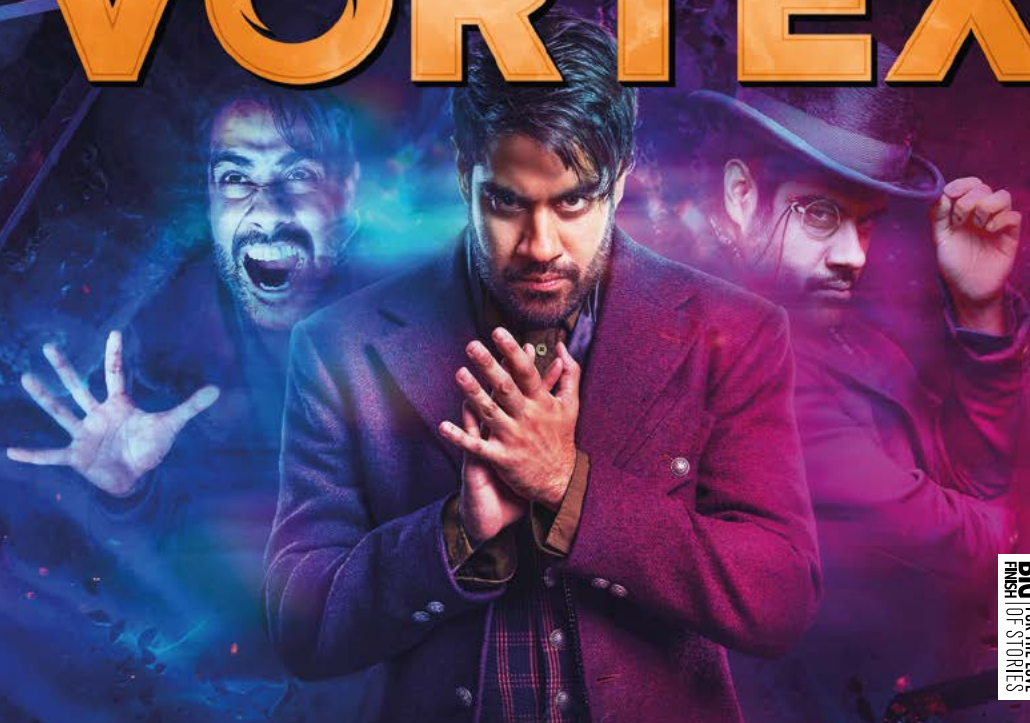


THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX



ISSUE 191
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BIG FOR THE LOVE
OF FINISH OF STORIES

MASTER PLANS

THE DOCTOR'S ARCH ENEMY
IS NOW READY TO RAMPAGE
ACROSS TIME AND SPACE...

BRAIN DRAIN!

THE THIRD DOCTOR FACES A
PERILOUS TRIP TO SCOTLAND...





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DOCTOR WHO: THE COMPANION CHRONICLES

THE FIRST Doctor's companions are heading back into the spotlight as **The Companion Chronicles** return. Launched in 2007, **The Companion Chronicles** tell stories from the perspective of the Doctor's friends with the series initially concentrating on the first four Doctors' eras.

Families, the latest release, begins with *The Temple of Light* by Jonathan Morris narrated by Vicki (Maureen O'Brien). Susan, the Doctor's granddaughter, is the focus of the second adventure *Stardust and Ashes* by Ian Potter and narrated by Carole Anne Ford. The third story, *The White Ship*, features Peter Purves as Steven Taylor, and *The Y Factor* stars Lauren Cornelius making her **Companion Chronicles** debut as Dodo Chaplet (as originally played on television by Jackie Lane).

Producer Dominic G. Martin says: "It is an absolute honour to be producing the latest batch of **The Companion Chronicles**. The legendary range has allowed the Doctor's beloved friends to flourish through their own personal tales – lived by them and told by them.

"We're starting this new era by introducing our resident First Doctor, Stephen Noonan, into the stories. The writers have cooked up beautiful tales for Susan, Vicki and Stephen played by the wonderfully talented original actors, and we're re-introducing Dodo to the range through the talents of Lauren Cornelius. I sincerely hope everyone enjoys what we have to offer – here's to many more years of **The Companion Chronicles!**" **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO: THE COMPANION CHRONICLES FAMILIES

- RELEASED: APRIL 2025
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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EDITORIAL

IT'S ALWAYS exciting having a brand-new Time Lord arriving at Big Finish.

In recent years, we've had Christopher Eccleston, David Tennant and Sir John Hurt joining the fold, as well as Jodie Whittaker's imminent audio debut.

We've also had travels with Sir Derek Jacobi as the War Master and now Sacha Dhawan is making his debut in **Call Me Master**.

I love Sacha in everything that he's in and have been familiar with his audio work for a long time now going back to his involvement with the animated television series **Chuggington** (which my daughter watched on CBeebies when she was about three!)

I first saw Sacha on screen in **An Adventure in Space and Time** and have followed his career with interest ever since as he made such a big impression on me. He was the highlight of *Iron Fist* (which featured Finn Jones from **The Sarah Jane Adventures**). And he's always impressed in series such as *Suspect* and *Wolf* (the latter featuring a very cheeky **Doctor Who** comment!).

So I can't wait to hear him in this new range – his Master has a wonderful, insane charm with that brilliant crocodile smile.

And don't forget, Sacha has previously appeared in a story with the Master at Big Finish... more on that in the preview here in *Vortex!* **VORTEX**

Kerry



MASTER PLANS

A new body... at last! Sacha Dhawan's incarnation of the Doctor's arch enemy is now ready to rampage across time and space...

EVER SINCE his first appearance on screen in *Terror of the Autons*, the Master has enjoyed mischief. His most recent incarnation, played by Sacha Dhawan opposite Jodie Whittaker's Thirteenth Doctor, might just be the best at it!

Call Me Master launches with its first box set, *Inner Demons. Master of disguise, disarray and disorder.*

The Master has always enjoyed creating chaos, but this incarnation revels in it more than most.

A new Master is unleashed upon the universe, and he is taking his time – and pleasure – in finding out exactly who he is...

Chris Chibnall, executive producer and showrunner during the Thirteenth Doctor's era, exclusively tells *Vortex*: "What is there to say about Sacha? He came in and claimed the character as his own, beautifully and delicately and powerfully, while also respecting everything that had come before. He is a dream to work with – he cares, he's precise, he's inventive – and he's

endlessly creative and present.

