

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX



WILD

~~HAPPY~~ TIMES

THE SIXTH DOCTOR MEETS OLD FRIENDS – AND OLD ENEMIES...

FALLEN HEROES

TWO INVESTIGATORS ARE SENT IN TO CATCH A KILLER...



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OPERATION VENGEANCE

THE THIRD DOCTOR Adventures return later this year with *Operation Vengeance*, a six-part story teaming the Doctor (played by Tim Treloar) with Sarah Jane Smith (Sadie Miller) and the Brigadier (Jon Culshaw) – plus a bonus appearance from Jo Jones née Grant (Katy Manning).

When the Doctor takes Sarah Jane to Konzomia, a planet he'd previously visited with Jo, he finds the consequences of his first trip there have put him and his friends in danger. A villain wants revenge, and plans to wipe Jo Grant out of existence – by targeting her father. To stop this, the Doctor and Sarah – with the Brigadier in tow – must travel to Dunkirk, 1940, where Terry Grant is serving his country, unaware of the extraterrestrial threat circling him.

Operation Vengeance is co-written by Tim Treloar and Nicholas Briggs. Tim says: "History is one of my passions and particularly the history of the Second World War. Even though the Dunkirk evacuation is one of the most famous parts of the war, the rearguard – the soldiers left behind to shield the retreating British forces – is a not-often-told story. "It was lovely working with Nick as co-writer. I pitched the story to him and he said, 'Go on then, write something!' I ended up writing all six episodes and then Nick took my script away, shaved off a lot of my waffling, added a heck of a shove to it and turned it into this brilliant **Doctor Who** story. It has been a most rewarding experience for me." **VORTEX**

THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES OPERATION VENGEANCE

- RELEASED: OCTOBER 2025
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/operation



EDITORIAL

SOMETHING THAT always astounds me (though really it shouldn't knowing Big Finish's track record!) is just how good the recasts are for major **Doctor Who** roles. These parts have been carefully and meticulously considered to ensure that the spirit of characters such as Dodo, Liz Shaw, Sarah Jane Smith, Harry Sullivan and indeed the earliest incarnations of the Doctor, live on.

This month, we preview the next release in **The War Doctor Rises** series with Jonathon Carley taking on the role once again. I remember seeing a video on social media a good few years ago and hearing his take on Sir John Hurt. I was blown away by how good it was and texted Nicholas Briggs straight away to see if he had heard it. He replied: "Oh yes – we're VERY aware of him." And within a few months, Jonathon was announced as playing the part of the War Doctor for Big Finish!

I'm lucky enough to have got to know Jonathon since we first started conversing for *Vortex*, and I very much enjoy meeting up with him at conventions. It's still a surreal experience when he goes from his normal speaking voice into the raspy War Doctor voice, all in the blink of an eye!

But what really impresses me is that Jonathon isn't just doing an impression, it's a full-on acting role packed with intensity, emotion and humour. I can't wait to hear his next release given that this new **War Doctor** set is rather different. **VORTEX**

Kenny

The Sixth Doctor is back on his travels with Constance Clarke, and they're ready for some...



THE LAST two Sixth Doctor releases, *The Quin Dilemma* and *The Trials of a Time Lord*, were special box sets to mark 40 years of Colin Baker in the part.

This year sees him back off through time and space accompanied by leading WREN Constance Clarke (played by Miranda Raison) as the pair encounter old friends – and old enemies.

Produced by Jacqueline Rayner, *The Sixth Doctor Adventures: The Cosmos and Mrs Clarke* features *The*

Story Demon by Julian Richards, *The Key to Many Worlds* by Paul Magrs and *Inconstancy* by Ian Potter.

Script editor Robert Valentine tells *Vortex*: “The starting point for this set was simply the desire to create some new adventures for the Sixth Doctor and Constance, who is one of my favourite of this Doctor’s companions. It’s a celebration of their relationship, in many ways, and we decided to make that the central focus.

“Choosing writers is the first, most important decision you have to

make. Julian had recently written an excellent script for us (which I can’t talk about because, in that wibbly-wobbly, productiony-wunctiony way of things, it won’t be out for a few more years). He’s a phenomenal writer and I was very keen to see what else was up his sleeve.

“Paul, as well as being a bit of a legend, is a good friend of producer Jac so enlisting him was brilliant – and so is his story.

“And Ian, who has written lots of things for Big Finish over the



Above (from top): Anthony Townsend, Miranda Raison and Katy Manning

years, had been speaking to us at the time about writing a Sixth Doctor adventure. The stars aligned and he became our third and final author. His story puts Constance right in the middle of things – and what a title for a Mrs Clarke set! It is the perfect story to round out the volume.”

THE STORY *Demon* by Julian kicks off the set. Julian recalls: “The brief for this one was really very loose as they go. I think it was early enough in the process that the brief for the story was literally just, ‘A Sixth Doctor adventure’ to the point where it hadn’t even been decided which companion or companions would appear with him!

“I had been asking whether I could use the Daleks for a story in a different box set, which fell through for various reasons, so when this opportunity arose I asked if the Daleks were still available. I then worked out a handful of pitches, each with an entirely different companion team.

“In my initial pitch, I had Heather Threadstone from *Vampire of the Mind* and Yrsa Kristiansdottir from *The Hunting Ground* in my head – both of whom I’m hoping to see back with the Sixth Doctor at some point. Jac and Rob liked the story idea and confirmed the companion would be Constance – and the final script for *The Story Demon* came from there.” Julian continues: “Writing for the

Sixth Doctor is one of the great joys in my life. I’ve done it a few times now (with the miracles of the Big Finish release schedule meaning that I’d written for him before this story but those stories are still in the future!) and every time it solidifies for me the pleasure in writing for this version of the Doctor and the ways in which he refuses to mask or restrict his righteous passions.

