

THE **BIG FINISH** MAGAZINE

# VORTEX

ISSUE 200  
OCTOBER 2025

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OF STORIES



# HALLOWEEN

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## THE WAR DOCTOR RISES CYBERGENE

**THE TIME** War is very much about the last battle between the Time Lords and the Daleks. We know that the Sontarans wanted to join the conflict but were prevented from doing so.

But what about the Cybermen? What were they doing at this time? We're about to find out in **The War Doctor Rises: Cybergene**.

And it's not just any Cybermen who are aiming to become the third force in the temporal conflict – it's every Cyberman, ever! In an epic three-hour adventure from writer Jonathan Morris, every variant of the Cybermen yet seen on television in **Doctor Who** joins the monumental battle over space and time.

*As the conflict between Gallifrey and Skaro rages, the Cybermen are gone from the universe. Until now.*

*The War Doctor finds himself on a world ravaged by battle, where soldiers are kept alive by grimly familiar methods. As time is manipulated, the dead no longer stay dead, and a horrifying evolution begins...*

*Seeking answers across multiple worlds, and in a long-dead Cyber-tomb, the Doctor uncovers the terrible truth.*

*The ultimate Cyber-form is coming to join the Time War.*

Mitra Djalili (known for playing Chloe in Apple TV+'s acclaimed *Ted Lasso*) joins the fray as Nesta, a battle-hardened surgeon who becomes the Doctor's latest ally. Producer David Richardson says: "The Cybermen enter the Time War. And more than that... every kind of Cybermen enters the Time War. Mondasian. Telosian. Whatever their heritage, these half man, half machines will change the stakes in the battle between the Time Lords and the Daleks. But who will this third party favour?" **VORTEX**

### THE WAR DOCTOR RISES CYBERGENE

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Above: Jon Culshaw

## EDITORIAL

**I'VE ALWAYS** loved Halloween.

Strangely, though, I don't remember ever going out dressed up as anyone from **Doctor Who**.

I can recall being a ghost, Optimus Prime (although Amazon Prime may have been more apt a name as the costume was made from cardboard boxes!) and even the Incredible Hulk. (My mum knitted the Hulk costume for me and years later my friend, Big Finish **Dark Shadows** cover designer Alistair McGown, kindly dubbed me the "fluffy green zip-up Hulk").

So, it's a real delight to see that Big Finish is finally releasing a **Doctor Who** Halloween-themed box set. We're going to encounter three Doctors, an old foe – I deliberately avoided reading the script so it will be a surprise to me too – and plenty of scares.

It's also a set which marks the arrival of Jon Culshaw as the Twelfth Doctor which I'm personally rather delighted about. Through *Vortex*, we've become quite friendly. I went to see Jon's show in Edinburgh in 2023 and he did a superb Billy Connolly – I've always thought that if you made Billy sound more posh, you'd get Peter Capaldi! I knew that Jacob Dudman was hanging up his shiny Doc Martins for Big Finish, so sent Nicholas Briggs a text to tell him that I had found a great possible replacement. And now here he is.

So, on behalf of the five million people of Scotland, I officially approve of Jon as Peter's Twelfth Doctor – who is staring at me from my wall calendar as I type! **VORTEX**

*Kenny*



HALLOWEEN IS JUST  
AROUND THE CORNER,  
WITH FOUR SCARY  
STORIES ON THEIR WAY  
TO TERRIFY YOU...



# DOCTOR BOO!

**SINCE DOCTOR** who returned to our television screens in 2005, it's been a regular fixture over the festive period. But surprisingly, not many stories have tapped into other seasonal events. There was an episode to loosely tie in with Easter *Planet of the Dead* and more recently *The Halloween Apocalypse*, the first episode of the Thirteenth Doctor's adventure *Flux*.

Incredibly, there's only been one other standalone story set at

Halloween, Mark Morris's Tenth Doctor novel *Forever Autumn* – although Mark Gatiss's Eighth Doctor audio *Invaders From Mars* is set at Halloween in 1938.

But now, that's all changing, thanks to *Halloween: Sea Smoke and Other Stories*. The release features four spooky tales: *Sea Smoke* by Jonathan Sims, *Party Favours* by Georgia Cook, *Bramble King* by Noga Flaishon and *Merlin's Trap* by Hannah Kennedy.

*Dare you step into the shadows? Terror awaits across time and*

*space. Silent assassins, primordial evils, and horrors that defy imagination – the Doctor's universe has never been more terrifying.*

The release was Noga's idea so she spoke to senior producer John Ainsworth about the possibility of the collection. Noga, who also produced the release, tells *Vortex*: "I approached John in around the summer of 2024 and begged to do it! As it happened, executive producer Jason Haigh-Ellery had a similar idea so it all came together very fortuitously.