"Jodie's Doctor deserved a great Master and Sacha provided that. He made me love, hate and empathise with the character. His Master could go anywhere, do anything, be anyone (and dance!). The playfulness, the pain, the joy, the despair, the rage – it's all there, shifting from second to second. Sacha makes it look and sound easy. It's not. I love that his Master gets further stories with *Big Finish*. He's one of the best around, as a human being and as an actor. Long may he Master!"

Of course, *Big Finish* fans with long memories and extensive collections may recall Sacha appearing alongside



Above: Sacha Dhawan

Alex Macqueen's Master in **The Eighth Doctor Adventures Dark Eyes 3** playing Jaldam and Vaughan in the second story, *The Reviled*.

Call Me Master producer Heather Challands was delighted to be asked to helm this new series.

She explains: "As soon as I knew that getting Sacha was a possibility, I threw my hat into the ring. It was incredibly exciting, it's the sort of thing you don't really need to think twice about. Sacha's Master is such a strong character but he's also a chameleon. You feel like he's a creature of extremes of volatility, hubris, vulnerability, laughter and anger. To be able to centre him in his own range and his own stories is just glorious."



Above: Maddison Bullement

"I wanted to give Sacha a challenge each episode, to put his Master into situations that we'd not seen him in before, all the while honouring what makes his performance as the Master so compelling and entertaining. I just wanted to tell good stories that keep you on your toes. It was all about that."

With Big Finish already giving us **Missy** and **The War Master** box sets, how would Heather sum up the tone of this first **Call Me Master** release?

She tells *Vortex*: "Funny. Dangerous. Dark. Surprising. Wicked."

"The studio sessions were a joy. I hadn't yet met or worked with Sacha, and I hadn't worked with Helen Goldwyn as a director but it was such a happy match. The days were very

I THINK CHRIS'S ORIGINAL INTENTION WAS THAT HE WAS SORT OF AN NTH MASTER.

ROBERT VALENTINE

playful and full of laughs. Sacha's a warm presence to have in the studio, and endlessly inventive with his version of the Master. There were frequent ad-libs, improvisations and I've never heard an evil laugh like it! You can't quite believe it comes from such a nice bloke!"

Self-Help by Robert Valentine opens the set. *The Master is having a crisis of the existential variety.*

While he may have a classic diabolical scheme on the go, the dastardly Time Lord's latest incarnation isn't quite feeling himself. In fact, he's not even sure who he is anymore. He needs help. But can he help himself?

Rob says: "It was lovely to be asked to introduce Sacha's Master to Big Finish, especially with Matt Fitton script editing and Heather producing. It's a great team to be working with."

"Initially, we weren't allowed to place this Master in the timeline because not unlike the Fugitive Doctor, I think Chris's original intention was that he was sort of an Nth Master."

"I thought it would be fun, in the context of starting a fresh series with him as our antihero, to embrace his identity crisis in a big way and make that the point of the story. He doesn't know where he fits in and that's a huge source of anxiety for him.

"So the newly-regenerated Master is beginning his incarnation with a classic diabolical scheme. However, when things don't quite go according to plan, he's engulfed in a crisis of confidence."

THE CLOCKWORK Swan by Georgia Cook is the set's second adventure. *Opening night is approaching for the latest presentation at cultural theme park Historica Dramatica:*

Earth-set whodunnit The Clockwork Swan. But cast and crew are being murdered...

Enter a mysterious stranger. Who better to solve the crime than galaxy-renowned detective LeMaitre? Only, LeMaitre isn't all he seems...

It was a delight for Georgia to write for this character. She says: "It was so exciting to write for the Master. This was my first time writing for this particular character, and my first time really centring a villain in the story. It was great fun to write and this particular incarnation is just a joy to get down on the page. You never really know what he's going to do next.

"The Master has such a wonderful history of putting on personas, and

WRITE A MURDER MYSTERY FOR THE MASTER TO SOLVE, SOMETHING A BIT DIFFERENT FROM HIS USUAL DAY-TO-DAY DEALINGS...

GEORGIA COOK

adopting monikers and different costumes. And people tend not to notice that he's not always doing them particularly well! It's so great to add to that mythos, with him hamming it up trying to portray a Poirot or Sherlock Holmes-style detective."

Georgia was handed a simple brief. She says it was: "To write a murder mystery for the Master to solve, something a bit different from his usual day-to-day dealings. So it's a *Poirot*-esque murder mystery with a few Master twists."

Georgia attended the studio recording and her highlight was: "Hearing Sacha and the rest of the cast performing the final script. It's such a delight to hear the story come together under the skilled hands of amazing performers and crew."

The Good Life by Una McCormack concludes the set. *On a distant Island, a group of holy men and women work together to keep the Balance. Elta, one of the Shore-folk, has come to learn. But there's a new man on the Island – the first in living memory – and it's not clear whether he's saint or sinner.*

Is it only coincidence that the weather seems more changeable these



Above (l-r): Sacha Dhawan and Bethany Antonia

Rob was delighted to not only write for the series star but also to meet him.

He explains: "I was very happy to write for this Master and was looking forward to meeting Sacha and listening to him work. I was then absolutely delighted by how enthusiastic and full of care and consideration he is about the portrayal.

"Sacha had lots of ideas and suggestions, and he and the rest of the cast really worked together to make the whole thing as good as possible. His level of commitment to playing the Master is astonishing, and I hope he plays him for years to come."



Above: Sacha Dhawan



Above (l-r): Becky Wright, Angus Dunican, Maddison Bulleyment, Sacha Dhawan and Dave Hearn

days? That people are angrier and turning to violence? Where, wonders Elta, is this all heading – and does the stranger even know himself?

How exciting was it for Una to be asked to write for this Master?

Una tells *Vortex*: “I am always excited to be asked to write an adventure, and particularly to be asked back! As I recall, Matt came to me with a brief series overview and asked me to write the finale for the first box set. The thumbnail sketch was, ‘The Master enjoys being the hero, but being bad is just too good...’

“As it happened, I’d just finished rewatching Mervyn Peake’s *Mr Pye* which is set on the little Channel Island of Sark. It’s all about a very good person deciding to be very bad, and I mentioned this to Matt. It’s actually one of his favourite books, so he said, ‘Let’s see where that takes us!’ There’s a dash of *Le Guin’s Earthsea* in there too.”

Vortex asks Una to sum up the script, and she says: “When he’s good, he’s very, very good, but



Above (l-r): Becky Wright and Angus Dunican

when he’s bad he’s horrid...”

