with the characters, which is very satisfying."

"We can look at the bigger picture of the impact this Time War has on other people who have been sucked into the drama. The collateral damage. So those characters get really fleshed out and have multidimensional lives as much as the regulars."

"This is what *Unknown Soldiers* has really leant into. It is an ensemble, and we get to go on this treacherous journey together and experience those wins and losses in individual ways. Everyone has a different stake and motivation."

"The basic premise is *Suicide Squad* in the Time War, which is a great concept. I always thought something like that would be really cool to explore, the idea of the Doctor assembling his own team in that grey area between sides. Tim seems to have anticipated that but put a smart spin on it in that the Doctor isn't necessarily doing the hiring and firing, which is so much more interesting." **VORTEX**

THE WAR DOCTOR RISES UNKNOWN SOLDIERS



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LIVING LEGEND

“FOR A FEW SECONDS, WE COULD BELIEVE WE WERE ROCK STARS!”

DOCTOR WHO: THE FOURTH DOCTOR

THE CURSE OF TIME

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