

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX

ISSUE 198
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FINISH OF STORIES



THE LOST STORIES

ALIXION

THE DOCTOR AND ACE FIND
THEMSELVES AT THE MERCY
OF A MALIGN ENTITY...

CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE

The Brigadier enlists the Doctor's help in solving a
mystery on an oil rig that they might prefer to forget...





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STAR COPS

STAR COPS: CONFLICT

BIG FINISH'S acclaimed audio drama continuation of Chris Boucher's **Star Cops** returns next year with *Conflict*, an exciting new miniseries of six linked adventures.

It's the near future, and maintaining law and order beyond Earth is the responsibility of the International Space Police Force.

Commander Nathan Spring, Chief Superintendent Pal Kenzy, and Inspector Colin Devis are once again leading the action with David Calder, Linda Newton and Trevor Cooper reprising the roles they first played in the 1987 BBC TV series.

Also returning throughout the series are Philip Olivier as Inspector Paul Bailey and Lynsey Murrell as Inspector Alice Okoro.

Earth's mineral resources are becoming scarce, causing a rise in global tensions. Two space missions – a project to recover mineral resources from the asteroid belt and a missile platform placed in Near Earth Orbit – result in a further escalation and the risk of war. The Star Cops' investigations bring them into the forefront of the crisis. Their actions may affect the future of everyone on the planet.

Producer Emma Haigh tells **Vortex**: "I'm always thrilled to see a new **Star Cops** script has arrived in my inbox and these stories have brought just as much excitement as ever.

"The Star Cops are tested to their limits, both physically and mentally, with huge professional and personal conflicts against the backdrop of a global crisis. Script editor Andrew Smith and our team of writers – Roland Moore, Mark Wright and Georgia Cook – take us on a journey for which it's worth flying to the Moon and back." **VORTEX**

STAR COPS CONFLICT

- RELEASED: JANUARY 2026
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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EDITORIAL

WHEN THE classic run of **Doctor Who** was unfairly curtailed in 1989, I was 15 – and I wasn't very pleased that my favourite television programme had been taken off air! At the time, Sylvester McCoy and Sophie Aldred were making great strides forward as the show's fresh and creative approach, overseen by script editor Andrew Cartmel, was taking it into territory that has since become commonplace in the 21st century iteration of the show.

Because of this, Big Finish's **The Lost Stories** range featuring what would have happened post-*Survival*, the last TV episode of the classic series, is one that I have a very special attachment to.

Previous **Lost Stories** have been *Thin Ice* (years before the Peter Capaldi story of the same name – ideal for Scottish Time Lords!), *Crime of the Century*, *Animal* and *Earth Aid*, all of which have provided a tantalising insight into where the TV show might have gone.

And now, another adventure is being brought to life for the first time, a mere three decades after it was planned! Robin Mukherjee's *Alixion* is well known to fans – and we've assumed for years that it is something to do with an elixir. I had a fantastic half hour call with Robin about it, and his absolute passion to work on the audio script came across loud and clear. *Alixion* really matters to him, as he finally completes something that began way back when. I can't wait to hear it! **VORTEX**

Kenny



Sylvester McCoy and Sophie Aldred finally star in *Alixion* - some 35 years after it should have been on screen!

ALIXION

THE LOST Stories range makes a welcome return, as an unproduced *Doctor Who* television story is finally brought to life, with the Seventh Doctor (Sylvester McCoy) and Ace (Sophie Aldred).

Alixion is based on a serial that was commissioned in 1989, prior to the show's cancellation. Its original writer, Robin Mukherjee, went on to have a successful career as a film and TV screenwriter.

Checking into a luxury health spa for a little rest and recreation, the Doctor and Ace find themselves at the

mercy of a malign entity that craves the conquest of time and space.

Script editor John Dorney says: "I'd been aware of *Alixion* for a while so it was exciting to get it into studio at last. Robin was a brilliant writer to work with, a very inventive mind, ambitious with his storytelling and a fab collaborator.

"One of the earliest issues we faced was that the story had been conceived as a three-parter and we needed to expand it to four. He had all manner of creative ideas for how to deal with that, there was quite the back and forth. But I think

his eventual solutions really were greatly to the benefit of the whole piece to the degree I can't imagine it working as a three-parter now at all!"

Robin recalls: "I first met Andrew Cartmel through the BBC script unit, which was based in offices in North Acton, and run by Tony Dinner who was a theatre director. Andrew and I were both mentees, which meant that our work was read by the mentor.

"When Andrew became script editor at *Doctor Who*, and with John Nathan-Turner looking for some fresh writers, he ventured some of the people from the script unit workshop.



Above: Sylvester McCoy

It was a strong cohort. Somebody had recognised our potential, and Andrew felt that we could bring something new to the show.

"My proposal was accepted, the outline had been commissioned, and we were just working on that, really, when the axe came down.

"The effect it had on me personally was disappointment, obviously. I had been excited to be on the show, and really enjoyed it. I was a **Doctor Who** fan, and had been for years, so it felt like a good thing from every viewpoint.

"I was aware there was an interest in *Alixion*, as it existed in a sort of limbo. Although it hadn't been made, it was part of the **Doctor Who** mythology. Somebody gave me

I DIDN'T REALISE SO MUCH OF THE WORK WAS STILL IN MY PSYCHE...

ROBIN MUKHERJEE

a book with a section on the **Lost Stories**, and I was tickled by that."

DESPITE NOT writing for **Doctor Who**, it stayed in Robin's life, and he enjoyed watching the 21st century series with his daughter. He says: "When the call from Big Finish came, it was

a complete surprise. They asked for permission to make the story, and then asked if I might be interested in writing it. So that was a double-barrelled offer to which the answer was, 'yes, of course'.

"Thinking back to working on the original story, I had index cards all over a table, trying to wrestle with the logistics of the narrative. I didn't realise so much of the work was still in my psyche, and that now it could all come to a completion.

"I'd made notes subsequently, when somebody asked me about it, and I'd tried to remember what the story was. I remembered there were things I hadn't quite cracked on the original.

"It's like returning to an itch you've had for 40 years and thinking, 'Now I know how to solve that problem.' I'm sure we would have solved it had the office remained open and the visits to Shepherd's Bush continued. It was lovely to go back to the material and play with it."

Robin was delighted to finally complete his story. He says: "It was so much fun. I would even call it an indescribable joy, partly because of the closure of the circle. All your stories, even the ones that never get made, are like your children. I've got all these orphaned stories in my head."

PRODUCER/DIRECTOR

David O'Mahony says: "Pulling together the guest cast of *Alixion* was really good fun. When I cast Jon Edgley Bond as Larkin, I literally said to him, 'He's like Renfield,' and he got that – he was great. There's moments where he really does make my skin crawl.