“Constance I hadn’t written for before. She conducts herself in a wonderfully mannered and controlled fashion, a perfect model of emotional restraint and precision so that every feeling she lets loose really hits home and makes the Doctor attend to what she needs him to understand.

THIS STORY'S VERSION OF THE 'DON'T WANDER OFF' EXCHANGE IS ONE OF MY FAVOURITE SCENES TO HAVE WRITTEN.

JULIAN RICHARDS

This story’s version of the ‘don’t wander off’ exchange is one of my favourite scenes to have written.”

Vortex asks Julian if he has any other particular highlights. He says: “To be honest, the entire story was a highlight for me, but if I were to actually pick something out then we have to come back to the Daleks.

“I’ve grown up around the Daleks, there are Daleks in almost every room of my childhood home and always have been. Part of my intent with this story was to try and find a new way to make the Daleks scary, not necessarily scarier than they’d been before, but scary in a way that hadn’t been pushed to the full extent before. I don’t want to say what that is here as it would give too much away, but there are a couple of specific TV stories that I’m responding to, which hopefully listeners will – I don’t think *enjoy* is the right word – appreciate the intent, shall we say.

“If I was asked to sum up the adventure then I think I’d probably



Above (l-r): Oliver Sartor, Lara Lemon and Vivienne Rochester

say something like: Cosy Dalek Folk Horror. Which I could explain but having said that now, why on earth would I? Cosy Dalek Folk Horror. That's what it is!"

THE KEY to *Many Worlds* by Paul Magrs sees a special reunion as the TARDIS crew crosses paths with Iris Wildthyme (played by Katy Manning) – the transtemporal adventuress who travels the multiverse in her double-decker bus. It begins with the Doctor and Constance arriving in thirteenth century Baghdad where they meet an ageing Marco Polo (Terry Molloy). *His adventures at an end, the legendary traveller has been tasked with transporting a certain enchantress back to Venice. But Iris Wildthyme doesn't take well to being kept prisoner and so performs her greatest trick yet – she swaps bodies with the Doctor!*

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Above: Katy Manning

Iris previously appeared alongside the Sixth Doctor in the 2003 adventure *The Wormery*. Paul says of his brief: "This was to be a celebratory adventure for

the Sixth Doctor featuring Iris Wildthyme. I knew straight away that a mind-swap was going to be a feature of it, plus Marco Polo – a story I'd always wanted to sequelize.

"The Key to Many Worlds is a journey to and from exotic lands in fabulous company – the old, jaded Marco returning from the East with his much-younger boyfriend – plus a couple of confused Time Lords in tow.

IT WAS AN ABSOLUTELY JOYOUS DAY AND I ACTUALLY CLIMBED INTO THE SKIN OF COLIN BAKER! I'VE GOT GRIN-ACHE!

KATY MANNING

"This was a great chance to reunite two brilliant voices – Katy and Colin – from *The Wormery* all those years ago, and to twine them together not only in one of my favourite **Doctor Who** genres, the historical saga, but also in one of my favourite science-fiction tropes – the mind-swap."

Colin tells *Vortex*: "Upon reading this script, my first reaction was, 'Oh, good, another adventure that's clever and touching and rather exciting; and things get turned on their head!'"

And Katy says: "It was an absolutely joyous day and I actually climbed into the skin of Colin Baker! I've got grin-ache! We're so lucky, Paul is a wonderful writer."

How much fun is there in writing for this Doctor with Constance – and then adding Iris into the mix? Paul says: "It was all tremendous, and with Constance also on board I think there's a perfect blend of characters. Good company, what more can we ask for on an adventure?"

Paul was delighted to have had an input into the cast. He explains: "Being able to lobby for the casting of my great friend Anthony Townsend for the role of Tonio is not something I usually do, but this time I felt that it was the right thing. Jac is a lovely person and understood at once.

"My friend Anthony had just been given a dreadful medical diagnosis

and I knew that, as a brilliant actor, they had always longed to play a significant role in a Big Finish drama. I would have moved heaven and Earth to make this happen for

“Because I wanted to sketch in a whole culture in two episodes, I added a small storytelling element to the plot that I thought might help speed that up. By accident or

the big questions at the back of the process for me were, What makes a monster? What do monsters want? And, How might their pursuit of that make them evil? That might make *Inconstancy* sound a lot heavier than it is, but it was really just my way of working out why my villains might choose to do what the plot expected.”

Ian concludes: “Constance and the Sixth Doctor are a great couple



Above: Colin Baker

them – and so I wrote them this part in the happiest of all adventures. I just wish they were here to hear it with the rest of us. I love the idea that their rollicking, richly-timbred tones will be something we can listen to forever now.”

Sadly, Anthony passed away in May 2022.

INCONSTANCY BY Ian Potter concludes the set. Ian reveals: “The initial brief for this one was really nicely open. It was pretty much, ‘Can you do something with monsters in some sense?’ though Jac did add the important caveat that I couldn’t use the Monoids!”

“I decided to write a science fiction piece set on an alien world because I’d just finished a very heavily researched historical, and fancied making up the rules of my own planet – Terry Nation-style, this time.

design, storytelling seems to have ended up as a secondary theme of this set with both Julian and Paul featuring it in their adventures too. I expect it was design actually, and it was just me who didn’t know!

“I wanted the monsters in my story to somehow touch on the idea of the word ‘monster’ originally meaning a show – monsters being distorted examples of human traits and excesses thrown out of balance. And I also wanted them to be something that would rattle Constance a little bit given her experiences and background.

“Out of that a sort of fable emerged, hopefully quite playful in tone but with a tiny bit of real horror buried deep down inside it. There’s one sequence that’s pretty obviously inspired by an old Disney cartoon and it’s that kind of tone I was hoping for – quite light but with an underlying menace. Ultimately,

BY ACCIDENT OR DESIGN, STORYTELLING SEEMS TO HAVE ENDED UP AS A SECONDARY THEME OF THIS SET...