"I love horror stories and horror movies – watching them, reading them, writing them – and Halloween has always been my favourite holiday, so I really wanted to create an anthology that celebrates and revels in spooky stories. Script editor John Dorney and I then gathered the

**SEA SMOKE** opens the set. *The First Doctor and Dodo arrive on the Scottish isle of Ulfsey during the height of the 19th-century boom in kelp burning. They quickly realise something is wrong as the smoke from the latest batch of 'kelp' begins to cause horrific transformations in the island's people.*

Chaplet (played by Lauren Cornelius) set on a Hebridean island in the north of Scotland. But of course this is **Doctor Who**, so you know there are going to be some extra-terrestrial elements involved..."

Writer Jonathan tells *Vortex*: "Growing up as a British nerd, **Doctor Who** has always had a



Above (l-r): Kiran Sonia Sawar, Jamie Laird, Jeff Rawle, Michael Abubakar, Lauren Cornelius and Stephen Noonan

writers, and I'm really proud of what they've all created."

Was Noga surprised to learn that Big Finish hadn't produced something like this before?

She says: "Yes! There are so many Big Finish stories that are objectively nightmare fuel, and yet nothing quite like this before – that felt insane to me."

"Right now, cinema is experiencing a bit of a golden age of horror, and horror translates to audio beautifully, with chilling works such as *The Holmwood Foundation*, *The Magnus Archives*, *Old Gods of Appalachia*, and more. There's real value in marketing something as decidedly horror: it gives people who aren't so keen on scary stories the chance to sit this one out, while giving the horror nerds among us something to really sink our teeth into."

## THERE ARE SO MANY BIG FINISH STORIES THAT ARE OBJECTIVELY NIGHTMARE FUEL...

NOGA FLAISHON

Noga says: "This is the Big Finish debut for Jonathan – the creator of the podcast *The Magnus Archives* and *The Magnus Protocols*. If you know his work already, you'll know he's one of the scariest writers out there – especially on audio."

"It's a classic gothic horror story featuring the First Doctor (played by Stephen Noonan) and Dodo

special place in my heart, and I always thought about how cool it would be to have a crack at writing a story for it."

"Unusually for this sort of work, it was just like I expected it to be. I have never worked with a team that so genuinely, passionately *cares* about the world they work in than the team at Big Finish care about the Doctor and his companions. I've always had a huge fondness for the historical stories that the TARDIS and its passengers end up in; nothing delights me more than the idea of shining a light into an obscure corner of history... and then putting a horrible space monster in it!"

"I'm very grateful that I've been allowed to add a new one to the list, and can only apologise for all the wet meaty sounds the editors have had to add (I don't even want to think about how they collected the Foley!)."



**THE SECOND** adventure *Party Favours* features UNIT. All Bev wants to do is host her yearly Halloween party and heal her fractured relationship with her girlfriend, Annika. Unfortunately, her reclusive upstairs neighbours have been invited to the festivities, and all they want to do is feast.

Noga describes this as: "A UNIT adventure featuring Osgood and Kate. It's set in the modern day, brings back

"A Halloween horror story set in the world of **Doctor Who**! Preferably Doctor-light, which was very exciting for me. I love the notion of ordinary people facing down monsters the Doctor deals with on a daily basis, letting us see just how dangerous they truly are."

The writer sums the story up as: "The worst house party you've ever attended! I loved writing the relationship at the heart of this

in director Helen Goldwyn's cast are Liv Andrusier (Bev), Saffron Coomber (Annika), Nicole Davis (Alice) and Jack Ayres (Tim).

**BRAMBLE KING** has been written by Noga and features the Eighth Doctor and Lady Audacity Montague. *The Doctor and Audacity encounter a strange vision which leads them to Walpurgis-9, a cargo ship drifting powerless through space. In their attempt to assist the ship's crew, they become entangled in their secrets and encounter the malevolent entity known as the 'Bramble King'.*

Noga says: "My story is sort of a dark fairy tale in space, and I wanted to pay homage to some of my favourite horror films including *Solaris* and *Event Horizon*. With the Doctor (Paul McGann) is Audacity (Jaye Griffiths) – out of all the companions, she's my favourite so I was thrilled to have the chance to work with her on this one."

Directed by Steven Kavuma, the cast includes Jamie Kenna (Otto), Judith Jacob (Gretchen) and Felicity Cant (Reinke).

*Merlin's Trap* concludes the set. When Lainey leads an expedition into the ancient Merlin's Cave system, the group is warned by Merlin's ghostly voice to explore no further. As Lainey and her team push deeper into the mysterious cave, they encounter things far beyond their comprehension, including Merlin himself.

This story is notable as it features Jon Culshaw capturing the dulcet Glaswegian tones of Peter Capaldi's Twelfth Doctor.

Noga says: "Another Big Finish debut with this story from Hannah. Out of all the adventures in this set, I think this one scared me the most. It's set in the modern day and involves caving (which I am abjectly terrified of). It's a real ensemble piece and great to record."