"Beverley Longhurst plays Mathilda who is such great value. When we were recording, that was around the same time as my five-year-old discovered *Descendants*, a series of films on Disney about the kids of villains. Beverley should be playing the Queen of Hearts – she has that kind of that kind of delivery!

"Playing Colin is Shri Patel, who I first met when he was recommended to do a table read of a play that I directed. He's a lovely guy, really talented. I was listening to his voice reel and he's got a quite nice roughness to his voice. And I really wanted that, because there's a lovely scene where Colin and Ace are quite involved. Colin sounds quite suave!

"Also in the cast are Mathew McQuinn and Ali Bastian. I cast Ali as I needed someone who could sound like a girl in her early twenties, but I also needed that person to double up as the woman who is Ace's aunt. She was brilliant because she puts a bit of high energy into her voice to sound younger. Mat is normally my first port of call for anything because he's just so reliable and has got so many different accents in his back pocket!"

Robin adds: "I was there for the recording days – I just thought, 'Oh,

THE REASON IT WAS NEVER MADE WAS OBVIOUSLY A FAIRLY BIG ONE...

DAVID O'MAHONY

I've got to do this, and I'm so pleased I did. Big Finish do it brilliantly. The writer's sitting there, nursing a certain amount of preciousness, but there's a huge amount of trust in the crew and the cast. They did a read through of a scene, and I'm thinking, 'Oh, my God! They've completely missed it!' But then, the director, David, gives a few notes, and I realise they're just getting the sound of it and testing the parameters of that scene.

"David is such a good director – you can tell he's worked in the theatre, because he has such a grasp of text and you really feel that he's entered into it, understood it and looked at the different options within the line. I even got to do a little cameo, although I think it will be lost in the edit. But what a dream come true! The cameo is myself and Sylvester. I played a rude old geezer, and called him a flipping idiot! I couldn't have wished for anything better."

DAVID ADDS: "Robin's really lovely, and working on *Alixion* has felt like one of those *Sliding Doors* moments in his career where he pitched a good, fun story, and was so close to being developed for television, before the show was cancelled.

"Robin's gone on and had a great career, but it is lovely that this



Above: Sophie Aldred

story has had the opportunity to live. In the creative industry, there are so many great stories that never see the light of day because of one of a thousand reasons.

"In the case of *Alixion*, the reason it was never made was obviously a fairly big one – the show didn't exist anymore. But I'm really glad we've been able to do this for him, and it's a great story."

Robin concludes: "I'm teaching some MA students at Bath Spa University and quite a few of them are *Doctor Who* fans. I took the secrecy of this seriously, but once it was announced, I intimidated what I was up to. They were so excited, and one of them told me yesterday he had already ordered his CDI!"

VORTEX

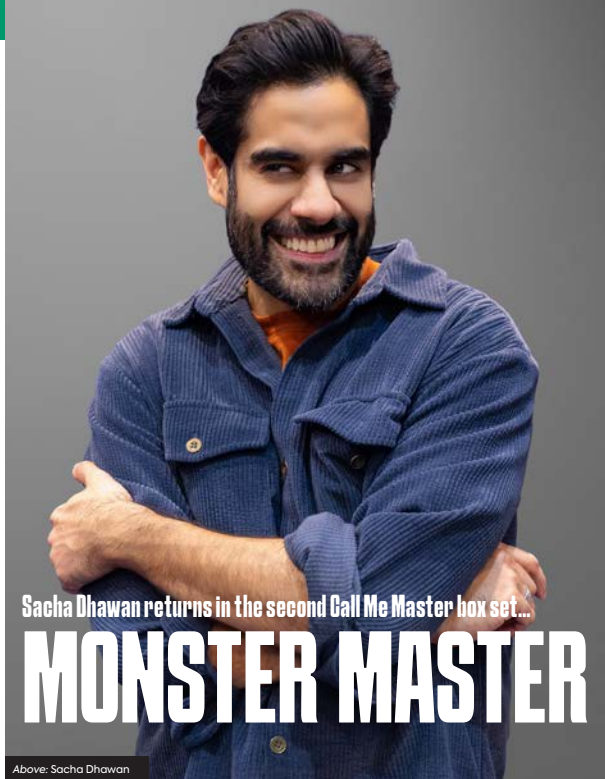
DOCTOR WHO: THE LOST STORIES ALIXION



■ RELEASED: SEPTEMBER 2025
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

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Sacha Dhawan returns in the second Call Me Master box set...

MONSTER MASTER

Above: Sacha Dhawan

THREE NEW adventures with the Master are coming our way, after the first set, *Inner Demons*, was released earlier this year.

A sequel, *Monsters*, is on the way, and producer Heather Challands says: "I had some lovely interactions with fans at Big Finish Day and what has come back has been really open and positive and excited so I'm thrilled to be able to share more of this Master."

"I would say we've got three pretty solid, different stories again. The Master is a lot more confident, which was exciting to dig our teeth into. I hesitate to use the word 'playful' but he feels just that touch more confident in his skin and it's great to have him play opposite characters who are very different from him or a bit too similar."

The set opens with *The Craft of Corruption* by Alison Winter. She says: "I was very excited to write for Sacha, who is a delightful force of nature. Development began back in the summer of 2022, so he was still very much on active duty as the Master. It felt very current, and I watched the Power of the Doctor

with an extra giddy excitement – especially when he interacted with Ace which was quite full-circling for me.

"It was a challenging brief, in that it was very open. I was told the Master was stranded. It had to be in space, and in the future, and using no known adversaries or locations, as the others writers on the set had bagged them all! With the exception of the Master, I had to invent and establish everything and everyone in the episode. I had some pretty wild ideas before settling on *The Craft of Corruption*."

Ali adds: "It brought me on as an audio writer to have to worldbuild everything from scratch without sacrificing pace, but ultimately the main highlight with this story was watching Sacha work. I apologise profusely for the pun, but 'masterclass' doesn't touch it. So pleased I got to write some juicy speeches for him."

The second adventure is *The Ideal Quarry* by Jody Hauser, with the Titan Doctor Who comics writer doing her first Big Finish script after meeting script editor Matt Fitton at the Gallifrey convention in 2023.

The set concludes with *Reformation* by Lisa McMullin. She says: "I loved Sacha Dhawan's Master on screen so was really keen to write something for him."

"I wanted to do something small scale and psychological – the Master's mind is a fascinating place to spend time – so asked if I could do

HE WAS STILL VERY MUCH ON ACTIVE DUTY AS THE MASTER.