IAN POTTER

to write for because they bounce off each other so nicely – though I split them up for a lot of this adventure. They both have lovely speech patterns which I shamelessly play up a few times in *Inconstancy* (there are few other Doctor/companion pairings that give you quite so many opportunities to talk about hoydens and tiffin) and neither of them are quite of our world or time...

“Possibly my favourite moment in the whole piece is one of the lines for the Doctor where he gets to be rather self-mockingly pompous about the kind of books he’s been reading – I can’t quite imagine this coming from any other Doctor’s mouth!”

VORTEX

THE SIXTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES THE COSMOS AND MRS CLARKE



■ RELEASED: MAY 2025
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

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Jonathon Carley and Daisy Ashford investigate a murder most strange in *The War Doctor Rises: Fallen Heroes*.

WE COULD BE HEROES

THE WAR DOCTOR has faced many challenges from Daleks, Time Lords and a host of other beings. But now, *Fallen Heroes*, the latest **The War Doctor Rises** box set, will move the focus away from the Daleks and Gallifrey to a remote planet affected in its own way by the universe-spanning Time War.

On the backwater planet of Falk, the mayor of the small town of Oakview has been murdered. Agents Wyatt Smith

(Jonathon Carley) and Louise Tickson (Daisy Ashford) are sent in to catch the killer. The case seems strange enough to start with – possibly the strangest of Smith's career – but what does it have to do with someone called the Doctor? And unbeknownst to everyone on Falk, they've just been caught up in a war beyond their imagination. A war that will change Falk forever.

This three-part mystery adventure is scripted by Alfie Shaw. Producer David Richardson says: "From the

very first scene, we're thrown into something very different – a dark story in which two agents are on the trail of a killer, in a place that is familiar but so very different. It's a tale packed with surprises and left turns, as Alfie throws everything into this brilliantly conceived Time War story."

The three chapters comprise:
Chapter One: The Dead Sea. *Galactic Investigations Bureau Agents Smith and Tickson have been dispatched to*



Above (l-r): Jonathon Carley and Daisy Ashford

the remote coastal town of Oakview to investigate a bizarre murder. Who killed the mayor? And why did they draw a clock around his body?

Chapter Two: Unit 26. As Wyatt and Louisa examine the links between the Clock Face Killer and a cold case, they realise their entire investigation could hinge on a single question. Who is the Doctor?

Chapter Three: Yesterday is Tomorrow and Tomorrow is Today. *Warrior no more.*

Writer Alfie says: "I've wanted to work with Jonathon playing the War Doctor for ages and so I

snapped up the chance when this was offered. It was great to have the whole box set to write. I really enjoyed doing the longer-form storytelling with the Eleventh Doctor as it's lovely to have the space to tell something more complex than the usual one-hour slots allow.

"The brief started and ended with it being three discs of War Doctor – and everything else was up to me! I'd just finished writing a full series which ends up with a big finale, so I didn't have any desire to go straight into a big space opera with lots of people fighting Daleks.

There are no Daleks and no massive space battles in *Fallen Heroes*. It's set in a little backwater town on a backwater planet that's about to be messed up by the greater conflict.

"What I wanted to do was something that didn't feel like **Doctor Who** and I'm so grateful that David and script editor Matt Fitton let me run with that. It was like working on a different franchise for a little bit. Of course, this is a **Doctor Who** story and has to become one again, but that also gave me the theme of the whole thing.

IT WAS A BIT OF A CHALLENGE, BUT A CHALLENGE ENTIRELY OF MY OWN CREATION.

ALFIE SHAW

"The inspiration for the box set was stuff like *True Detective* and *Alan Wake 2*. Yes, there's a murder to be solved, but the focus is more on how the crime affects those caught up in it rather than a Christie-style whodunnit.

"It was a bit of a challenge, but a challenge entirely of my own creation. There was a lot thrown up in the air when I started working on the outline with Matt. We cut and simplified a lot of it. The cameo of a Dalek 'singing' in the style of *Hamilton* never made it past that initial stage. Maybe next time...

"It's weird – possibly the weirdest audio I've written – but if you're doing a whole box set in the Time War, you need to take a big, bizarre swing. I adore Daisy and Jonathon and am over the moon that I could write for them on this one."

THE WAR DOCTOR

himself, Jonathon, tells *Vortex*: "Alfie tried to give me a heads up on what he was planning some time before.

He referenced various shows and games that sadly went over my uncultured head and I saw the light slowly fade from his eyes!

"But my interest was piqued by murder mystery. Straight from the off, in this one, we're mixing genres which immediately gives things a different energy and feel. I have to play authentically to that kind of mystery, thriller show.

"Compared to galactic conflicts it seems relatively small scale but there's much more to it than meets

I DIDN'T WANT TO LET HER GO AT THE END!

JONATHAN CARLEY

to make sacrifices for the greater good. My reference point for him throughout was the Peter Capaldi Twelfth Doctor speech in the *Zygon* two-parter. Even after he saves Gallifrey, the Doctor's talking about having done terrible things.

"It isn't just that he is haunted by thinking he's destroyed Gallifrey. This man isn't the beacon of hope the Doctor is because he's caught up in the Time War. The Doctor as a character doesn't function how they should in that setting.

"I tend to write toward the darker side of the Doctor in all my stories, but ultimately he'll try and save you. This incarnation? Well, there's a bigger picture to consider."

JONATHAN WAS delighted to be given something different to work with in this box set, especially as he is with a companion played by Daisy Ashford (better known to Big Finish listeners as Caroline John's daughter, now recreating the part of Liz Shaw in **The Third Doctor Adventures**).

Jonathon explains: "It had occurred to me that given the lane the War Doctor is in in continuity, that it would be very unlikely I'd get to work with a lot of classic characters and actors from the worlds of **Doctor Who**. So when I saw Daisy's name on the cast list my eyes just lit up. It was Christmas! I knew this was going to be so much fun and really special.