Una was unable to attend the studio session for her adventure. She tells *Vortex*: “I was invited to the recording but sadly couldn’t make it. But I’m so glad to be involved. There are some nicely macabre bits in *The Good Life* which I hope people enjoy.”

VORTEX ASKED each of the writers in turn what is it about this Master that sets him apart from other incarnations? Rob says: “Sacha’s Master is without a doubt the most vulnerable of all the Masters. He’s less pure evil incarnate and more a man who’s clearly very damaged, and not in complete control of himself. I think that’s the main difference and why I also felt he’s a Master I could inflict some insecurities upon while he’s getting to know his new self.”

Georgia agrees: “All the Masters are fun and unhinged in their own

WHEN HE’S GOOD, HE’S VERY, VERY GOOD, BUT WHEN HE’S BAD HE’S HORRID...

UNA McCORMACK

particular way, but there’s something about this incarnation’s sheer unpredictable energy that makes him such a joy to listen to. He’s a clear threat and he’s only out for himself, but he seems to be having such a delightful time with it – until that underlying darkness seeps in.”

And Una concludes: “There’s an extra edge of mania with this incarnation, I think, but also a great deal of vulnerability. More than other Masters, he seems about a millimetre away from cracking completely.” **VORTEX**

CALL ME MASTER INNER DEMONS



■ RELEASED: FEBRUARY 2025
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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The Third Doctor faces a perilous trip to Scotland in his latest adventure...

BRAIN STRAIN

THE THIRD Doctor's exile on Earth continues in his next Big Finish box set, where he's escaping military bases, science research centres and space control centres.

Tim Treloar is back as the Doctor – the tenth year in which he's played the part – and is being sent to Scotland, this time with companion Liz Shaw.

Producer Heather Challands enjoys the rotation between the Doctor's companions of Liz (Daisy Ashford), Jo (Katy Manning) and Sarah (Sadie Miller), with Jon Culshaw also starring as Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart. She explains: "From a personal point of

view, it's great to cycle through the companions because it means I'm getting to continuously work with lots of lovely different people. **The Third Doctor Adventures** is one of the most familial ranges that I work on in that whatever companion we have, whether it's Sadie, Daisy, Katy and/or Jon, it's such a happy atmosphere in the studio. We've all known each other for years now.

"From a broader perspective, it frees up the stories we can tell. We can play to the strengths of each portion of the Third Doctor's life. All you need is the spark of a story and an idea of when it's set during that run and you're off!"

Doctor Who and the Brain Drain has been written by Nicholas Briggs and Richard James – the latter's first adventure for Big Finish.

Heather says: "I worked with Richard as one of the actors in *Revolution in Space* but it was Nicholas Briggs who brought him into the fold as a writer. The adventure went through various changes at the storyline stage but the basic premise was always: the Doctor, the Brigadier, Liz, Scotland. And mysterious goings-on at a medical symposium."

Director, co-writer and script editor Nick confirms: "Richard has been on my radar for a while. I met



Above (l-r): Jon Culshaw, Richard James, Nicholas Briggs, Glen McCreeady, Tim Trelor, Callum Pardoe, Daisy Ashford, Rosalyn Landon, Susan Harrison and Mark Elstob

him through my close friend and colleague Jamie Anderson, who has known Richard for years and years. I first booked Richard as an actor, and it was during his many roles in a number of stories that I became more aware of his writing.

"My wife, who edits books for Anderson Entertainment, told me that Richard's writing was very good so I spoke to him about possibly writing for the Third Doctor. He then pitched me some ideas and I picked one of them. *Doctor Who and the Brain Drain* has a beautifully vintage television feel about it, like it's the kind of story that could have been made for that first colour season of *Doctor Who* which aired back in 1970. A very noble, rewardingly exciting adventure story – almost a detective story – but it has a sci-fi twist and a more personal angle with the whole issue of dementia being explored."

WRITER RICHARD has a history with Big Finish. He says: "I've been lucky enough over the years to appear in a few Big Finish productions as an actor (most notably Rembrandt in *The Waters*



Above: Callum Pardoe

of *Amsterdam* and Sergeant Ballard in *The Incheron Incident*). Nick cast me in a previous *Third Doctor Adventure*, *Revolution in Space* by Jonathan Morris. And during our lunch break on my final day of recording, he leaned across the table and said, 'It's about time you wrote one of these!'

"I must explain that I do have previous writing experience. I've written my own Victorian book series as well as nearly thirty plays that are performed around the world. Nick's wife Steph has been proofreading the various novels and adaptations I've

written for Anderson Entertainment and has apparently enjoyed them, and it was her suggestion that Nick consider me for writing for Big Finish, so I'll be forever grateful to her.

"*Doctor Who and the Brain Drain* has proved to be not only my first *Doctor Who* story, but my first stab at scripted drama so Nick's input has been particularly valuable. He took the initial outline of the story and added tons more jeopardy."

With the story being set during Season Seven, it mirrors the TV series structure by being in seven parts.

Richard says: "Creating a story that would fill seven episodes was a most daunting prospect! But the idea of having the Doctor missing presumed dead for an episode or two seemed a great way to let Liz Shaw have the spotlight for a while, something she rarely had on the TV series. It also gave the whole story a bit of a *Hound of the Baskervilles* feel. I love the way that Sherlock Holmes seems to take a back seat during that story, only for it to be revealed that he was present after all. Nick helped me tie up the various disparate elements; the symposium, the mythical creatures, even the



Above: Susan Harrison

strange weather! With so many episodes, the main challenge was to try and make sure that every story element was resolved satisfactorily.

“Although it spans seven episodes, the main plot is relatively simple. Linus MacLeod believes he has devised a way to bring his father back from the dead using a revolutionary new headset that cures memory loss and dementia. The energy produced by the procedure is enough to form a gateway to the afterlife – or at least that’s what Linus is led to believe.

“Ultimately, it’s a story of betrayal as it gradually dawns on Linus that the creature waiting to gain access to our dimension may not be his father after all. In the meantime, the Doctor is on the hunt for mythical creatures which are rumoured to stalk a Scottish castle, while a scientist on the way to a symposium is murdered.”

THE STORY’S setting is a change from the usual scenarios in Season Seven. Richard explains: “When Nick told me the adventure was to be placed in Season Seven, he issued an

WHEN NICK TOLD ME THE ADVENTURE WAS TO BE PLACED IN SEASON SEVEN, HE ISSUED AN INSTRUCTION – NO TARDIS!

RICHARD JAMES

instruction – no TARDIS! We settled on the idea that this was still early days for the Third Doctor so it would also be pre-Bessie.