ALISON WINTER

what is essentially a two-hander.

"The Master is trapped in a peculiar prison with an irritating cell-mate and his moral conscience is called into question (insert maniacal laughter)."

"I loved writing the dynamic between the two characters – I had a very particular idea of who Renata was and when Daisy Head was cast she played it EXACTLY as I'd imagined. The recording was a hoot – it's such fun to hear actors having a ball with your words!"

Heather adds: "The recording day for *Reformation* was a highlight to me. Because it was a two-hander, we could do a complete run-through with the actors, without pausing, just to see the way it all sounded and get a glimpse into it before we started recording. Sacha and Daisy, by happy coincidence, knew each other anyway and so it was a really different way of working. Just going in order!"

VORTEX

CALL ME MASTER
MONSTERS



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THE THIRTEENTH DOCTOR AND YAZ ARE
SET TO FACE SOME ARMADILLO PEOPLE...

HAPPY RETURNS?

JODIE WHITTAKER and Mandip Gill are continuing their adventures as the Doctor and Yasmin Khan in *The Return of the Doctor*.

With their audio adventures having begun on Earth in Tim Foley's *Vampire Weekend*, they're now heading off world in the first Big Finish script from Rory Thomas-Howes, who was commissioned by producer Noga Flaishon.

Noga explains: "I've watched Rory's work in theatre before and so knew he was a terrific writer with a sharp sense of humour. Then when

we started talking, I also discovered he was a huge **Doctor Who** fan. We happened to take the same audio writing course, and that's when I realised he had a really instinctive understanding of the form.

"When I was offered the role of producer on this new range, it was important to me to include some fresh writing talent alongside the Big Finish veterans. I asked Rory to send in some audio samples so that script editor Matt Fitton could get a sense of his style – and he liked them just as much as I did. Right from the first draft, we knew we'd made the

right choice; Rory has captured the Thirteenth Doctor's voice perfectly."

Explaining her brief to Rory, Noga says: "There's an overarching plot running through the stories – which I won't spoil here. We gave the writers all the details during a writers' meeting and asked them to find ways to drop in hints without revealing anything outright (I am still very inspired by the *Bad Wolf* season, you see...).

"We have Yaz and the Doctor in a new dynamic – just the two of them without the rest of the fam – and a whole universe to explore. We also



Above (l-r): Mandip Gill and Jodie Whittaker

wanted to hit a balance with the stories being set throughout time and space. Tim's *Vampire Weekend* was domestic, set in contemporary times just outside Sheffield, but we wanted this next episode to go much further afield and so Rory took us to a brand-new planet in the middle of a war."

Rory says: "I've known Noga for a while now and we've spent a great deal of time discussing, dissecting and unpacking **Doctor Who**, Doctor by Doctor, monster by monster, adventure by glorious adventure. So when Noga got in touch asking if I wanted to write an episode, I nearly set my keyboard on fire with the speed of my YES! If you'd told 12-year-old Rory, settling down to watch his first ever **Doctor Who** television episode (*The Empty Child* – exhilarating and terrifying) that one day he'd be writing his very own episode, he'd have collapsed like a Slitheen in vinegar.

"The brief was pretty open, to be honest! The only things I had to bear in mind was that this story takes place between TV episodes *Revolution of the Daleks* and *The Halloween Apocalypse*, and that the

ideas rattling inside my head), and we settled on this one. I honestly could write every story idea I pitched if I had the time – who knows, maybe one day I will!"

THE THIRTEENTH Doctor has a unique voice, which Rory enjoyed finding. He explains: "Jodie's Doctor is fizzy, fun and loyal to her fam. She's both totally unlike and completely in keeping with any Doctor that came before, and her performance really embraces the strength, the silliness and the wonder that comes with **Doctor Who**. Quite aside from anything else, both Jodie and Mandip are an absolute delight to be around – there's no shortage of energy there! I think the biggest challenge was nailing the Doctor's alien nature – a

AND THERE ARE BIG ARMADILLO PEOPLE. OBVIOUSLY.

RORY THOMAS-HOWES



Above: Belinda Stewart-Wilson

Doctor and Yaz are the centre of the adventure. Outside of that, as long as the story was engaging, imaginative and fun, I was basically let loose to create whatever I wanted."

"I started pitching ideas to Matt and Noga (drawing from 20 years of

champion of humanity who's always slightly on the outside of what it means to be human.

"It was wonderful to explore the Doctor and Yaz's relationship in greater detail – the TV series really crafted a beautiful partnership between these two characters, and I'm so glad Big Finish has decided to expand on their magic and mischief."

Vortex asks Rory to sum up the story. He says: "I was always interested in what happens after the Doctor leaves a world she's saved. Why doesn't she stay to help clear up the mess? Why is she always moving forwards? What doesn't she like about looking back?"

"This story looks into the consequences (intentional and unintentional) of the Doctor's actions. It looks at how we deal with conflict, and how we can move forward from pain. Crucially, it's about the strength of team Doctor/Yaz, as they figure out their new dynamic – no longer Doctor and companion, but equally brilliant people saving countless worlds.

"And there are big armadillo people. Obviously."

Director Bethany Weimers says: "To have Jodie and Mandip back



Above: Charlie Kelly

together again was exciting for everyone, themselves included, and to be a part of that is really special.

"Alongside Jodie and Mandip, we've got a brilliant supporting cast who bring the Zaarians to life beautifully. In fact, the recording session had such a lovely feel to it that I couldn't single out one particular highlight from the day – more like the whole day was a highlight of a busy summer!"

Noga agrees: "We had a fantastic guest cast for this episode. Rory wanted a West Country accent for his alien race, the Zaarians. He told me the choice was inspired by the idea of them being a peaceful people with strong ties to the land – an accent that, to him, evoked the Hobbits and their gentle way of life. The cast included Will Kirk, Stephan Bessant, Belinda Stewart-Wilson and Charlie Kelly – all of whom took to being alien rebels like ducks to water.

"As a writer myself, I'm always a little concerned when actors are handed a bunch of big sci-fi words they've never encountered before.



Above: Stephan Bessant

But with Big Finish actors, it's never an issue – they bring the same professionalism and emotional intensity to the technobabble as they do to the drama.

"This episode also required quite a few wildtracks, which can sometimes make actors a little self-conscious but not this cast! We had such a great time in the studio. And, of course, having actors like Jodie and Mandip

really helps. The chemistry between those two is electric, and their energy lifts everyone else in the room."

Rory concludes: "Getting the chance to invent an entirely new planet and species for **Doctor Who** was incredible – building the culture and the landscape in my mind was like taking a little mental holiday every day.