"I've met Daisy a couple of times at conventions and events, and she's always been so bright, warm and good humoured. To work with her was just joyful, I didn't want to let her go at the end! And I'm chuffed she actually gets to appear on the cover for this.

"Because the War Doctor mostly flies solo, I'm not privy to the working dynamics of other TARDIS teams. And now I feel like a complete bore by comparison. I'm planting a flag, get me into one of **The Third Doctor Adventures** because it sounds like they have a ball!

Also in the cast is Christopher Naylor who plays Harry Sullivan in **The Fourth Doctor Adventures**. Jonathon says: "I've got to mention Chris as well, who is probably one of the nicest men I've ever met. He's just utterly charming and exudes calm. I've loved the work both Daisy



Above (l-r), Daisy Ashford, Christopher Naylor, Jonathon Carley, Ian Conningham and Teresa Creacey

the eye. Agent Wyatt Smith has a working partner in Louisa Tickson, so there's a professional dynamic to explore. *Fallen Heroes* has really helped me discover things about the War Doctor. Alfie's given me some of my favourite material to work with because it's so different."

Discussing the storyline, Alfie says: "It starts off as something like the Saga Anderson parts of the game *Alan Wake 2*, if that means anything to anyone reading this? *True Detective* with shades of *The X-Files* might be a better reference.

"Small town murder, FBI agents sent in to investigate, things get weird. It ends as a **Doctor Who** story. But unfortunately for everyone involved, the last thing these characters need is a **Doctor Who** story!"

How did Alfie find writing for this Doctor, given he's a little different from the others?



Above: Christopher Naylor

Alfie replies: "What I love about the War Doctor is that he's emphatically not the Doctor. Admittedly he's not at the Master's level of morally compromised, but he is willing



Above (clockwise from top left): David Richardson, Christopher Naylor, Vineeta Rishi, Paul Panting, Alfie Shaw, Ken Bentley, Ian Gommingsham, Maria Teresa Creasey and Jonathon Carley

and Chris have done continuing the legacies of their respective characters so respectfully and authentically. It's something we all share. So it felt like a celebration to sort of flip that on its head and have those actors playing original characters but with a very conscious link. If you know, you know.

"The highlight for this set has really been the people and the laughs. Unusually, I think this is the first time that I've recorded a story where everyone involved is either a Big Finish regular or has appeared before, albeit in other ranges. There was an immediate sense of ease, familiarity and shared experience. To cross over with other parts of the Big Finish family, play together and swap stories was just a massive treat.

"And it's been great to work with Alfie. He's done such stellar work with the Eleventh Doctor, I have enormous respect for him. We also share a similar sense of humour and Alfie laughs at my jokes – though that may just be good diplomacy on his part!"

Alfie has another memory which sticks out with regard to

THE HIGHLIGHT FOR THIS SET HAS REALLY BEEN THE PEOPLE AND THE LAUGHS.

CHRISTOPHER NAYLOR

Fallen Heroes. He explains: "The fact that I nearly broke my brain several times working the plot out! But on a more serious note, the recording days. Such utter joy from start to finish. I adored the cast David and director Ken Bentley pulled together for this – everyone was having such a great time."

Jonathon first played the part of the War Doctor in 2021, and he tells *Vortex*: "I've lost count of how many releases because the War Doctor has branched out into other

ranges and specials. It really is like second nature now for me now; the War Doctor is always in there.

"To look at the things that we've covered in that time is immense! There's always the anxiety of being tempted to rest on your laurels and go into autopilot, but the fantastic writing has ensured that is not a danger – and *Fallen Heroes* is no exception." **VORTEX**

THE WAR DOCTOR RISES FALLEN HEROES



- RELEASED: MAY 2025
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

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THE CONCLUDING SET OF A 12-PART EPIC FOR THE FIFTH DOCTOR IS ON ITS WAY...

THE HOOKLIGHT

FANTASTIC

THE FIFTH Doctor and his friends have been travelling across space and time to different planets and eras, meeting a host of new characters and monsters. Writer Tim Foley takes us to Morning, where a powerful force has re-emerged. A lamp filled with a mythical substance, known as Hooklight, has been discovered but this apocalyptic element could mean the end of everything... get ready for the conclusion in **The Fifth Doctor Adventures: Hooklight 2**.

Producer David Richardson says: "When we were developing *Hooklight*, I knew the only way we were going to get it all recorded was to do it in

one massive block over two weeks. It's hard enough finding windows of availability when all of the leads can get together in a single day, and *Hooklight* has a prominent guest cast who feature across both box sets.

"So everyone in the team lived 12 episodes over a very concentrated fortnight, which made *Hooklight* both a massive mountain to climb and a joyous universe in which we could immerse ourselves. Having now heard it all I think it feels unlike anything else I've worked on; Tim's voice is unique and his creations in this are so vivid. *Hooklight* has been a big and challenging experiment, but one that's hugely rewarding."

Director Ken Bentley was delighted

when he was first asked to work on an adventure of this length.

He says: "I like getting my teeth stuck into a longer story so I was quite excited when David briefed me about this one. We've told longer stories before but over more releases, so I was looking forward to telling this bigger story from start to finish, recording in one huge block."

With Ken having experience as a theatre director, *Vortex* asks if working on a 12-part story is like having a short-run theatre play, keeping the same core cast together.

He explains: "Yes, it makes it much easier to prep and cast. And it gives the actors something to get their teeth into. You can see how



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

much more invested they are in the storytelling when an adventure is as long as this. I love it when a cast gets excited and they each take responsibility for their character, it's a privilege to watch as they work together to bring the story to life."

The main guest star of the story is Celia Imrie – who **Doctor Who** fans will know from her role in TV episode *The Bells of St John* – in the role of Dr Jessica Myles.

Ken continues: "We've worked with Celia before and sometimes a role comes along that's such a perfect fit you have to hope that particular actor is available! Celia's delightful to work with. We always record a lot of audio in a very short amount of time so actors need to be able to bounce off each other quickly. Celia's experience in comedy makes recording with Big Finish second nature."