Hannah says: "I've known Noga since lockdown when we worked together on an anthology of stories about the end of the world for a night of online theatre. Since then, I've been so fortunate to have had her as a champion of my writing. I love working with her, so when she reached out and asked me if I would be interested



Above (l-r): Jaye Griffiths, Jamie Kenna, Judith Jacob and Felicity Cant

a fan-favourite monster to audio, and it will absolutely rip your heart out."

*Vortex* asks Georgia what her first reaction on being asked to be involved was: "Heck yes, a Halloween audio script!"

A keen horror writer, Georgia was delighted to mix this with her love of **Doctor Who**, saying it was: "So much fun! I always love being allowed to write a horror (or even a little bit spooky) script for Big Finish, and this was no exception."

"**Doctor Who** blends so well with the genre (I'm sure we all remember an episode that scared us witless as children, and still does now!) and it feels like adding to a time-old tradition for the show."

Georgia says her initial brief was:

**WE WORKED  
TOGETHER ON AN  
ANTHOLOGY OF  
STORIES ABOUT THE  
END OF THE WORLD...**

**HANNAH KENNEDY**

story, even as the horrors unfold around them. And the unexpected guests at this particular Halloween party are some of my favourite **Doctor Who** monsters of all time."

Joining Gemma Redgrave as Kate and Ingrid Oliver as Osgood

in creating something scary for this Halloween anthology, I couldn't say no. It's **Doctor Who**, it's horror, it's audio. I knew it would be a lot of fun to work on.

"The brief Noga gave me was essentially, 'Halloween, one hour, bring your best scares', so it was excitingly (and terrifyingly) pretty broad. It's so rare that you get told to go off and think about what the story that you

**HANNAH WAS** delighted with getting the chance to include a Doctor, saying: "Writing for the Twelfth Doctor is a lot of fun. He really lends himself to horror and helps create that uneasy atmosphere that you want for a Halloween story. It was very exciting to play with.

"One of the real highlights of the process was being in the studio. For logistical reasons, we recorded it

Doctor with Big Finish – you couldn't wish for better homework than that!"

Directed by Sam Clemens, the guest cast are Kymberley Cochrane (Flo), Lucy-Jane Quinlan (Lainey), Robyn Cooper (Alice) and Antony Jardine (Ezra).

Vortex asks Noga how the box set sounds in the edit? She confirms: "So scary! I heard some people ask how scary it might be and I'm afraid I'm the worst person to ask that



Above (l-r): Ingrid Oliver, Jemma Redgrave, Saffron Coomber, Liv Andrusier, Georgia Cook, Nicole Davis and Jack Ayres

want to tell is, without many more expectations beyond that. I came back with a few ideas before Noga, John and I decided that this was the right one – and I'm so glad this is where we landed.

"Merlin's Trap follows a group of cavers who are on an expedition to map out a previously unexplored cave system in Cornwall. However, they soon discover more than just hidden chambers and ancient caverns. There's something else deep in these caves and it wants them gone. Cue the 'dun dun dun!'

"One of the reasons we landed on caving for this story was that I find the idea of being deep down in an unexplored and potentially deadly cave is truly horrifying already, without adding any ghosts, aliens or monsters into the mix. I'm not personally a fan of caving, but I admire the bravery of those who are."

almost completely chronologically, and it was such a treat. It felt as though we were venturing deeper and deeper into the cave with the characters in real time. I can't wait for everyone to hear the performances of the amazing actors we had on board."

On being cast in the role, Jon recalls: "There are so many different facets to Peter Capaldi's Doctor. A great, moral character, a beautiful, supremely witty sense of impatience at times, but desperately, desperately caring.

"The Twelfth Doctor has such mystery and so many aspects of the earlier Doctors. The irascibility but lovability of the First. The wit and merriment of the Second and the Fourth. The warmth and charm of the Third and Tenth. Every little aspect is like a beautifully cut diamond and it catches the light in its own way.

"And to watch that era over and over to prepare for playing the Twelfth

question of! I love being scared in fiction... I guess the only way to find out how truly scary it is would be to give it a listen?" **VORTEX**

## DOCTOR WHO: HALLOWEEN SEA SMOKE AND OTHER STORIES



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AS THE DARKER EVENINGS ARRIVE EARLIER IN THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE, IT'S TIME FOR A SPOOKY STORY...



# THROWN TO THE LIONESSES

**IT'S ENGLAND**, 1183, and the court of Henry II is given a surprise when the Doctor and Yaz gatecrash the royal Christmas party.

Jodie Whittaker and Mandip Gill returns as the Doctor and Yaz in *Lionesses in Winter*.

Producer Noga Flaishon says: "I love this adventure so much. It's a ghost story and a mystery but at its heart it's really a family drama. No matter how many twists and turns the plot takes (and there are plenty), that

emotional core is what holds it all together. And of course, having Yaz and the Doctor crash a dinner at the court of Henry II is such a fun idea – it feels so classically **Doctor Who**."