"I wanted to create an immersive environment for the listener and design a world that really worked in an audio medium, so I came up with a desert planet (Velazaar) filled with swirling sand and wind, echo-y caverns, the sound of claws digging through earth. Putting that world

I'M ALWAYS A LITTLE CONCERNED WHEN ACTORS ARE HANDED A BUNCH OF BIG SCI-FI WORDS...

NOGA FLAISHON

from my brain to page to audio was such an exciting process, and I actually found myself thinking about Velazaar and its citizens long after I'd finished writing the story.

"Plus, I got to include a reference to The Great Jupiter Bake Off. I wonder who hosts that...?" **VORTEX**

**THE THIRTEENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES
THE RETURN OF THE DOCTOR**



■ RELEASED: SEPTEMBER 2025
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DOCTOR WHO THE WIDOW'S ASSASSIN



BEFORE THE Sixth Doctor and the older Peri have a new adventure in *Bad Terms* out for release this August, we turn the clock back to a release from 2014 when their reunited journey began.

Colin Baker and Nicola Bryant star in *The Widow's Assassin* by Nev Fountain, bringing the pair together again after the events of television episode *Mindwarp*.

Colin tells *Vortex*: "It's always lovely to be acting with my original Sixth Doctor companion. I enjoy working with all of the actors, but with Nicola it's always a little bit special because Peri was the first companion I had adventures with. I know I was Peri's second Doctor as she started with Peter Davison's Fifth Doctor, but she's the companion I'm most associated with.

"Nev has written a very good story, sorting out the whole business with Yrcanos and whether or not Peri died, and resolving what really happened in *The Trial of a Time Lord* season – did she really marry him? "I always think that anyone who can write comedy can write anything. It's a great skill because you need to

WE'VE ALWAYS WONDERED ABOUT WHAT WAS REALLY HAPPENING IN MINDWARP...

NEV FOUNTAIN

have an understanding of the human mind and what makes it laugh."

Nev says: "In the brief, script editor Alan Barnes told me to continue on from *Mindwarp* and bring back Peri; he wanted a *Game of Thrones*-style story.

"I was interested in the situation created in *Mindwarp* as to why Peri left the Doctor. When the Doctor was told she was living as a warrior queen, I wanted to know why Peri would want to stay with Yrcanos? What would make her go off with him and leave the Doctor? Why not wait for the Doctor's return? Peri knew the Doctor very well by then, so surely in *Mindwarp* she would have known that the Doctor was not a bad man – even though she's been tortured, threatened and battered?

"I had a variety of ideas. Another was what would happen if the Doctor went back 20 years later

and, in an interesting twist, Peri would have influenced the people of Krontep more than they would have influenced her, with them all sitting around drinking cappuccinos and waxing their bikini lines!

"In the end, I went back to a month after *Mindwarp*. There was no reason for the Doctor not to go back for her, and there was no reason for Peri not to want to continue adventures with him. She wasn't treated any worse in *Mindwarp* than in, say, the TV episode *The Twin Dilemma*.

"Fandom has accepted that Peri went with Yrcanos and the Doctor carried on to meet Mel, and that's that, but I wanted to unpick why. We've always wondered about what was really happening in *Mindwarp* and where the Matrix was lying. It was like taking fragments from *Trial of a Time Lord* and putting it back together – piecing together historical documents."

The story also ties in with Nev's *Companion Chronicle* starring Peri. He adds: "Alan also decided it would be on nodding terms with *Peri and the Pison Paradox*, but not a sequel, which suited me. As far as I'm concerned, it's an alternate Peri from the end of that story – the one that became the warrior queen – and this is her story." **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO THE WIDOW'S ASSASSIN



■ RELEASED: OCTOBER 2014
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/assassin





David Bradley returns as the First Doctor in new adventures Unbound by TV continuity...

monk-Y BUSINESS

PREPARE TO enter new worlds where everything is larger than life. We'll encounter some very familiar faces along the way, as we being a journey with **The First Doctor – Unbound**.

David Bradley is joined by Gemma Powell as Barbara Wright, Jamie Glover as Ian Chesterton and Claudia Grant as Susan. The quartet first took on the roles of **Doctor Who's** original cast of actors in the 2013 biopic **An Adventure in Space and Time**.

Producer/director David O'Mahony says: "David Bradley is one of my heroes. He's one of those actors that crops up in so many things. If you go on his IMDB, he is everywhere!"

"I was a big fan of **An Adventure in Space and Time**, getting a glimpse into the dramatic realisation of William Hartnell's time on the show and his life. David was brilliant to work with, so kind, so generous.

"With this range now being Unbound, the cast were able to completely go to town with it. I want the audience to suspend their disbelief. We're creating something where people will be wondering, 'How does this fit in with the canon?' We've played with that.

"We, as a creative team, have an idea about where these stories are placed, but we also don't want to be too prescriptive.

"With this being the **Unbound** series, we have the licence to reinvent things. We thought it would be nice to take the Cushing films as our inspiration, with big, broad technicolor stories."

WRITER LR Hay has crafted the first of three adventures, *Knights of the Round TARDIS*, in which established TV continuity is up in the air. Lynn says her brief was: "Technicolor audio! A full-length play for sound, in the style of 1960s cinema. We set out to re-imagine the TV First Doctor, in the bold, bigger budget, Saturday matinee feel of the Cushing movies. Audio is tremendously freeing anyway, since



Above (l-r): Jamie Glover and Jemma Powell

the listener paints the pictures, but the confident, bright tropes of 60s films took it to another level.

"It's amazing to be kicking off this wonderful trilogy. 'Visual sound' is an inspired concept, and the fact that they are feature-length stories gave us a huge amount of scope too."

The story sees the TARDIS crew encounter the Meddling Monk, in Earth's past. The writer says: "I had great fun having the Doctor and the Monk's timelines go in opposite directions. After the Doctor stranded him for a second time at the end of *The Daleks' Master Plan*, the Monk was bellowing for vengeance. We deserve a rematch! But in this **Unbound** glitch, the Doctor has not yet met him.

"There are Easter eggs for theatre buffs to look out for too – or fans of *Upstart Crow*, for that matter – since Robert Greene was also dealing with Roger Bacon's curiously sci-fi dabbings in his (in)famous play, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*."

Asked to sum up the plot, Lynn says: "Barbara in particular is relishing Oxford in its golden age and the chance to meet scientific genius Friar Roger Bacon, until it becomes clear that this monk is not all he seems. Not only is he out for revenge on the Doctor yet again, but



Above: David Bradley

THERE ARE EASTER EGGS FOR THEATRE BUFFS TO LOOK OUT FOR...