Also in the cast is Kieran Bew, known for his roles in series such as *House of*

the Dragon and The Street, as well as appearing in **Doctor Who** on screen in the Twelfth Doctor episode *Oxygen*.

Ken adds: "It was great to cast Kieran in such a big and fun role. We've recorded with him a few times now and we're always trying to find other roles for him. He's a busy actor who goes away for weeks at a time on really high-profile TV projects, but we were lucky he was available this time which was a relief. He was our first choice for Davlin and I can't imagine anybody else in the part. His performance is a joy to listen to."

SARAH SUTTON enjoyed the experience of recording this 12-part epic, especially as she got to spend more time with her former co-stars from Season 19 and 20. For many years, Nyssa and the Fifth Doctor had adventures as a duo before Janet Fielding and Matthew Waterhouse reprised their

roles as Tegan and Adric on audio.

Sarah says: "It's great having Janet and Matthew in the cast. For a long time, it was just myself with Peter. We had fun, but there's something really special about having all four of us together again. We laugh a lot – an awful lot – and we know each other so well, we can tease each other too. We've been working together for more than 40 years, so we're like an extended family.

WE LAUGH A LOT – AN AWFUL LOT...

SARAH SUTTON

"I'm really loving what I get to do with Big Finish. We've had the chance to explore more about Nyssa and actually use the fact that she's a scientist which was often forgotten about on TV.

"*Hooklight* has been great fun to do. It's a massive story and there's a lot in it for Nyssa, which I'm obviously very happy about!"

David concludes: "This is actually my last set as producer for the Fifth Doctor (although I have done some development work on the 2026 sets). I've been involved with the range since 2007 in various capacities, and it's been an absolute treat to spend time with one of my favourite teams. But it's now someone else's time to play in this brilliant sandpit and I shall enjoy following the stories in future as a listener." **VORTEX**

THE FIFTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES HOOKLIGHT 2



- RELEASED: MAY 2025
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

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The next volume of Doctor Who short stories is on the way – featuring a gaggle of new scribes...



SHORT BUT SWEET

BIG FINISH'S popular **Short Trips** range returns with six thrilling new adventures. The Doctor and his companions face friends and foes from past, present and future in this audiobook anthology of **Doctor Who** short stories. Range producer Peter Anghelides says: "**Short Trips** has been a wonderful opportunity for Big Finish to seek out new and varied voices for writing **Doctor Who** adventures.

"In previous releases we've had a balance of familiar and new writers. I'm delighted that this time five of the six authors are contributing their first audio story for Big Finish – including some who came to our attention from their entries in the annual Paul Spragg Memorial Competition.

"Each writer has brought a fresh outlook to the range. Their stories make clever use of the opportunities an

audiobook offers that a full-cast audio drama does not, such as descriptive prose and a perspective on someone's inner thoughts and perceptions.

They combine exciting adventures with thoughtful character pieces.

"Whenever possible, I invite the writer to listen in to the studio recording of their story. When I've written scripts myself, I've always found it a treat to hear my words come to life as the actor performs them. And I think writers also get a better feeling for the practicalities and mechanics of recording a story that can help them when they write their next script. Two of our six writers for this collection were in the US so it was quite an early start for them to dial in!"

The set opens with *Dark Watchers of California* by Riley Silverman, a Twelfth Doctor and Bill adventure read by Rebecca Root.

Susie hides out in California's Big Sur, but finds she cannot entirely escape a 1966 San Francisco riot. Who are the Dark Watchers?

Riley is a writer, comedian, actress and podcaster based in Los Angeles. She is an author of *Star Wars* books, head writer of the comedy panel podcast *Troubled Waters*, and a contributing writer to *D&D Beyond*.

The second story, *When I Say Run...* by Ben Tedds, is an adventure for you and the Tenth Doctor, read by Clare Corbett.

You love listening to these audio stories as you go about your daily routine, so it's awkward when an alien entity takes control of you during your morning run. Maybe the Doctor can have a word in your ear?

Ben won the Paul Spragg Memorial Short Trips Opportunity



Above: India Fisher

in 2019 with *The Best-Laid Plans*. He has subsequently written for the **Short Trips** range and **The Twelfth Doctor Chronicles**. In 2024, Ben won an ITV Development Traineeship at Plimsoll Productions.

Rise of the Eukaryans by Daniel Hardcastle is an Eleventh Doctor story read by Laura Aikman.

A busy factory owner unexpectedly finds her own face burned into her breakfast toast. As if that's not bad enough, someone's rearranged the contents of her fridge.

Daniel was invited to write his first audio story for Big Finish when judges of the Paul Spragg Memorial Opportunity were impressed by his competition entry. As Nerd³ he is a popular YouTuber, author and actor. He wrote a 2019 Sunday Times bestseller book on video gaming, and his science fiction novel *The Paradox Paradox* is being published by Unbound this year.

Ahead of Time by Paul Booth is an Eighth Doctor and Charley adventure read by India Fisher.

Kairon lies in ruins, its timeline destroyed by a reckless temporal Ponzi

I'VE ALWAYS FOUND IT A TREAT TO HEAR MY WORDS COME TO LIFE AS THE ACTOR PERFORMS THEM.

PETER ANGHELIDES

scheme. Amid the chaos, Kenz Qindi holds the secret to saving her planet.

Paul was invited to write his first audio story for Big Finish when judges of the Paul Spragg Memorial Opportunity liked his entry. He is professor in Communication and Media at DePaul University, Chicago, where he teaches a course on **Doctor Who**. Paul has written and edited more than 50 books, chapters and academic articles on media and pop culture (including **Doctor Who** titles for Bloomsbury), as well

as other sci-fi/horror stories.

Emerald Isle by Christian Markham is a Seventh Doctor and Ace adventure read by Kaye Brown.