Noga agrees that Lisa McMullin was the obvious choice to approach as the writer. She says: "Lisa is a writer I've wanted to work with for a long time. I love her work (and she's a wonderful human being) so I knew I wanted her to be part of the initial group of writers for the Thirteenth Doctor. It was also

crucial to me to hit a balance of new and familiar writers. I know many people will be very excited to see Lisa's take on the Thirteenth Doctor."

With the story being set in history, it fits in with the television series mould.

Noga explains: "For this range, we wanted to strike a balance between stories set in the past, present and future. The first episode begins in contemporary times with a very familiar setting, while the second takes us to a completely alien planet



with high-concept sci-fi. And now for this third episode, I wanted to ground us in something more recognisable.

"Part of the fun of having a TARDIS is getting to travel all across time and space, so it felt crucial to make the most of that by going somewhere historically significant. While working on this episode, I ended up going down a bit of a Wikipedia

time for the festive season. *Lionesses in Winter* is about a dysfunctional family forced together for Christmas jollity when it's the last thing any of them are in the mood for. Sound familiar? And it becomes increasingly clear that supernatural unpleasantness is afoot, intrinsically linked to their family secrets and traumas. But it's fun too!



Above: Jodie Whittaker

rabbit hole learning much more about Eleanor of Aquitaine – someone I knew very little about beforehand."

Lisa says: "It always genuinely feels like a treat and a privilege to be asked to write for a new series, and especially so when it's a Doctor and companion new to Big Finish. I was bouncing at being invited to join the Thirteenth Doctor fam!

"I was asked to write a historical (or possibly I asked if I could do a historical!) and was briefed on the recurring series character of the Tourist, so I knew I had to incorporate them into this story which gave me a steer.

"I've long been fascinated by Eleanor of Aquitaine and her marriage to Henry II. Two of their sons (King John and Richard the Lionheart) tend to hog the limelight but the complexities of their relationship and family life is mind-boggling."

**WITH THE** longer nights drawing in, Lisa's pleased the story is being released as the year nears its end. She says: "The plot is a Christmas ghost story so I'm thrilled it's coming out in



Above: Mandip Gill

"The title is a cheeky nod to *The Lion in Winter* – a play I saw many years ago that first sparked my interest in Eleanor – but this story goes off in a very different direction! The lion in that play is Henry, but I wanted to focus on the female historical characters (and of course we also have the Doctor and Yaz) hence: *Lionesses*." Directing the story is Steven Kavuma who is delighted to work on

the range. He says: "It is such a thrill to be invited to work on a story with the brilliant Jodie as the Doctor for Big Finish. I really enjoyed watching her in the TV series where at times I felt her Doctor's arc had more to explore. So I relished the chance to work with her and to learn from her too – she takes notes with such ease and is a true professional. What a treat!

"Reading the script, I loved the blend of tones. There are moments of real horror that stand out, but also plenty of lightness and humour. At its heart, though, it is deeply moving. It's a story about grief and the importance of not letting it consume you."

Steven has brought together a strong team of guest actors. He says: "I was lucky to bring together such a wonderful, experienced cast in Ammar Duffus, Debra Baker, Dolly Webb and Kevin Mathurin to accompany Jodie and Mandip. We had so many laughs in the studio I sometimes had to remind everyone not to get too carried away! It was a joy to work with such a fantastic group of actors.

"I remember jokingly having to 'separate' Jodie and Mandip now and then because they have such incredible chemistry. Their friendship really shines through and it made working with them an absolute dream."

Lisa concludes: "I really loved writing a Christmas story. And I think I can claim this as the *first* Christmas story for the Thirteenth Doctor." **VORTEX**