“Setting the story in Scotland gave me a couple of opportunities. Firstly, an overnight train journey that was the perfect place to meet our main cast and the perfect place to murder one of them. Secondly, a suitably spooky location to play with – a

Scottish castle! Scotland is also a place that seems built from myths and legends, perfect for telling a story concerning the strange appearance of mythical creatures. Lastly, it gave one of our cast the opportunity to flex their vocal muscles with a suitably outrageous Scottish accent...”

Nick was delighted to be in the director’s chair on this adventure. He reveals: “We actually recorded this in a new studio for Big Finish as our usual studio, The Soundhouse, was fully booked (mostly with other Big Finish productions!). I’m always on the lookout for new studios so that we don’t have all our eggs in one basket, as it were. I got talking to a chap called Keiran Brown and he told me his company had just bought the lease on the former Royal National Institute for the Blind complex in Camden – he showed me round the building when it was just a husk with all the old facilities ripped out. Keiran then revamped the place in record time, and I believe ours was the first full-cast audio drama at the new Fitzrovia Post Production & Voiceover Studios.

“So it was very exciting getting used to a new place. Heather realised it was Tim’s tenth anniversary as the Third Doctor so she bought a cake for him and the atmosphere was very celebratory. The team has developed a really close, fun relationship. And it was great to be back with Daisy and Jon again.”

Nick also assembled a strong guest cast. He tells *Vortex*: “The real standout, misunderstood sort-of-villain in this adventure is Callum Pardoe as Linus. I worked with Callum on a **Second Doctor Adventure** not long before where he was playing a very measured, alien character with tendrils. But I somehow suspected that Callum had more of an explosive performance in him. That, plus the fact that he’s a massive **Doctor Who** fan and totally gets that ‘operatic’ quality you sometimes have to tap into. He’s incredible in this story. A real study of a young man caught up in a misadventure, but for all the right reasons.

“Rosalyn Landor, as his mother, is a real class act. She’s a hugely experienced actor with countless hours of audiobook and audio drama on the clock – such a pleasure to work with. I should also add a special mention for



Above (l-r): Nicholas Briggs and Tim Treloar

Milo Rutter who gives the most extraordinary performance you'll ever hear in a **Third Doctor** story."

WITH A decade of **The Third Doctor Adventures**, Tim continues to win acclaim for his portrayal of Jon Pertwee's Doctor. Nick says: "Tim just gets better and better. And now he's watched all the Jon Pertwee stories – twice! – he keeps finding new aspects to the character. He's never over-confident in the part and I give him a lot of support, but I think we've developed a lovely working relationship. Part encouragement, part mickey-taking, part outrageous joking. He's a lovely guy. He's got a very 'blokey' exterior but he doesn't fool me for an instant!"

Richard tells *Vortex*: "The highlight of the experience for me was the recording itself. To be the other side of the glass for a change was very enlightening. Even as we recorded, Nick was open to changing the odd line if it made the scene clearer – and the cast felt free enough



Above: Richard James

to offer ideas of their own too.

"And what a cast! Hearing them perform the story, I was struck by how one of two things happened. Either they would deliver a line just as I'd heard it in my head as I wrote it (which made me very happy), or they would bring something extra

and make it sound even better than I could have imagined (which made me happier still!). With Nick at the helm as director and Heather keeping us all on the straight and narrow, the whole experience surpassed my expectations."

Heather concludes: "The recording sessions are always hard work but the best hard work. **The Third Doctor Adventures** now are, more often

TIM JUST GETS BETTER AND BETTER. AND NOW HE'S WATCHED ALL THE JON PERTWEE STORIES – TWICE!

NICHOLAS BRIGGS

than not and certainly will be going forward, six or seven-part stories told over around three hours. We record them over three days, back-to-back, with varying cast availability so it can be easy to get stuck in the weeds or not know which way is up! Luckily, Nick is very experienced and knows the script and his actors so well that the days are joyful.

"A personal highlight for me was seeing Richard sit in on the sessions. It was his debut Big Finish script and his first time hearing those words being brought to life. And yes, we also had cake on one of the days – what could be better?" **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO AND THE BRAIN DRAIN



■ RELEASED: FEBRUARY 2025
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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V FOR VISITORS

AN EIGHTIES TV CLASSIC IS BEING GIVEN A BIG FINISH MAKEOVER...

IN 1984, BRITISH television was taken over by a hit series from America. From writer and director Kenneth Johnson, **V** saw a race of aliens landing their spacecraft on Earth seeking refuge – claiming their own world was dying. It proved to be a huge success. And now, Big Finish is creating a new audio version, updated to the present day and located in the UK.

V – UK is being made with the involvement of its creator who has provided additional material

both newly-written and from drafts of the original miniseries.

Jonathan Morris, Big Finish producer and writer for the audio series, recalls: “**V** was event TV. It was a huge hit in the USA and then it was shown in the UK in 1984 in five parts over a single week. I think everybody watched it. It had the production values of movies like *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* which we’d never seen in a TV series before.

“Although it has all the trappings of science fiction – motherships, aliens, laser guns – that’s not what it’s about. It is, pretty blatantly, an allegory for living life under occupation or under a fascist government. And by being an allegory it could cover extremely tough topics; the news media putting out propaganda,

people choosing to collaborate out of self-preservation, or self-advancement (for instance, a political journalist who effectively becomes a sock puppet for the Visitors).

“A young girl even has a romance with one of the occupying troops. So in a way it was looking back at the Vichy regime in France but it was also a warning for the future. That tyranny will gain power by offering simple solutions and by making scapegoats. And in that situation, you have to ask – what would I do? Would I join the resistance or would I keep my head down for the sake of a quiet life?”

The series has been in the works for more than a year. Jonny continues: “I was asked whether I would be interested in producing



Above: Jack Myers

now. And, of course, all the cultural touchpoints and technology have changed. This is a world with smartphones and social media, and where politicians are more likely to appear on daytime television than on highbrow discussion programmes.

“My goal, basically, was to make it feel close to home, uncomfortably so, because that’s the power of the premise. It’s not about aliens invading a distant world. It’s about them marching down the street where you live.

WHILE THE BROAD STROKES ARE THE SAME, ALL THE DETAILS ARE DIFFERENT.

JONATHAN MORRIS

“The characters are present-day, UK equivalents of those in the original miniseries. The leads are Mike Donovan, a freelance documentary-maker who we first meet in a war zone; and Juliet Parrish, a medical student in her second foundation year. We also follow the story through two families: the Maxwells – Richard and Kathleen and their daughter Robin; and the Mabasos – Abraham, who grew up in South Africa under Apartheid, his daughter-in-law Lynn and his grandson Daniel.