LR HAY

he's up to his old tricks of tweaking a crucial moment in history for his own gain. This time, it's dashing nobleman Simon de Montfort's efforts to establish an elected parliament.

"The Monk's plans are flamboyant and on an epic scale. Only the most swash-buckling response from the TARDIS crew will do."

DAVID HAD great fun with the casting: "Keith Wickham is a fantastic actor, a really intelligent and nuanced voice performer. His portrayal of the Monk is a homage. It's not an impression, because we didn't want a Peter Butterworth impression, but we did want a nostalgic overtone of it, which I think he captures.

"The Monk was ideal to launch this range, and Lynn has weaved this

amazing universe around it, which was so interesting. She also weaved in some history as well, with Simon de Montfort and King Henry.

"Another actor we have is Mathew McQuinn, who was just great. Not all the cast were present across the recordings, so we had Mat read in all the other parts. Sophie Matthew is playing the Chamberlain in *Knights of the Round TARDIS*, and plays a rather important couple of roles in the next two episodes. Ewan Goddard is a bit like Mat, as he crops up in all three of the *Unbound* stories as different people.

"To create these three stories, we had to be very creative with casting, with people playing six different characters. Playing Simon de Montfort, we had Joseph Millson, who is a bit like David Bradley as he crops up in loads of different roles – he's like a chameleon!"

Lynn adds: "What a talented bunch. And such an honour to have David Bradley, along with Jamie, Jemma and Claudia, who brought to life the origins story of **Doctor Who** in *An Adventure in Space and Time*. It felt like writing for those first actors too, in a way, as I had their voices in my mind. I got very emotional when, while I was writing this script, William Russell appeared unexpectedly in *The Power of the Doctor* – Jan as an old man! Oh, my heart.

"And with Keith's incredible array of voices, I can't wait to hear him as the Monk." **VORTEX**

THE FIRST DOCTOR: UNBOUND KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TARDIS



■ RELEASED: SEPTEMBER 2025
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FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

PROFESSOR BERNICE SUMMERFIELD IS BACK –
AND SHE'S FACING SOME VERY FAMILIAR EYESTALKS...

LIFE IS never easy for Professor Bernice Summerfield. What should have been a dream new home at the Eternity Club, the base of the universe's most eminent explorers, didn't quite work out as planned. Benny finds herself carrying out menial tasks when her membership fee isn't paid – and having a number of adventures along the way.

In **The New Adventures of Bernice Summerfield: The Dalek Eternity 1**, Benny faces the evil creatures from Skaro – creatures she has a long-standing relationship with since they killed her mother, Claire and made her lose contact with her father, Isaac.

Although Benny never faced

the Daleks in the original *New Adventures* novels of the 1990s, she has encountered them on audio, notably in *Death and the Daleks* and in *Volume 01 of The New Adventures of Bernice Summerfield*.

A new Dalek masterplan threatens the galaxy. A deadly alliance is building. Can Bernice Summerfield save us?

Producer James Goss says: "It's back to business for Benny after her holiday in *The Eternity Club*, and she finds herself at the centre of a new Dalek master plan. She has a list of worlds that are going to get caught up in it, and it's a race against time for her to stop the Daleks. This is a proper epic saga with each episode set on a different world with a different challenge, and

whole new Daleks to go up against.

"It's sort of a tribute to the marvellous **Dalek Empire** but with the twist of 'what if Benny had to do this, with only her wits?'"

Lisa Bowerman once again stars as Bernice Summerfield. Lisa tells *Vortex*: "I was delighted by the response to *The Eternity Club* releases. It was very clever of James and script editor Tim Foley to come up with such a great idea. It was a wonderful contrast and antidote to the seriousness of the preceding series. All human life was there – well, all alien life was there – and it proved hugely entertaining as well as touching, with a proper adversary, of course.

"There's a huge cornucopia of

regular characters in *The Eternity Club*, all very contrasting. Every one of them, though, brings out the best and worst in Benny. There's pathos and comedy; excellent ingredients for good drama."

JAMES HAS written the first story. He says: "*The Lonely Bomb* sees Benny heading to the first world on her list, The Johannes Arsenal, a vast sentient weapons store that's about to do a deal with the Daleks. Can she convince it to change its mind?"



Above: Luyanda Unati Lewis-Nyawa



Above (l-r): Lisa Bowerman and Niamh Cusack

"On her quest, Benny takes in all the Dalek classics. There's a lone survivor hunted through ruins; there are rebels and a slave mine; there's a world invaded by Daleks; and then there's an outcast leader who worships the Daleks... And meanwhile, at the Eternity Club, we see Secretary Pym trying to hold things together under Dalek occupation. There are some great scripts by people new to the Benny range, and there's also something quite remarkable by Tim."

Satrap, by Felicia Barker, is the second story. Felicia says: "This run of adventures is quite tightly plotted and the initial brief covered the whole series arc, with details of the key plot beats in each episode along the

way. My episode is a bit of a unique one, and the top line note was to sell the situation back at the Eternity Club. We see a little of the Daleks' arrival in episode one, but then we follow Benny on her escape. She won't be back for a while so episode two is all about establishing what the Dalek occupancy of the Eternity Club looks like in her absence."

The writer was delighted to be invited to be involved in this series, adding: "As a big fan of Benny of old, the arc of these adventures appealed particularly, because I think it's reminiscent of the Braxiatel Collection era in many ways. That said – and I guess this is a little bit of a spoiler – Benny isn't in this one! I got to expand and investigate the cast of

the Eternity Club (in particular poor Secretary Pym and misunderstood Geren), which was a joy.

"Pym and Geren are playing Poirot, investigating sabotage at the Eternity Club. Which should be a jolly fun romp except that they're under Dalek occupation, and every wrong move is punished with immediate, brutal, consequences. And with Benny gone, this is a story missing a hero. Things play out in ways that wouldn't happen if she were around."

Felicia adds: "I really fell in love with the ensemble of the Eternity

THEY FUMBLE THEIR WAY THROUGH EVENTS FAR BIGGER THAN THEY WERE EVER MADE FOR.

FELICIA BARKER

Club members. Particularly the double act of Pym and Geren as they fumble their way through events far bigger than they were ever made for. By the time I was done Pym had become my favourite character in the series. I feel quite protective of him! He's doing his best!"

Vortex asks Lisa if she found it exciting to be facing off with the Daleks once more.