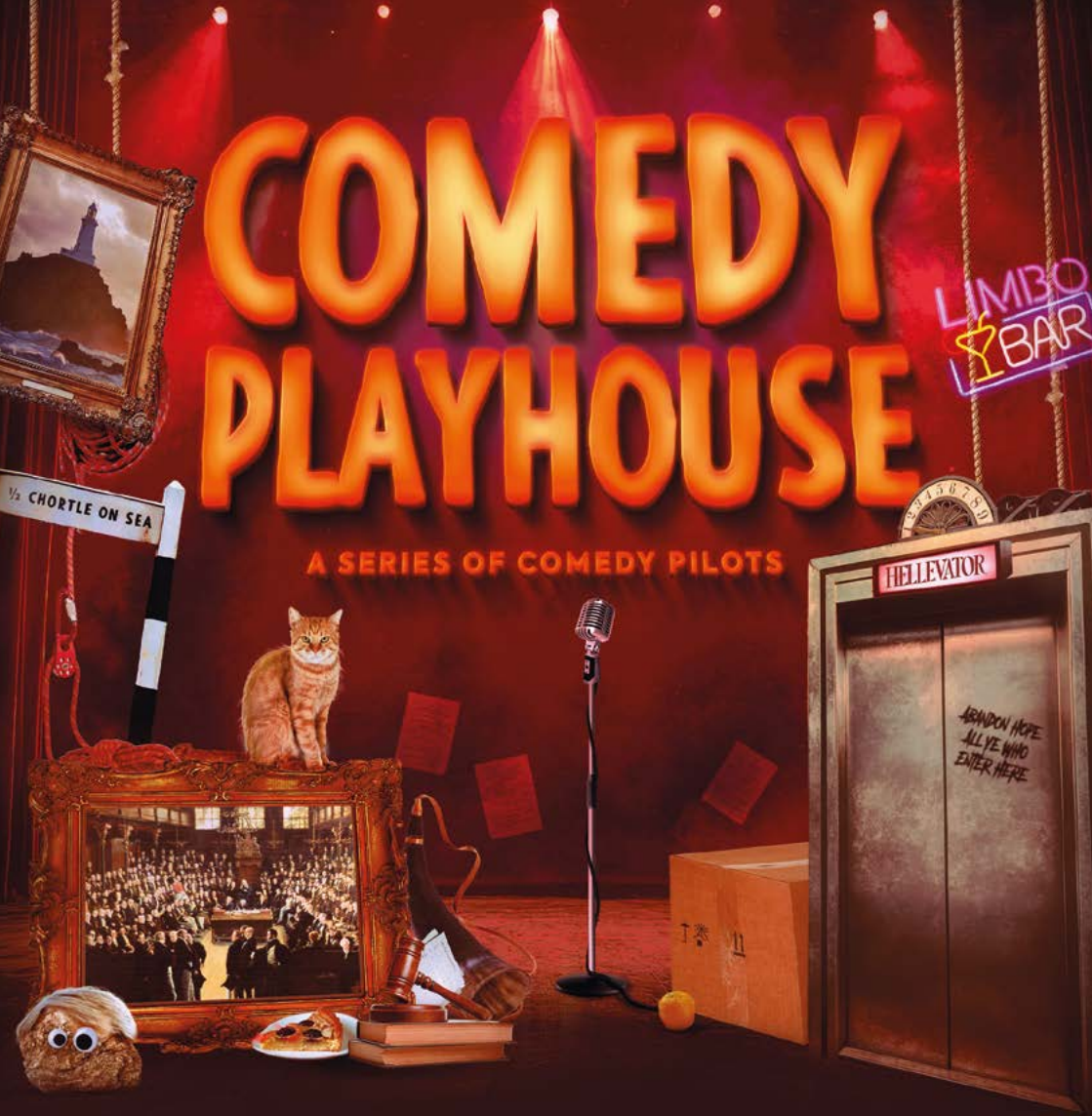
## THE THIRTEENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES LIONESSES IN WINTER



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## Six new comedy pilots arrive on audio from Big Finish Originals.

**BIG FINISH** has an award-winning reputation for producing science fiction dramas, and now something new is on the way with a set of comedy pilots.

All six scripts were winners of the Big Finish **Comedy Playhouse** competition, and each is a pilot for a potential series. Every style of situation comedy is covered from domestic, character-comedy to historical, parody and surreal.

The six productions are *Sad Sunk Rock* by Tom Worsley, *Scribbling* by Amy Xander, *Members* by Jack Bradfield and Fergus Macdonald, *Square Pegs* by Jenny Devaux and Phil Butcher, *Golden Sands* by Toby

Walker, and *The Cracks Are Showing* by Alan Ronald and Cy Henty.

Lizzie Worsdell, producer of *Square Pegs* and *Scribbling*, explains: "Comedy is a brand-new venture for Big Finish, so it feels really exciting to be part of it from the start. The idea came about after we were approached by Robert and Gemma Ross of Write On Comedy. Executive Producer Jason Haigh-Ellery had been looking for some new ways



## Sad Sunk Rock

BY TOM WORSLEY

*After his girlfriend dumps him and he proves unbearable, Victor is sent to join three other marine biologists on the isolated island of Sad Sunk Rock. They are Elspeth, who has been there for 38 years and talks to the sheep; Deborah, who has had no contact with the outside world; and Ally, a wild-eyed Scotsman who is technically twins, slightly radioactive and who once fought an alligator in the Amazon.*

*Victor's first thought is to return to the mainland at the first opportunity but somehow he begins to feel that he might fit in...*

## Scribbling

BY AMY XANDER

*Scribbling follows four inhabitants of a rural, West Country town – Madeleine, Edward, Ling and Beth – who reluctantly bond after joining a writers' group run by brazen new resident Laurie, a former entertainer still desperate for an audience.*