Family and friendship are at stake on the Caribbean island of Montserrat as ghosts of the past come for Ace and her childhood friend.

This is Christian's debut story for Big Finish, having previously submitted entries to the Paul Spragg Memorial Opportunity. For his story, he has chosen to draw upon his mixed Jamaican/Montserratian Caribbean heritage.

The final story, *Dark is the Devil that Walks* by Mags L Halliday features the Fifth Doctor, Tegan and Turlough read by Janet Fielding.

In 1814 Devon, palaeontologist Isabella Kerslake rescues the Doctor from a cliff collapse.

This is Mags's first audio story for Big Finish though she has written adventures for print in **Short Trips: Transmissions** and the **Bernice Summerfield** and **Iris Wildthyme** ranges. Mags wrote the Eighth Doctor novel *History 101* for BBC Books and has been shortlisted for the Exeter Writers prize for her non-**Who** fiction.

Peter concludes: "This is the first **Short Trips** volume to have behind-the-scenes tracks where the author, director and reader discuss how the story was written and recorded.

"We did some of these for the most recent Paul Spragg Memorial Competition winners, and as listeners like them so much we decided to do them for all our short stories." **VORTEX**

SHORT TRIPS TALES FROM THE VORTEX



■ RELEASED: APRIL 2025
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/tales





THE BAD BOY OF TORCHWOOD IS BACK, AND HE IS . . .

TWICE THE MAN

TYLER STEELE is the nearly man of *Torchwood* – a disgraced former journalist, determined to fit in somewhere. When he didn't initially make the grade with *Torchwood Three* in Cardiff, he instantly got himself a job working for their rival – Ro-Jedda of the alien Sorvix, the mayor of Cardiff.

Throughout *Torchwood: Among Us*, Tyler, played by Jonny Green, ultimately proved his worth. And now we're now going to find out more about Tyler, who has previously refused to discuss his childhood and his past.

The Boy Who Never Laughed by Joseph Lidster puts Tyler front

and centre. Summing up Tyler, Joe says: "I've always loved Jonny's performance as Tyler. Tyler is a very tall, very handsome, very sexually promiscuous, very confident – even arrogant – disgraced ex-journalist who I think is, paradoxically, very clearly a lost young man absolutely lacking in the confidence he pretends he has. I know a few Tylers in the real world. They have everything, but scratch the surface and there's trauma. One of the reasons I've always loved Jonny's performance is that he's hinted that Tyler might just actually be a scared little boy."

Producer James Goss says: "We're so pleased with this act of

shameless serendipity. A script just arrived from Joe, and he literally asked 'Do you want to do this?'. Joe loves the character, and we had been wanting to do a solo Jonny script. So I mentioned it to director Scott Handcock and he said, 'Ah, interesting, no particular reason but can it be out by May?' "And that's where we are. It's a phenomenal script and a fab showcase of just how brilliant an actor Jonny is."

Joe continues: "This was an odd one for me because I wasn't given a brief. During lockdown I struggled to write anything, except this one idea kept niggling away at



Above: Jonny Green

me, and so I wrote a script around it. It hadn't been commissioned, it wasn't planned, there was no scene breakdown. I'd go for walks and record voice-notes as I thought of scenes and conversations. I then put all these together until it became something resembling a coherent script and sent it to James and he, thankfully, saw something in it. Obviously, he had notes and I had thoughts on his notes but, eventually, it became the script that went into the recording studio."

THE STORY opens with Tyler in bed with... himself... how difficult was it writing two different versions of him, that were distinct enough to be told apart?

Joe explains: "Tyler wakes up one morning and there's another Tyler in his flat. The second Tyler wants him to explore what makes him tick because, well, who knows why..."

"This might come back to bite me in the backside but I didn't worry too much about who was who. I hope it

will be clear in the dialogue which Tyler is talking to the other. I have faith in Jonny who is brilliant, and I have faith in Scott who is simply an absolute expert at his job.

"But I also have faith in the listener to pay attention! The story is a two-hander conversation between Tyler Steele and Someone Else. It's just that the same actor plays both parts."

Scott adds: "Tyler's a really interesting character because you very rarely get to see his true self. Ash Darby wrote a brilliant

THIS MIGHT COME BACK TO BITE ME IN THE BACKSIDE BUT I DIDN'T WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT WHO WAS WHO.

JOSEPH LIDSTER

story called *Hostile Environment* in **Torchwood: God Among Us 2** which really got under the skin of him because it stripped everything back. He no longer had his suits or flat or the trappings that he thought made him who he was. That story particularly was quite exposing for him because he's someone who's lived a life and is trying to run away from it. In his head, the only way to do that is to reinvent himself as something else. And because he's been hurt in the past he tries to avoid it happening again by making himself seem superior to everyone – but of course he's not.

"Since he's been surrounded by people like Ng, Orr and Mr Colchester, he's been able to strip those layers back and open up a bit more. He's realised there's not just more out there in the universe, but also to himself. *The Boy Who Never Laughed* is a really lovely exploration of who he was before joining Torchwood. And it all makes perfect sense."

Scott continues: "Jonny and I go back a long way. I do a radio drama project with the Royal College of Music and Drama once a year, and

Jonny was one of their students. I soon realised he was brilliant – I mean really, really fantastic. Not just on audio but as an actor generally, so I suggested him to James for Tyler when we were originating the new team for **Torchwood: Among Us**. I also cast him in **The War Master**, and he's done a few other bits for Big Finish here and there. I adore working with Jonny because he's prepared, fun, easy going – a really gentle kind-hearted human being.

"*The Boy Who Never Laughed* is brilliantly observed, particularly the Tyler-parent relationship. After reading it I messaged James saying, 'Absolutely no one else can direct this!' I felt weirdly proprietorial over it. I also wanted to challenge Jonny, to push him, and I sort of know

HE'S PREPARED, FUN, EASY GOING – A REALLY GENTLE KIND-HEARTED HUMAN BEING.