Lisa says: "Exciting? Absolutely! Benny definitely has skin in the game with Daleks, and this time it's personal. Watch out for a particularly serious confrontation." **VORTEX**

THE NEW ADVENTURES OF BERNICE SUMMERFIELD THE DALEK ETERNITY I

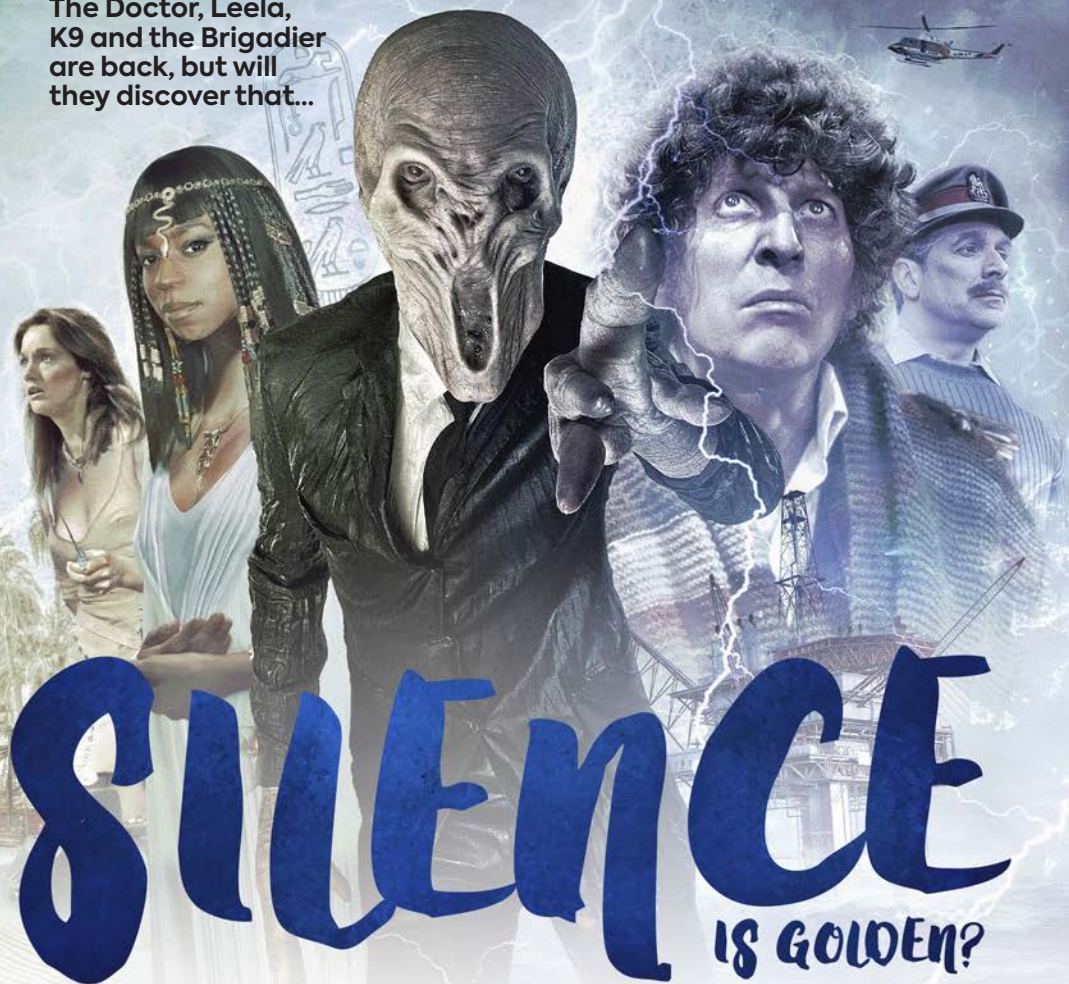


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The Doctor, Leela,
K9 and the Brigadier
are back, but will
they discover that...



WHEN WE last encountered the Fourth Doctor (Tom Baker) alongside his companions Leela (Louise Jameson) and K9 (John Leeson), they had received a summons.

The Fourth Doctor Adventures
Cry of the Banshee ended on a cliffhanger. Shortly after dropping off Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart, he called the TARDIS back to Earth via the Space-Time Telegraph. And what happens next will be revealed in the latest Fourth Doctor box set, *The Last Queen of the Nile* – six episodes packed with peril, danger and a foe from the future...

In the first story, the two-part *Conspiracy of Silence*, the TARDIS crew is joined by the Brigadier (Jon Culshaw) as they investigate mysterious disappearances on a remote oil rig. The rig turns out to be infested by a terrifying enemy, though no one can remember them for long. The story features the monsters that have the ability to wipe the mind of anyone who has seen them – the Silence.

Producer David Richardson says: "It's been a joy to bring the Brigadier back into the Doctor's life this season, and in *Conspiracy of Silence* he joins the Doctor, Leela and K9 on an

adventure that is unforgettable. But, given that the Silence are involved, can that even be possible? *Conspiracy of Silence* is a high concept piece with its two episodes approaching the narrative from a different perspective."

Written by Jonathan Morris, *Conspiracy of Silence* sees the Doctor and friends reunited with the Brigadier.

Something happened to the oil rig. Something so swift and unexpected that the over one hundred people aboard couldn't summon help. Everyone who has tried to investigate has disappeared.

So now the Brigadier is sending the Doctor and Leela. But is there



Above (l-r): Tom Baker and Blake Ritson



Above (l-r): John Leeson, Tom Baker and Louise Jameson

anything to find there? Or is there nothing to be found there? No-one on board... but the Silence.

The story features the monsters that have the ability to wipe the mind of anyone who has seen them.

The writer was pleased to have the chance to bring the Silents into the era of the Fourth Doctor. Jonny says: "I was delighted to feature some new-series monsters in a story with the old series cast in an adventure which, unusually, doesn't feature any monsters. My brief was to write a two-part story with the Fourth Doctor, Leela, K9, the Brigadier,

UNIT and the Silence with a note that, 'They have an inbuilt get out for any continuity problems'. I'm not sure what that was referring to..."

The story features the monsters that have the ability to wipe the mind of anyone who has seen them. Summing up the story, Jonny says: "The Brigadier enlists the Doctor's help to visit the West Viking oil rig in the North Sea after it lost radio contact with the mainland and the UNIT team sent to investigate disappeared without trace. It's a tale of spooky, echoing corridors, sinister creekings, slamming doors and a long-buried primeval entity.

"This story does something very original and clever, which meant it was also very difficult to write. I don't want to give it away but the whole script had to be written in three different ways and recorded in a special way. I don't like to make life easy for the director! Fortunately I had John Dorney script editing so he was able to help with the continuity.

"I really remember the recording day and how eerie it was to hear Nicholas Courtney's voice coming through the speakers with Tom, Louise and John.