## Members

BY JACK BRADFIELD AND FERGUS MACDONALD

*Members is set in the House of Commons during the reign of King George II. It's a strange and cloistered world of the corrupt and the eccentric, where the main businesses of the day are boozing, whoring, and trying to get pudding served earlier.*

*Due to an administrative mix-up, the young Henry Fthistle gets himself elected to parliament, and finds it is almost impossible to leave.*

## Square Peggs

BY JENNY DEVAUX AND PHIL BUTCHER

*It's the Peggs' first day in their new country home but all is not well – there's no mobile signal, no takeaway, the neighbours are... different – and Dawn's run over the previous owner's cat. Can anything else go wrong?*

## Golden Sands

BY TOBY WALKER

*Chortle-by-Sea is a bleak, desolate and decaying seaside town, and few visitors come to purchase the peculiar novelties from Julie's gift shop or to sample the delights of Sue's chip shop. And it is not much of a place for the young, awkward Rowan and Sophie to have a blossoming romance.*

*It is, however, the ideal place for a murder.*

## The Cracks Are Showing

BY ALAN RONALD AND CY HENTY

*When Karloff goes for an interview to be an 'office scapegoat', but he is found to be too optimistic for the position and is thrown out of the window.*

*In his death, he is joined by painter and philosopher William Blake on a metaphysical quest through the underworld to find out who is responsible for humankind's misery.*

diversify Big Finish and audio is such a fun medium for comedy."

Having sat on the panel to pick the competition winners, Lizzie admits: "Honestly, it was so tough to choose just six, we had so many entries. The standard was really high and the scripts were all so different. It wasn't just about which ones made us laugh the most but about spotting potential in the writing. We were looking for originality, strong characters and something that

**A very wild, freewheeling ride through hell with more than a touch of Douglas Adams.**

JONATHAN MORRIS

would really come alive on audio as well as potentially be turned into a full series further down the line."

Script editor Jonathan Morris adds: "For a couple of years, a long time ago, I made a living writing sitcoms that got optioned or piloted. I've been through the process of doing a dozen drafts or more of the same 30-page script, just trying to make it 15 per cent funnier. So it was really exciting for me to be on the other side of the table, using my expertise from all the audios I've written, to try to make each script the very best it could be."

**VORTEX ASKS** how different

is script editing comedy, compared to drama? Jonny replies: "It has all the things you worry about with drama – story, character, dialogue – but with the added complication that it has to be funny, very frequently. So you have to work much harder but, when you get a line that does plot, character and is funny all at once, you know you've cracked it. A lot of the process is taking out jokes which don't work



Above (l-r): Clive Hayward, Annette Holland, Rachel Fenwick and Sacha Dhawan

rather than adding them, as a misfiring joke is actively annoying. And then questioning each funny moment to ask if there could be another version which is even funnier."

Summing up each comedy, Jonny says: "*Scribbling* is about an aspiring writers' group, a coming-together of obsessives, eccentrics and people who just want to get out of the house. *Square Peggs* is a gentle, character-based piece, the sort of thing you'd get on a Sunday night on BBC One starring Judi Dench and Peter Egan. *Members* is set in the House of Commons during the Georgian era, so there's an obvious comparison with *Blackadder* and *Python*-adjacent things like *Ripping Yarns* and *Jabberwocky*.

"*Golden Sands* is set in a declining seaside town where the only businesses are a gift shop, a bookies and a chippie – basically *Broadchurch* with jokes. *Sad Sunk Rock* is about a team of marine biologists stuck on an island in the middle of the Atlantic, all going a little bit strange, but it's more like the cult sitcom *Nightingales* than *Father Ted*. And *The Cracks Are Showing* is a wild, freewheeling ride through hell with more than a touch of Douglas Adams."



Above (l-r): Helen Goldwyn and Amy Xander

Lizzie tells *Vortex*: "My favourite thing about *Scribbling* is how distinctive each of the characters is, and how utterly batty they all are in their own way! We were crying with laughter on the recording day. For *Square Peggs*, it would have to be how accurate and relatable it is. Having grown up in the country, I was howling at the little details that were just spot on. *Members* has a hint of *Blackadder* with some great character performances. You can't help but feel sorry for the main character in *Sad Sunk Rock* and how his life has

**Utterly  
bizarre and  
hilarious and  
unlike almost  
anything  
you've heard  
before !**

**LIZZIE WORSDELL**

panned out. There is a mindfulness section in *Golden Sands* which is hilarious, but the episode also reminded me of the kind of TV shows I watched growing up. And *The Cracks Are Showing* is utterly bizarre and hilarious and unlike almost anything you've heard before!"

**THE PRODUCTIONS** include an array of recognised television stars and comedy talent including Jessica Martin, Siobhan Redmond, Forbes Masson and Sacha Dhawan, as well as a number of Big Finish regulars.