“On the Visitors’ side, you should expect to hear John – the Supreme Commander, and Diana – the Commander of the mothership located above London with responsibility for the UK.

“Everyone is faced with terrible events and choices. Mike loses a family member and becomes a wanted man. Juliet loses a close friend. The Maxwells are forced to go into hiding. And Abraham and Lynn find themselves scared to even criticise the Visitors after Daniel becomes an eager member of the ‘Visitor Friends’ group. It’s tough and harrowing but with light and shade. There are moments of comedy and tenderness too.

“Some fans of the original series may be wondering – where are Willie and Harmony, and the other

it back in October 2023. When I, very eagerly, said yes, I was put in contact with Kenneth, the legendary writer who created **V** who was very keen to be involved at every stage from storylines to scripts. So one of the great pleasures of this project has been to work with Kenneth and to learn from him. It’s his show and he’s rightly very protective of it, but as a huge fan of **V**, I was already determined that any reinvention should live up to the standard of the original series and be true to his vision.

“There are two very big differences with this audio series, however. Although it has the same mix of characters, it is set in the UK and it’s set in the present day. So while the broad strokes are the same, all the details are different.



Above (l-r): Kenneth Johnson and Jonathan Morris

“This is a story set in a world post-Brexit, post COVID-19, and some of the themes from the old series – such as the vilification of scientists – are even more timely



Above (back row l-r): Jesse Dunbar, Geoffrey Aymer and Andrew James Spooner (front row l-r): Keta O'Rourke, Louise Faulkner and Hannah Brown

characters from the miniseries? Don't worry. Even though these first three episodes have an extremely large cast, there wasn't room to include every single character. But they will be featuring in the next volume."

THIS FIRST box set features three episodes. In episode one, alien motherships appear above cities across the globe. The world reacts with panic and fear – until the leader of the Visitors appears and reveals that they come in need of help. Their offer seems too good to be true...

Episode two is set one month later and the Visitors have become part of everyday life. But people are beginning to disappear and scientists are being persecuted. Documentary-maker Mark Donovan sneaks on board one of the motherships and discovers the horrifying truth.

And in episode three, it is now Christmas. The Visitors have taken charge, imposing martial law over the UK. Scientists are forced to go into hiding – and Doctor Juliet Parrish finds herself becoming the reluctant leader of the rebellion. The first box set is directed by

THEY ALL NEEDED TO DOUBLE, TRIPLE, QUADRUPLE UP PLAYING OTHER SMALLER ROLES.

HELEN GOLDWYN

Helen Goldwyn who recalls: "I was obsessed with **V** when I was a kid. My family watched the whole first series together. This was an extremely tricky series to cast because there are so many characters, some with very specific vocal qualities (Abraham Mabaso to name one) so they all needed to double, triple, quadruple up playing other smaller roles. You need distinctive voices for the lead roles but then those voices are harder to disguise when playing other parts, so it took twice as long to cast compared to other series I've directed.

"Jonny has done a brilliant job of making Kenneth's original characters work in this more modern setting. It's really an ensemble piece so they all get their own journeys. Obviously

the Maxwells experience the prejudice that Abraham recognises from his own background in South Africa. Abraham then has to come to terms with his grandson Daniel's betrayal. Juliet must discover her leadership instincts, whether she wants to or not, and Mike – strangely in his element in these high-risk circumstances – continually pushes boundaries as he follows his survival instincts. He is a born rebel leader."

Helen adds: "The studio days were exceptionally challenging as there was so much to fit into the time. We basically went as fast as a rollercoaster from morning till end of day and it was super high-pressure. Definitely worth it though as Jonny has created something extraordinary that both new listeners and fans of the original show will be thrilled by."


JONNY, IN his first producing role for Big Finish, tells *Vortex*: "Phrases like 'steep learning curve' and 'baptism of fire' spring to mind. No matter how much you think you know, and no matter how carefully you read the producers' guidelines, there are so many things you only learn by actually doing it.

"But you cannot imagine how much I have enjoyed having control over a project from start to finish – being able to brief the actors in the studio, being able to fix things in the edit, coming up with the cover and everything else. I've been a frustrated backseat driver for ages so imagine my delight at being trusted at the steering wheel!" **VORTEX**

**V - UK
VISITATION**



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I LOVE YOU, TOMORROW!

I was a massive fan of the Big Finish **The Tomorrow People** range back in the day, and am still gutted that we never got to hear what happened beyond season five, with that dramatic cliffhanger. Is there any chance that Big Finish could reinvestigate to see if the rights are available again, and we could either have the series made available as downloads, or, in my wildest dreams, get the conclusion with a new recording of series six? Nigel Fairs did amazing work!

ANDREW MARKS

Nick: We have repeatedly investigated this but sadly we've not been able to get hold of the rights again, Andrew.

TIME FOR MORE RANI?

I just wanted to say I've been loving the new **Sarah Jane** adventures releases of late and wondered if there's any more **Rani Takes on the World** on the horizon? Or possibly an adaptation of *The 13th Floor*, the unmade story from the TV series? I've missed that corner of the **Doctor Who** universe so much – so thank you for reuniting me with it.

CHARLIE PREW

Nick: We're certainly hoping that Rani will return in one way or another, Charlie.

FINDING THE LOST

I've really enjoyed the Big Finish **Doctor Who – The Lost Stories** over the past couple of years, especially the alternative versions of the Fourth Doctor stories which we all know and love – especially *Return of the Cybermen*. *Operation: Werewolf* and *Deathworld* were both excellent



and I hope there's potentially more on the way, especially for the Seventh Doctor and Ace. I still get so frustrated at the series we never got, with so much potential in this excellent Doctor and companion pairing. I live in hope!

STEVEN D.

Nick: No news on more of The Lost Stories at the moment, Steven, but we're always keen to do more.



FANTASTIC PANDA

I loved the last set of **Iris Wildthyme**, and Captain Turner was a good companion for Iris, but David Benson as Panda is just inspired. Magic. Some pairings just feel like they were made for each other, like the Seventh Doctor and Ace, or the Second Doctor and Jamie, and Iris and Panda. Please could we have more Iris and Panda, or "I'll give you a punch right up the hooter!"

MICHAEL MCGINLEY

Nick: Ouch! We'll bear it in mind, Michael. Leave my hooter alone! **VORTEX**



VAM PD IS BACK WITH MORE THINGS THAT GO BUMP ...