SCOTT HANDCOCK

how to do that. And I know that he trusts me as a director so it would be a really lovely collaboration.

"Of course, it's also more complicated because Jonny's not just playing Tyler; he's playing Tyler interacting with a version of himself. It was tricky scheduling-wise because there's no way we could get it done in a single day and we had to marry it up with something else Jonny was doing.

"I read in a little bit opposite Jonny but for the most part we had the brilliant Gwion Morris Jones. Gwion is a fantastic actor. He was in *73 Yards*, *The Winter King* and lots of other things. It's actually quite surprising he was happy to join us to read in without being recorded or featured. But that's testament to who he is because he's just very happy to work with other actors and give whatever he can to get the best result from everyone."

Joe concludes: "The story is – predictably for my writing – a little heavy in places. It goes into some



Above: Jonny Green

really dark stuff from Tyler's past, but James and Scott always know how to keep things light. James is great at really pushing for more story during the writing process and then providing snacks at the recording, and Scott is really great at pushing the actors to go even further with their performances while also knowing when to give them a moment or two to breathe.

"And then as soon as the recording stops, everyone takes the mick out of each other! It's a really safe, fun environment to work in."

Scott adds: "It was a very intense script, both in terms of the narrative and production, but really rewarding. It's one of my favourites of the entire range." **VORTEX**

TORCHWOOD THE BOY WHO NEVER LAUGHED



■ RELEASED: MAY 2025
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/laughed



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EVERY MONTH THE BIG FINISH BOOK CLUB SPOTLIGHTS A RELEASE FROM THE BIG FINISH CATALOGUE, WITH A SPECIAL DISCOUNT ON THE DIGITAL DOWNLOAD PRICE.

DOCTOR WHO: FROSTFIRE



WHEN DOCTOR Who Magazine first announced that Big Finish was launching **The Companion Chronicles** range, it was with little pomp or ceremony – the last item in the monthly Big Finish round-up in issue 375. Who knew from the range's launch of just 94 words what a success it would become!

The first story to be released was *Frostfire* by Marc Platt with Maureen O'Brien as Vicki and guest star Keith Drinkel. The adventure featured Jane Austen.

I'M NOT SURE I KNEW I WAS WRITING THE FIRST EVER COMPANION CHRONICLE UNTIL I'D ALREADY STARTED.

MARC PLATT

Marc recalls: "I'm not sure I knew I was writing the first ever **Companion Chronicle** until I'd already started. There's always some pressure with whatever I write, I have to meet my own expectations as well as those of the producers. As for the audience's expectations – surely it's my job to surprise them?"

"It's slightly different writing for **The Companion Chronicles** as they're more like short stories in concept – more subjective. I was asked for a play split into two thirty-minute episodes, performed by one of the early companions plus one other voice. And as much in the style of the original series as possible.

"I was offered two or three companions to start off with and none of them was Vicki, but when I found out that Maureen was available, I pestered the producers to give me her character. Maureen is an immensely experienced radio actress and I really wanted to write something for her.

"Vicki was seriously underused in television **Doctor Who**. She's bright, bubbly, intelligent and has a teasing sense of humour. Since her story would be told at a distance, looking back on old events, that gave me the

chance not only to tell a new story, but also to explore Vicki's life after she was left at the sack of Troy.

"I'd always wanted to use one of the Thames frost fairs as a location, and the last fair in 1814 is the most fully documented. What clinched it was that while I was reading up on Georgian London, I realised that Jane Austen was a regular visitor, travelling up to town to visit her publisher. So it was possible that she might have visited the fair as well. The combination of Jane and the Doctor was irresistible.

As I recall, Maureen only upbraided me over one line. At one point, Vicki remarks that Jane Austen, like all writers, would never use a few words when a couple of hundred would do. Maureen is something of an Austen aficionado and made me take that line out – even when I feebly protested that it was a teenager Vicki's view!"

Looking back at his cover, artist Simon Holub says: "I was really happy with how *Frostfire* came out. It is pretty much exactly as I had pictured in it my mind, albeit with the slight historical error of featuring the Palace of Westminster before it'd even been built. Oops!" **VORTEX**

THE COMPANION CHRONICLES FROSTFIRE



■ RELEASED: JANUARY 2007
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/freeze 

Big Finish's digital re-releases of the Lucie Miller series with the Eighth Doctor are coming to a conclusion...



"I Love Lucie"

OVER THE past year, Big Finish has been bringing together the hugely popular adventures of the Eighth Doctor and Lucie Miller in digital box sets. Released with a brand-new cover, the box sets feature the exploits of Paul McGann and Sheridan Smith's characters, encountering new friends and old foes in time and space.

Series Four is now set for release on download to own with 10 glorious adventures which ultimately see Lucie depart the Doctor's side in tragic circumstances.

Executive producer Nicholas Briggs recalls: "I think I can say this was our best season, though the other three were great! But for this one, we really pulled out the stops. We knew, as I've said before, that we wanted

to do something heartbreakingly violent with Lucie. We wanted her to be as brave as a lion and willingly get herself blasted out of existence to save the day. And we wanted the Doctor to be left devastated, hollowed out, in shock... which is what, in turn, helped to give *Dark Eyes* its power the following year. The Doctor was traumatised by his loss." Producer Barnaby Edwards adds:

"We went into preproduction knowing that this was to be the final season with Lucie Miller and it affected all the scripts. We loved working with Sheridan and she loved working with us, but it was getting increasingly difficult to book her because she was so crazily busy. During the previous season, she'd be filming in the morning,

Once he finds Tamsin – played by the fantastic Niky Wardley – we fly off and follow her adventures."

VORTEX ASKS Nick for his main memory of that final series in studio. He says: "Brilliant stories and actors, really creatively rewarding. I was flabbergasted when

she was so busy – so we had to let her go and fly! She has come back, though, which is glorious. And, naturally, we'd love her to come back again and again."