THE WHOLE SCRIPT HAD TO BE WRITTEN IN THREE DIFFERENT WAYS...

JONATHAN MORRIS

Nicholas Briggs was there too to do the voices of the Silents, but there must've been some sort of mix-up because there aren't any monsters in the story – so he wasn't needed."

The story features the monsters that have the ability to wipe the mind of anyone who has seen them.

THE SECOND story in the box set is a four-part historical epic, *The Last Queen of the Nile*, in which the Doctor takes his companions on a trip to ancient Egypt. But this is no holiday, as they find Cleopatra's realm on the brink of war.

The Last Queen of the Nile has been written by David K Barnes.

The TARDIS lands a few miles from Alexandria in Egypt, where the Doctor, Leela and K9 encounter Mark Antony, returning from a military campaign. As he joins Cleopatra, they realise they are about to witness one of the most famous romances in history.

But this romance threatens the power of Rome, where the ambitious Octavian Caesar is attempting to convince the Senate to declare war on the Queen of the Nile. A tragedy of Shakespearean proportions is about to unfold – and the time travellers are trapped in the middle.

David Richardson tells *Vortex*: "The *Last Queen of the Nile* is a belting historical story where the TARDIS

crew encounter Cleopatra and Mark Antony. It is a full-blooded, character-filled traditional historical piece – there are no spaceships or aliens – but this is *Doctor Who* at its most dramatic and gripping. It's a story packed with peril, incident and drama, and a huge four-parter to end the season on."

The writer explains: "This was my third script for Big Finish, with

THE MAN WHO
ACTED LIKE NO
ADULT HAD EVER
ACTED BEFORE.

DAVID K BARNES



Above (l-r): Tom Baker and David K Barnes

the most open brief I've ever had: four episodes with the Fourth Doctor, Leela and K9, set anywhere and anywhen! I chose the fall of the Roman Republic: my favourite historical period for my favourite Doctor! But with Tom as the leading man, I needed historical celebrities with big box office appeal to match – and you can't get much bigger than Mark Antony and Cleopatra. From Shakespeare to Hollywood to HBO, and now to Big Finish!

"The TARDIS lands near Alexandria in Egypt, just as a Roman army passes by led by General Mark Antony. Antony requisitions K9 as a present for his mistress, Queen Cleopatra, so the Doctor and Leela join the entourage to try and get K9 back. But these are dangerous times, and both Antony and Cleopatra have many enemies. Their downfall is an established fact of history – or

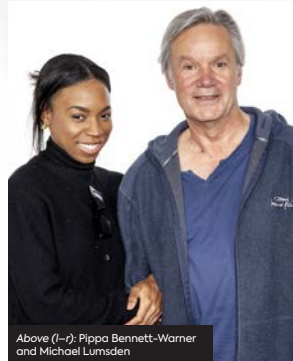
her as a monstrous and corrosive influence, ruining Julius Caesar and Mark Antony. But I believe she was an incredibly shrewd operator, spinning all sorts of plates just to stay alive and protect her people.

"With Leela pressed into service as her bodyguard, I wanted to explore Cleopatra's private world through the eyes of someone who has no idea who she is. Meanwhile, Mark Antony used to be a gifted general, but he's become a boorish braggart – so pairing him up with a Doctor who doesn't take fools gladly was enormous fun."

David was also delighted to get to write for his childhood hero: "The Fourth Doctor was my Doctor, the one I watched on UK Gold when I was 9-years-old with the man who acted like no adult had ever acted before. Writing for Tom was the most exciting thing I've ever done – and the most nerve-wracking.

"My first draft made his character too flippant, too Season 17, so I scaled that back to draw out the moodier side of the role. John Dorney's *Wrath of the Iceni* was a big inspiration, especially the dynamic between the Doctor and Leela. I wanted to explore how Leela had evolved: she now knows she can't change history but that makes her feel fundamentally helpless – and angry.

"The real fly in the ointment is K9: he's a super intelligent computer, but he was built by a human. There's no reason to believe K9 has any conception of the laws of time. What happens when you drop a robot dog into the politically volatile world of Roman Egypt? The Doctor is about to find out..." **VORTEX**



Above (l-r): Pippa Bennett-Warner and Michael Lumsden

at least, it ought to be. With K9 as her new Oracle, Cleopatra may yet find a way to defy her fate...

"Everything we know about Cleopatra comes from extremely biased Roman sources who paint

THE FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES THE LAST QUEEN OF THE NILE



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TIME FOR MORE OUT OF TIME?

I've just relistened to the **Out of Time** trilogy again – it's definitely not my first relisten. We are so lucky to have the opportunity to have these amazing stories. Hearing the Tenth Doctor interacting with the classic Doctors is such a lovely treat, and I'm so grateful that Big Finish gives us these amazing opportunities to experience the stories that **Doctor Who** fans have dreamt of. Let's be honest, David Tennant being the fan that he is must have been so happy! He only got to meet one classic Doctor in his era on screen for a short time, so not only getting to do a story again with Peter Davison, but Tom Baker and Colin Baker too must have been a lovely experience for him! Are there any plans for more **Out of Time** stories?

Tommy Tunnard

Nick: So glad you enjoyed them, Tommy. There are currently no plans, but we're always looking to create special releases like these.



THE FUGITIVE RANI

I have only recently gotten into Big Finish and that's thanks to me finding out about your spin off series **The Sarah Jane Adventures** and your **Fugitive Doctor** series. The whole **Fugitive** set is incredible, and **The Legend of Baba Yaga** is one of the best stories I've ever experienced – and that includes television stories! Jo Martin excels in the audio format, she has such a commanding presence with her voice alone: I cannot wait to hear the second box set. I'm also hoping there will be more Rani releases soon, as they are also great! Are there any plans for more?

Jarred Darter

Nick: No big reveals of future plans here, Jarred. But your enthusiastic approval is very much noted.

GOING FOURTH

Do you have any plans to consolidate the earlier Fourth Doctor serials into season compendiums, similar to the Eighth Doctor and Lucie Miller stories? It would be a great way to reduce the total number of individual purchases required to get into the range.

Steve Taylor

Nick: You're not actually *Peter Purves*, are you? *Flight Red 50*? No plans at the moment, Steve, but it's a great idea that we already have under consideration.

PICTURE PERFECT

I was wondering if you would ever consider selling posters and other such merchandise featuring some of the gorgeous cover art the talented artists who work for you make?