IN THE NIGHT

THE SECOND volume of Big Finish's original vampire series, **VAM PD**, is on its way.

Volume One introduced us to the team and secrets were revealed as the three episodes unfolded. We met the Office of the Night with the undead Catrin (Juliet Landau), Magnus (Alimi Ballard), their new human liaison, Jane (Mara Wilson) and her boyfriend Orhan (Warren Brown).

Producer Lizzie Worsdell says: "People have really enjoyed the first release of **VAM PD** which is so rewarding and validating – it can be daunting when releasing a non-*Doctor Who* title.

"There was an obvious, instant chemistry between the three leads. They got along well straight away and had so much fun together. It was

really lovely to experience, and it really comes across in the recording."

The series was recorded in Los Angeles directed by Ursula Burton and London directed by David O'Mahony. Lizzie was the only person to attend both US and UK recordings.

She says: "I loved it. I was really lucky that I got to work on both sessions. Both Ursula and David were great directors to work with in their different but equally brilliant ways. I also got to meet all the actors and see their individual performances and interpretations which is such a treat. I lived in LA for many years so it feels like going home whenever I get the chance to visit."

The set opens with *The Last Post* by Rochana Patel and David Smith. Lizzie says: "In *The Last Post* we hear Magnus struggle to come to terms

with what he discovers at the end of *Volume One* and how that affects his relationship with Catrin. It's also a bit of a two hander with a new character played by Anna Crichlow who is fab."

Rochana tells *Vortex*: "*The Last Post* is focused on Magnus. He's a multi-faceted character with a lot of depth who is struggling to understand his place in an ever-changing world. And I think that's a quality most people can identify with these days; that the moment you think you're beginning to get a grasp on how the world actually works, everything suddenly changes and you find yourself completely adrift again!

"The brief for this one was exceptionally hard as the plot and story-structure had already been mapped out with very firm boundaries which didn't allow



Above (l-r): Alimi Ballard as Magnus, Juliet Landau as Catrin and Mara Wilson as Jane

much room for anything else. But that's the reality of scriptwriting. You're often following storylines provided by others trying to bring their vision to life whilst conforming to production requirements and hitting tight deadlines. Writing is the easy part – it's dealing with everything else that's difficult!"

EPISODE TWO is *Sunlight and Bleach* by Aaron Lamont.

Lizzie reveals: "We get to learn more about Warren's character Orhan and explore his role outside of his relationship with Jane. And we also took the opportunity to reunite Warren with his old *Hollyoaks* co-star Ali Bastian."

Aaron says: "I remember reading the brief and the first script when they came through and emailing back, saying, 'This is the best series concept I think I have ever been asked to work on.' It just leapt off the page. I couldn't really think of anything else like it."

"I remember getting a brief through for the episode from creator James Goss, saying, 'This is the episode where this happens' and then I

IF THIS WAS A FRIENDS EPISODE, IT WOULD BE, 'THE ONE WHERE ORHAN HAS A CUNNING PLAN'.

AARON LAMONT

built the plot around that. It was a 'Catrin-lite' and 'Orhan-focused' episode with definite instructions to tighten the noose around Jane's neck. But there was lots of leeway (and therefore scope to make mistakes!).

"If this was a *Friends* episode, it would be, 'The One Where Orhan has a Cunning Plan!'"

Episode three concludes the set with *Dracula Bachelor* by Ash Darby. Lizzie tells *Vortex*: "*Dracula Bachelor* is my favourite episode, it is so much fun! We had a great time recording it. It's quite different in tone to the other episodes – a lot of new characters enter the story and show our leads in

a very different light. We had some wonderful guest actors such as Big Finish favourites Lauren Cornelius and Jon Culshaw, and newcomers Dev Joshi and Mat McQueen. There is also one heck of a cliffhanger at the end."

Director David says: "The setup of the recordings was an interesting mission of massive spreadsheets of characters and scenes, and a huge amount of faith in what the American contingent had done. Lizzie and Ursula put together the recording in LA of the three lead characters and then it was my job to pack a huge amount of British talent around that framework. "I was so lucky to be able to cast incredible actors for the London sessions. Particular highlights were working with Warren as Orhan. Having been a fan of his for decades, he was a total pleasure to work with bringing his particular brand of gritty honesty and open heartedness to the character and also in the studio as well."

"Leading on from that, the names 'Orhan', 'Quoit' and about twelve thousand other words were the biggest challenge – how do you pronounce names, places and businesses to match with the LA sessions?! Luckily we had Lizzie guiding us and the recordings to sift through if we needed them but it presented a unique challenge. I was completely blessed with the cast we had and I'm so grateful to them for sometimes simply recording things twice with different pronunciations for safety." **VORTEX**

VAMPD
VOLUME TWO



■ RELEASED: FEBRUARY 2025
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TUNNEL VISION

BIG FINISH, IN ASSOCIATION WITH LEGENDARY PICTURES, IS BRINGING THE CLASSIC IRWIN ALLEN'S THE TIME TUNNEL SERIES TO LIFE ON AUDIO...

FOR MORE than a quarter of a century, Big Finish has been working with science fiction creations, taking them in brave and bold new directions.

In 2025, **Irwin Allen's The Time Tunnel** joins the family, following on from the original TV series first aired from 1966–67 in the USA.

Co-producer and director Gary Russell tells *Vortex*: “Executive producer Jason Haigh-Ellery mentioned the prospect of doing an audio version of **Irwin Allen's The Time Tunnel** to me sometime in late 2022. It's a series about two American scientists who are working at Project Tic-Toc in the Arizona desert, in a big military scientific base. This was in the 1960s at the height of the Cold War. They were using the time tunnel to see if there was anything in history they could possibly use to

give America a bit of a boost and an advantage, although they weren't actively looking for weapons.

“But while they are looking for technology the scientists, Doug Phillips and Anthony Newman, accidentally get sent back in time. They are trapped in the tunnel and jump from place to place, going to different time zones. Everybody back at Project Tic-Toc tries to get them back but the series only ran for one season, and they never got home.

“What we're doing is a direct sequel to the original. We learn that Project Tic-Toc was shut down by Jimmy Carter in 1979, and Doug and Tony have been lost ever since.”

And so to the modern day. It's 2025 and four people are brought together by a need to reopen the Arizona base and reactivate the time tunnel in secret. From there, they must try to find Doug or

Tony because something they have done in the past has changed the present. And not changed it for the better as the world is now under the power of Rakervia...