Barney adds: "This was my first series as a producer and it was wonderful to be able to shape those four seasons. I'd have been lost without the guiding hand of Nick and the scripting genius of Alan. Being able to cast four years' worth of stories is an amazing privilege, too. I got to play with many of my acting heroes – Bernard Cribbins, Miriam Margolyes, David Warner, Una Stubbs, Timothy West, Barbara Flynn, Art Malik, Hayley Atwell, Kenneth Cranham, Nigel Havers, Julia McKenzie – you name them. And, of course, the pleasure of working with Sheridan and Paul for such an extended period. My memories of recording Lucie Miller are filled with utter joy."

Nick concludes: "I look back on these adventures with so much pride. It's obvious to say, but work is most rewarding when you set out to do something and actually achieve it. Everything we wanted to do with Lucie and the Eighth Doctor worked, and more. From the brilliant creation of the character by Alan and how that inspired us all to write for her, through to the casting of Sheridan and how she so wonderfully brought the character to life.

"Barney's casting across the board was superb and really upped Big Finish's game in terms of how we viewed ourselves, giving us a greater and a growing feeling of legitimacy and worth. We felt like we were forging something very special. And, as it turned out, we were. It was also a huge learning curve, with a massive feeling of satisfaction at the end. I already had great respect for Alan and Barney beforehand, but by the time we rounded off the final season, their reputations were cemented with me forever." **VORTEX**



Above (l-r): Nicholas Briggs and Sheridan Smith

pop over to us mid-afternoon for a couple of hours, and then scoot back to town to perform in the theatre in the evening. And she was set to be even busier by season four. So, sadly, we had to bid Lucie farewell.

"Script editor Alan Barnes, executive producer Jason Haigh-Ellery, Nick and I were determined that Lucie would go out in a blaze of glory. Nick volunteered to handle that incandescent finale – and pretty spectacular it is too! We then set about trying to work out how to get a whole season out of Sheridan's very limited availability. Alan or Nick – not me – hit upon the brilliant idea of starting the season with Lucie's departure and then bringing her back as a surprise later. Alan was to handle the fake departure and he made a wonderful job of it. *Death in Blackpool* is absolutely heartbreaking.

"We then pressed the reset button for the second story, *Situation Vacant*, in which the Doctor is searching for a new companion.

SHERIDAN ARRIVED, NOT KNOWING LUCIE WAS LEAVING.

NICHOLAS BRIGGS

Sheridan arrived, not knowing Lucie was leaving. I'd thought that Jason, whose job it was to book Sheridan (he handles all the top-line talent) would have mentioned it to her agent. But no! I was presented with a fragile Sheridan on the day, sitting on the bottom step of the stairs in the studio, looking up at me like an abandoned kitten, genuinely asking, "Don't you love me anymore?"

"I explained that we loved her beyond all reason and would gladly work with her every day of the rest of our lives, but it was already proving a nightmare to book her because

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CASTING A SHADOW

Will we ever see more **Dark Shadows** at Big Finish? I know with COVID, other projects at Big Finish and the loss of some of the actors/creatives, it's not been easy. June 2026 will be the 60th anniversary – can we expect to have **Dark Shadows** continue before then, in some form? It's been more than a five-year gap since the last **Tony & Cassandra** release.

MICHAEL MCGINLAY

*Nick: We'd love to do some more **Dark Shadows**, Michael, as you know, we never say never at Big Finish!*

V FOR VICTORY

A quick email to say, as a new Big Finish customer, how much I enjoyed listening to **V: UK – Visitation**. I found out about the release by accident as someone had posted about it on Facebook and I immediately ordered the download and CD. I really enjoyed listening to it, it was true to the original story. I liked how Kenneth Johnson worked with Big Finish and I loved the fact the story had been updated and set in the UK. I am looking forward to the next release.

MARK ROBINSON

Nick: So glad you enjoyed it, Mark. It was a privilege for Big Finish to work with Kenneth, the original series creator.

WE'RE ALL DOOMED!

I have recently finished listening to your excellent series of **The Avengers – The Lost Episodes**. My mind turned to another series you might turn your attention to for similar treatment. I was listening to the commentary track on the recent **Doomwatch** movie Blu-ray release, and I was saddened to hear that at a convention panel a few years ago, Big Finish were not keen to adapt the missing episodes. However, given that the current repeats of the series on Talking Pictures TV are proving extremely popular, could there be a re-think on this situation and that **Doomwatch – The Lost**



Episodes could be a possibility?

COLIN FRANCIS

*Nick: I would love us to do **Doomwatch**, Colin, and I too am enjoying the repeats on TPTV (the constant sexism – although very much normal for that time – is now so offensive it beggars belief!). I think any reluctance on our part was probably connected with our doubts about how popular it would be with a large audience. We received many requests for **Adam Adamant Lives!** and so entered into a licence agreement to make that but it sold very poorly which is why we haven't made any more. Get me a thousand guaranteed listeners for **Doomwatch** and we might consider it!*

THE MISSING LINK

I've just enjoyed **Gallifrey: Echoes Through Eternity** and feel inspired to go back to the start of the series and

do the whole 20-year run again. But then, I thought, "Better do **Zagreus** too: that's where it started!" and then went, "Hang on, got to do **The Apocalypse Element** too as that's the first Romana one, and then thought, "Oh, but I must do **Blood Harvest** as that's when Romana returned from E-Space and – oh, but that's never been done for audio, not even as an audiobook reading." I think this is a real shame, as it's not only a very definite missing link between the TV series and the audio ranges featuring Romana, but also the thematic twin to last year's **Goth Opera** in **The Novel Adaptations** range. So, can we have **Blood Harvest** please? If nothing else, it's more Benny and the Seventh.

PAUL CASTLE

*Nick: No plans at the moment, Paul, but we keep all these kinds of decisions under continuous review. **VORTEX***



BIG FINISH RELEASE SCHEDULE

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ISSUE 194
APRIL 2025
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