Jonny says: "We've got some great casts. And in that I very much include





Above (l-r): Jessica Martin, Suzy Bloom, Timothy Bentinck, Lizzie Worsdell and Suni La



Above (l-r): Alan Ronald and Cy Henty

the Electric Head duo of Alan and Cy performing their own script, *The Cracks Are Showing*, as well as legends like Forbes and Siobhan from *The High Life*, Judy Flynn from *The Brittas Empire* and most of the cast of *Members* plucked from musicals in London's glittering West End."

Lizzie adds: "It was lovely to work with so many people that I haven't previously worked with. I've known Sacha and Sagar Radia for quite a while so it was fun to be on a project like this with them. The casts brought such

sharpness and energy to the recording sessions and it takes a special actor to nail comedy well. It's one thing to read a funny script but to hear these actors bring it to life? That's when the magic happens and when you know you've got something special on your hands.

"The idea to cast Sacha came about when we were on a panel together at Chicago TARDIS last year. I mentioned that I was producing some comedy pilots and he seemed intrigued, so I pitched this to him and his agent and that was that.

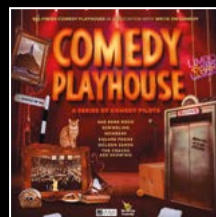
I think Big Finish fans will enjoy hearing him in such a different role."

How exciting is it to be doing something rather different for this release? Lizzie says: "It's been great if slightly terrifying at times! I'm very lucky in that I have been able to work on a variety of different projects for Big Finish but comedy is a first. Once we got stuck in, it felt fresh and fun and honestly, who doesn't want to spend their days working on scripts that actually make you laugh out loud?"

Jonny agrees: "I really enjoy the process of working with the writers, mostly just giving them pointers in terms of the grammar of audio, but also pushing them to make each script the best possible showcase for their work. And, as you'd hope, the days in the studio were lots of fun as the characters on the pages suddenly spring into life. All you're trying to do is to capture that comic energy on the studio's hard drive. Since then I've been going through the dialogue, sound effects and music edits with the directors – tweaking things, tightening things, loosening other things – just to make sure that everything is working to enhance the comedy."

Jonny concludes: "The most important thing about these pilots is that we want to do more. The casts are there, the writers are there. So please support this release and show that there is an audience for situation comedy, and we will be able to make one – or some – of these pilots into series." **VORTEX**

## BIG FINISH ORIGINALS COMEDY PLAYHOUSE



■ RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2025  
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**THE EIGHTH DOCTOR, AUDACITY  
AND CHARLEY ARE READY FOR NEW  
DANGERS ACROSS SPACE AND TIME...**

# JUST CAUSE

**SOMETHING THAT Doctor**  
**Who** has been doing for a long  
time is building up story arcs,  
whether with *Bad Wolf*,  
*Torchwood* or *Mr Saxon*.

But did you know **The**  
**Eighth Doctor Adventures** with  
Charley and Audacity has been  
doing the same thing? No? Neither  
did *Vortex*! We'll find out more in  
their latest box set, *Causeway*.

Producer David Richardson  
reveals: "The Eighth Doctor  
has been following a scent for  
some time, although listeners  
may not have noticed. The word  
'Causeway' has been seeded

throughout his adventures with  
Charley and Audacity, and now  
their destination is the Causeway  
itself... Worlds will collide and  
for one of the TARDIS team, life  
will never be the same again.

"This set is a favourite of mine; the  
writers have instilled a real sense  
of awe into the stories. The first is  
all about the awe of exploring space  
– and the thrills and threats of this  
new frontier; and the second is about  
the awe of travelling through time.  
They're both adventures that stretch  
the imagination and feel like proper  
blockbuster (audio) movies, while  
still finding time to dig deeper into

the psyches of our trio of travellers."

The Eighth Doctor (Paul McGann)  
and his companions – Edwardian  
adventurer Charley Pollard (India  
Fisher) and Regency aristocrat  
Lady Audacity Montague (Jaye  
Griffiths) – will begin to unravel the  
mystery of the Causeway while on  
a dangerous expedition into deep  
space, at an anachronistic business  
venture in Copenhagen and meeting  
visitors from another reality.

*Lost Amongst the Stars* has been  
written by Rochana Patel.

*The Doctor wants to find a challenge  
for Charley and Audacity. All of time  
and space awaits, with wonders beyond*





Above: Paul McGann

*their wildest dreams and darkest nightmares, but are they truly ready to venture further out amongst the stars?*

Rochana says: "I was thrilled to be asked to write for the Eighth Doctor and Charley, as for me they're a pivotal **Doctor Who** team, who very much kept the series alive during the tail end of the wilderness years when the TV show was off air. At that critical time, they were very much the current Doctor and companion. And so, to jump in now as a writer, having been an avid fan and listener during those early adventures, is an absolute privilege.