Leading the cast are Seán Carlsen (Narvin in **Gallifrey**) as British naval officer Captain Lewis Haworth and Safiyya Ingar (Valarie Lockwood in **The Eleventh Doctor Chronicles**) as young hacker MB, alongside Jay Reum as journalist Cole Smith and Rachel Handshaw as marine biologist Clare MacGregor.

Gary continues: “In **Irwin Allen's The Time Tunnel**, the two scientists are like fish out of water and they find themselves in quite dangerous situations. It's a perilous time for the leads, but it also has a very... how can I put it... loose grasp of the morality of time travel! Shows like *Quantum Leap*, and certainly **Doctor Who** and *Star Trek*, when



Above (l-r): Jay Reum, Rachel Handshaw, Safiyya Ingar and Sean Carlsen

they do time travel they all sit down and say, 'Look the thing we mustn't do is ever interfere in time' and 'Don't step on the butterfly again'.

"Tony and Doug actually have no qualms about changing history at all or worrying about what they would do or whether they're going to interfere with something. However, this 2025 version has moralities and butterfly effects very much as its central premise."

THE SERIES opens with *The Shudder* set on 14 November 2025 and written by Gary. The team come together and send Lewis and MB back into the past to try and find Tony and Doug – but they have opponents whose existence they are completely unaware of...

Gary explains more: "In episode one, we learn the whole premise and the world in 2025 requires our new team to go back into history to try and find Tony and Doug – or at least

find out what happened to them.

"So they start to go to the same time zones that Tony and Doug went to before but that soon goes out of the window when they realise that they've got more people trapped and lost in time. It's not only about trying to find Doug and Tony and bring them home – it's about bringing

GLOSSIER, BIGGER IN CONCEPT AND MORE EXPENSIVE...

MARC PLATT

home our new characters as well."

Episode two is *Too Close to the Sun* by Marc Platt, set on 5 January 1941. It's the UK during World War 2. A momentous day for air pioneer Amy Johnson. But this might also be the day she disappears...

Marc says: "I remember **Irwin Allen's *The Time Tunnel*** when it was first shown in the UK in 1968. In those days, American series always appeared glossier, bigger in concept and more expensive than their meagre British counterparts. It had some great stories too.

"So I was immediately intrigued when Gary asked me to be involved. He produced an extensive rethinking of the series, picking up the story some 60 years later. Where are the original heroes, Tony and Doug? The new characters, who are looking for the old ones, are considerably more savvy about the dangers of exploring history.

"Gary asked me to write part two – the first actual journey through the tunnel for our new heroes, Lewis and MB, back in time to search for the long-lost Tony and Doug. He gave me the historic setting and one specific character. But from the start, things (and history) are not what they seem. Lewis and MB have a lot to learn, both

about the past and about each other. Meanwhile, in the vast, empty and abandoned time tunnel base beneath the Arizona desert, Marine Biologist Clare and subculture activist Cole are also sizing each other up and unsure who exactly they can trust.

"In line with the original series, Lewis and MB encounter a famed historical figure – the celebrity aviator Amy – who is flying a plane solo back from Scotland to Oxfordshire. But how is the arrival of stowaways from the future going to affect her mission... the fatal last flight Amy will ever make?"

I GENUINELY THINK THERE IS SOMETHING SPECIAL HERE...

DOMINIC G. MARTIN

THE SET concludes with *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* by Martin Day set on 24 December 1645. MB and Lewis find themselves in the grim heart of the English Civil War – and on opposing sides. The battle of Naseby is over – Cromwell's New Model Army has defeated the Royalist forces commanded by Charles I – but everything is in tumult, the future uncertain.

Martin says: "I remember watching *Irwin Allen's The Time Tunnel* as a child – because I'd watch anything with an element of fantasy or science fiction – and so *Irwin Allen's The Time Tunnel* feels like something big and adventurous and American to me. Almost brash, at least compared to a lot of British sci-fi of the time. Rewatching it (because I didn't remember it very clearly), I'm not sure it counts as the deepest or most thoughtful of series, but you can't fault its scale and ambition.

"My brief was to place the modern characters that Gary had invented – they're rather distinct from the square-jawed American heroes of the original show – in a historical period of religious and political unrest. There were some



Above (l-r): Flavia Ravenhill and Rachel Handshaw

'serial' story beats to feed in and the usual limit on characters, but the 'story of the day' was up to me."

Martin adds: "This was my first drama commission for a while and it was lovely to be scriptwriting again – to invent characters that you hope will echo and explore the themes (or – chicken and egg – is it create a storyline to echo and explore the characters?), to play around with non-modern dialogue and to imagine myself in a time distinct from our own – but perhaps not too distinct."

Co-producer Dominic G. Martin tells *Vortex*: "It's been simply stellar to work with Gary on *Irwin Allen's The Time Tunnel*. He is an absolute diamond and it's been a lot of fun.

"And being in the studio is grand, we have such a lovely, talented cast who immediately became enamoured with the concept much like I am, and these stories have been absolutely stunning to read and watch play out in studio, thanks to our wonderful writers.

"I'm hugely excited about the series being released. No nerves, just excitement. I genuinely think there

is something special here and I really hope it piques people's interests. It's a very gripping listen and it really heads in directions that you would not expect. I hope that people enjoy what we are offering them." **VORTEX**

The second volume of *Irwin Allen's The Time Tunnel* will follow in November 2025.

IRWIN ALLEN'S THE TIME TUNNEL THE NIGHTMARE BEGINS



■ RELEASED: FEBRUARY 2025
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/tunnel 



ASPECTS OF AVON

A BLAKE'S 7 NOVEL FROM THE 1980S IS BEING GIVEN A NEW LEASE OF LIFE ON AUDIO THANKS TO BIG FINISH...

WHEN PAUL Darrow passed away in 2019, *Blake's 7* lost one of its most iconic, charismatic and beloved stars. The actor invested so much of himself into the role of Kerr Avon, to the extent that in 1989 he wrote *Avon: A Terrible Aspect* – a prequel novel to the television series. It tells the story from a time long before *Liberator*, as the young Avon grew into man with a driving purpose: to avenge the death of his father in a world of cross and double-cross. It is a thrilling tale of family, loyalty, action and revenge during the early days of the Terran Federation that took Avon through his early life and across the galaxy towards his ultimate destiny.

Paul said of his book at the time of publication: "This is a prequel to *Blake's 7*. It's a straightforward, fast-moving story of the origins of Kerr Avon. It begins before Avon's birth and shows the family structure he was born into, in the strange repressive culture projected for the future in the *Blake's 7* universe.