Jack Owens

Nick: It's currently not part of our licence arrangement to sell this kind of thing, Jack. But do check out our lovely coffee table book **The Art of the Audio Adventures** that features 100 of the audio drama covers. **VORTEX**



THE VISITORS ARE STILL ON EARTH AS THE NEXT BIG FINISH BOX SET BASED ON THE V TELEVISION SERIES ARRIVES...

OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS

BIG FINISH'S reinvention of a modern science fiction classic continues in *Occupation*, the second release of **V – UK**.

In 1983, the world was stunned by a TV miniseries of such scope it cast a shadow over science fiction for decades to come. Created by Kenneth Johnson – the man behind *The Bionic Woman* and *The Incredible Hulk* – **V** told the story of a band of freedom fighters struggling against a totalitarian alien force whose plan is to enslave humanity while harvesting Earth's resources.

The Big Finish audio incarnation of the series has seen the focus move to life in the United Kingdom, set in a recognisable modern world – post-Brexit, post COVID-19 – and features some of the themes from the original such as the vilification of scientists.

Starring Annabel Baldwin, Janie Dee and Jack Myers, the first box set of the audio series received rave reviews, much to the delight of its producer and script editor, Jonathan Morris.

Jonny tells *Vortex*: “The reaction to the first release is immensely gratifying. Putting together *Visitation*, the first volume, was a very ambitious

undertaking – not just for me but also for the director and sound designer – so it was great to read glowing reviews both from fans of the 1980s TV series and people finding it anew.

“All the reviews were sent on to Kenneth so he could see how impactful his series is in this new audio version. And, of course, volume one going down so well meant that we could not only make more, but we could go into the next episodes with a bit of a wind in our sails.

“In *Visitation*, there were several characters and storylines from the original miniseries I had to



Above: Jon Culshaw



Above (l-r): Alan Cox, Abigail Cruttenden, George Naylor and Andrew James Spooner

leave out, not so much for reasons of time or budget but because I think they deserve to be given their own episodes later on.

"*Occupation* explores three areas of life under occupation: people who are exploiting the situation in terms of the black market; those who have chosen to collaborate; and those who fraternise with the enemy. It has some pretty dark and raw moments, while also being powerful and life-affirming."

Jonny continues: "The first episode in this set (episode four of the range) is by James Swallow. It's a fast-paced and action-packed

story about the black market and our heroes discovering the real reason for the Visitors' arrival."

JAMES WAS delighted to be asked to write for **V-UK**. He explains: "I think every science fiction fan of a certain age can remember where they were when they saw Jane Badler eat a guinea pig! The original **V** miniseries was a big deal here in the UK, and I recall being fascinated by the idea of an alien invasion story that wasn't all about blowing up national landmarks and eradicating the human race. "I especially enjoyed reading the

tie-in novels that expanded the events of the Visitor invasion beyond the events of the TV stories, to other cities and other resistance groups. Being able to come in all these years later to work on this alternate take on the **V** storyline has been a very interesting assignment."

Looking at his story, James explains: "Time has passed since the episodes of the *Visitation* box set, and the resistance are feeling the pressure as the Visitors continue to advance their agenda.

"Mike Donovan undertakes a dangerous reconnaissance mission aboard the London mothership to learn more about the aliens and their sinister plans, as well as searching for his son who went missing in a Visitor round-up. Meanwhile, Juliet Parrish leads an ad-hoc mission to get supplies for the resistance cell.

"Juliet's storyline connects up with some new characters, the Taylor family, who have their own issues to resolve under the shadow of the Visitor occupation, and we also follow the growing connection between teenager

I THINK EVERY SCIENCE FICTION FAN OF A CERTAIN AGE CAN REMEMBER WHERE THEY WERE WHEN THEY SAW JANE BADLER EAT A GUINEA PIG!

JAMES SWALLOW

Robin and her Visitor love interest Brian. Expect gruesome revelations, new complications and fresh challenges for the resistance team!"

James adds: "I did enjoy the work of British-ising the **V** storyline! It was fun to take concepts, themes and characters from the original show and put that through a current, UK-based lens, so to speak. I really liked the idea of a UK anti-Visitor resistance force being made up of ordinary folks under the cover of their five-a-side pub football teams, gardening clubs and W.I. groups!"

Jonny continues: "The middle episode is by Eddie Robson and starts off as a romantic comedy with a burger-van proprietor called Harmony falling for the much-loved



Above: Annabel Baldwin

bumbling Visitor known as Willy, before taking a very nasty turn.”

Eddie says: “The whole **V – UK** project is really exciting. It’s already a great format but we’ve been encouraged to take it in a new direction from the starting point of the original miniseries, which gives us a lot of freedom. It’s very collaborative too, the writers are all working together to weave an ongoing story.

“When we were breaking the contents of this box set down, I asked to take the romance story between Willy and Harmony because they were two of my favourite characters from the miniseries, and there was a chance to turn that story almost into a rom-com in the midst of these pretty grim events. It starts that way and then takes a turn. But even while that’s going on, we’ve got a major intelligence mission for the resistance and Robin’s relationship with Brian getting complicated.”

THE SHOW’S original creator also had a hand in this script – which delighted Eddie. He explains: “Without giving too much away, there’s a scene towards the end of mine which



Above: Louise Faulkner

Kenneth rejigged and now it’s terrific. It makes a connection between Willy and Mike which I hadn’t spotted, and it gives real weight to the decision Willy has to make.”

Jonny says: “The final episode in *Occupation* is by Lisa McMullin, who does a great job of exploring some tough and complex moral and emotional issues including the idea of how far someone is willing to go to compromise their principles in

the name of self-preservation.”

Lisa was delighted to be invited to work on the series. She tells *Vortex*: “It was really fun to write on this reimagining of a sci-fi classic. I wasn’t allowed to watch the original when it went out but I snuck down and caught some of it by peeking through the door when I was supposed to be in bed! I then watched it as an adult and was impressed by the pace and cracking dialogue.

“My episode looks at the collaboration between some of the humans and the Visitors, and

I WASN’T ALLOWED TO WATCH THE ORIGINAL WHEN IT WENT OUT BUT I SNUCK DOWN AND CAUGHT SOME OF IT BY PEEKING THROUGH THE DOOR...

LISA McMULLIN

explores the fallout of Visitor Brian’s deceptive relationship with Robin. I really enjoyed telling that part of the story – it was a moral minefield and fairly dark but the challenge was very satisfying!”

Jonny concludes: “*Occupation* is all beautifully written – I can say that this time as I didn’t write it! – and beautifully performed. Hopefully, it not only continues from the first volume but turns thing up a notch.” **VORTEX**

V – UK
OCCUPATION



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THAT VOICE IN YAZ'S HEAD...?**

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The Brigadier enlists the Doctor's help in solving a
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