"In here are some of the characters a *Blake's 7* fan will recall – Anna Grant, Avon's only love; Del Grant, her brother; and Tynus, Avon's good friend – or so he believes!

"In a weird duel in the frozen North of their mother planet, two brothers

fight a duel to the death – and Rogue Avon is slain. This, the Federation feels, spells the end to rebellion in the universe and the status quo of peace without freedom can continue.

"But they are wrong. The son of Rogue Avon, obviously an Earthling and entitled to return to his home planet, has sworn to his mother to avenge his father. He returns to Earth, and there manages to work out the inevitable conclusion to this ingenious and fascinating tale.

"This book is dedicated to Terry Nation – a great writer – and to Janet, my wife, without whose help I could not have attempted to emulate him."

BIG FINISH'S *Blake's 7* producer Peter Anghelides says: "The question on every fan's mind when the original TV series ended was: 'What happens next?' So it was an unexpected treat when Paul Darrow defied all expectations by writing a prequel. And apart from Terry Nation, himself a good friend of Paul's, who better than the man who played Avon himself to reveal the character's history before his first

PAUL DARROW DEFIED ALL EXPECTATIONS BY WRITING A PREQUEL.

PETER ANGHELIDES

appearance on the telly? When the book was first published in 1989, Terry said: 'Now I know why Avon was the way he was.'

"*Avon: A Terrible Aspect* was published a good eight years after the series ended. Contemporary *Blake's 7* fandom has kept the series alive and has quite the tradition of new fan fiction – not just short fiction but also whole novels published in A4 fanzine format.

"But what a treat to discover that the man who played Avon in the series was writing his own first novel – and it was about *Blake's 7*! The book was only available in print form – it was published at a time

when novels were not so widely made available as audiobooks."

The new audiobook is read by Alistair Lock who plays Orac and Zen for the Big Finish *Blake's 7* audio plays. Alistair has also played other characters in *Blake's 7* and *Doctor Who* audio dramas, and been a sound designer and music composer for many of them.

Peter says: "As it's been so long out of print, now seemed like the right time to give *Avon: A Terrible Aspect* a makeover and make it available again. Alistair has been involved in officially licensed *Blake's 7* audios since about 2008 as a director, sound designer, musician and/or actor. He's very much the all-rounder."

Alistair tells *Vortex*: "Having been involved with the full-cast *Blake's 7* audios since 2012, I was honoured to be asked to record Paul's book. "Over the years I have actually played or read-in for every member of the *Blake's 7* cast so narrating this novel has been an enjoyable challenge. I had great fun finding a voice for all the characters including, of course, the man himself – Avon. Well now..."


Peter is delighted with the way the audiobook is coming together, saying: "It sounds wonderful. As well as capturing Avon and a diverse range of other characters in his reading, Alistair has also done a great job on the sound edit. I can't wait for people to hear it."

Avon: A Terrible Aspect isn't Paul's only *Blake's 7* fiction. Peter explains: "Paul has also written three post-series Avon novels for Big Finish known as the *Lucifer* trilogy. They have been released in print and also as audiobooks with the first and second narrated by Paul, and Stephen Greif reading the third."

Lucifer, Lucifer: Revelation and *Lucifer: Genesis* are available from Big Finish as eBooks, audiobooks and/or in print. Paul's autobiography *You're Him, Aren't You?* is also available. **VORTEX**

BLAKE'S 7 AVON: A TERRIBLE ASPECT

- RELEASED: FEBRUARY 2025
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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TORCHWOOD THE LAST BEACON



Above (l-r): Gareth David-Lloyd, Ellie Darvill and Burn Gorman

A SIGNAL in a Welsh mountain is calling an ancient battlefleet to Earth. Owen Harper and Ianto Jones head up into the Brecons to stop it. The problem is – Ianto really loves camping.

The Last Beacon was the first Big Finish script written by Ianto actor himself, Gareth David-Lloyd, who has since gone on to write a number of **Torchwood** audios.

The setting brought back memories of the first television series with echoes of *Countrycide* where the Torchwood Three team found themselves trapped in the great outdoors in Wales and were captured, one by one, by local cannibals. When asked how he felt about writing his first **Torchwood** script Gareth admits: "It was nerve-wracking. But I think writing comes alive with somebody else's interpretation.

I ALWAYS WANTED TO DO ANOTHER VALLEYS/BRECON BEACONS EPISODE BECAUSE I LOVE COUNTRYCIDE SO MUCH.

GARETH DAVID-LLOYD

It's about the communication between your work and the interpretation of somebody else.

"I always wanted to do another valleys/Brecon Beacons episode because I love *Countrycide* so much. Having the characters completely out of their comfort zones, we had such a blast recording up there.

"When producer James Goss asked if I'd be interested in writing an adventure, I sent him a few ideas all about the valleys. And then it was script editor David Llewellyn who said, "Wouldn't it be great to stick Owen in the valleys as he's the character who would feel most like a fish out of water in that environment.

"And I jumped at the chance because Owen is my favourite character."

"It's a great script," says Owen Harper actor Burn Gorman, "and it was really nice to be working with Gareth as a sort of double-act. It was great fun to do, we mostly couldn't stop laughing.

"Big Finish create an informal

atmosphere but still really disciplined. It's great to come in and feel like you can try things out. The whole recording was just a really nice experience. We were saying the other day how easy it is to slip back into the character that you'd played all these years ago, especially when the writing's good."

The aliens whose plans the Torchwood two have to foil are the Talaskotians.

Gareth reveals how the creatures got their name: "The night before I was writing, I was drinking Talisker – a brand of single malt Scotch whisky from the Isle of Skye – which just happened to be on my table. Their name was inspired by that."

While Gareth was delighted to write his first script, Burn admits that it's not something he feels ready to do.

Burn says: "I've got great respect for anyone who has the intelligence and discipline to sit down and actually write something. It's the classic dinner party conversation, 'Oh, you're a writer? I've always thought about writing something!'

"I do have lots of ideas – some of them might be suitable for different worlds one day!" **VORTEX**

TORCHWOOD THE LAST BEACON



■ RELEASED: APRIL 2018
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX

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BIG FOR THE LOVE
FINISH OF STORIES



AN EIGHTIES TV CLASSIC
IS BEING GIVEN A BIG
FINISH MAKEOVER...

BRAIN DRAIN!

THE THIRD DOCTOR FACES A
PERILOUS TRIP TO SCOTLAND...