"I actually started the pitching process for this story a long time ago, way back in 2023, for an earlier box set. As far as I can remember, the brief was fairly open ended, but at the time the TV series was doing a lot of fun and fantastical stories so I very much honed in on going in the opposite direction. I instead chose to do a big, hardcore science-fiction horror story as I believe the audio

## WE NEED TO BE BIGGER, BOLDER AND DIFFERENT!

ROCHANA PATEL

adventures always need to push in other ways to the TV series. We need to be bigger, bolder and different!"

**SUMMING UP** the story, Rochana says: "The Doctor, Charley and Audacity team up with a group of space explorers to help them find a missing crewmember... On a planet where there's no atmosphere, their suits can only carry so much air, and time is running out..."

The writer was delighted to craft a tale for this particular TARDIS team.

Rochana explains: "There's a very special chemistry between Charley and Audacity. They're both historical companions which gives them a unique perspective on the universe. In most TARDIS crews, there's normally at least one contemporary, future or alien companion who serves as a grounding point for the audience, but with these two we get to see everything through the lens of their respective time periods. It's fun, and different, and makes time-travel that little bit more special. It's the reason I love historical companions



Above: Andrew Wincott

— I think we need more of them!

"So far, I've not done a lot of hardcore sci-fi scripts, but I love writing them. To get this TARDIS team out onto a truly alien world, with no breathable atmosphere, was tremendously fun — and it has left me with a hankering to create adventures in some even stranger alien environments!"

*The Time You Never Had* by Tim Foley features the return of the Silurians. The adventure guest stars Richard Hope who played Silurian characters in the TV episodes *The Hungry Earth*, *Cold Blood* and *The Wedding of River Song*. Richard reprises his role as a Homo Reptilia, the enigmatic Mr Barabbas.

Tim says: "I feel very attached to the TARDIS team of the Eighth Doctor, Charley and Audacity. It's both calling back to the era of Big Finish I grew up with, whilst pushing ahead with its own story.

"I was a bit nervous about including Silurians at first but then Matt Fitton, the script editor, pointed out that an



Above (l-r): Nicholas Khan, Jaye Griffiths, India Fisher, Obioma Ugoda and Bee Menabney

aspect of this story allowed us to use them in a whole new way. He's clever like that! He's a great script editor, forever giving us writers space to add stuff to his series outline. *Causeway* emerged somewhat organically through the writing process of my first Audacity story (the Silurians were initially seen in *The Great Cyber War*... or were they?!), but it's all building towards something fun...

"I'll be vague about the story details because it's best to go in without any foreknowledge (you can probably guess that from the elusive synopsis!) – but I will say it's the end of this chapter and the start of a new one. The Causeway is waiting... and one character will be forever altered by its presence. Listen out for the shocking post-credits scene!"

**INDIA FISHER** is delighted to be back as everyone's favourite Edwardian Adventuress. She says: "I have been playing Charley for more than half my life which is a scary thing!

## I HAVE BEEN PLAYING CHARLEY FOR MORE THAN HALF MY LIFE WHICH IS A SCARY THING!

INDIA FISHER

Thinking about that makes me feel old, but the great thing is that because this is audio, I can still play a 19-year-old. Everyone writes so well for her.

"It's always lovely to be back as Charley. She is one of my favourite people and there are some great stories coming up for Charley and Audacity. There's a really lovely enriching of their relationship,

which I am thrilled about because I think they work so well together. Jaye and I get on incredibly well, and both love acting too.

"This run with Audacity has really brought Charley on again, and she feels as though she's growing in her relationship with the Doctor. I suppose another companion coming along has changed things too; there's another strong female. You might think that two alpha female personalities wouldn't really work but actually it does – and it works brilliantly. The poor Doctor gets a bit of a hard time, but he can hold his own!

"These two stories are beautiful in the way that they bring the relationship further forward. I'm really interested to see how it progresses – and I love the way that Charley has started calling Audacity 'Dassy'!

"We've got brilliant scripts from Tim and Rochana. I really love my adventures with the Eighth Doctor and Audacity, Charley has some beautiful moments. There's a lovely



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

bit where Charley is dragged away and gets kidnapped again. She sees a huge, hideous monster coming at her and is convinced it's a demon. She then realises, 'Oh, it's just an alien.' And that relaxes her – she can deal with an alien! She's been travelling so long with the Doctor that she's perfectly happy with the fact that it's just an alien species!

"And there's a moment in the other story when Audacity comes in and says, 'I'm afraid a lizard from the dawn of time has arrived,' and Charley simply replies, 'Of course it has. I love things like that.'"

**CHARLEY AND** Audacity very quickly befriended one another, which reflects the off-mic chemistry and friendship between India and Jaye. Script editor Matt Fitton agrees: "We knew that on paper, these two were a good mix as a companion pairing as they're both strong-willed, intelligent women. Jaye and India really hit it off and

## WE'RE SOWING SEEDS FOR THE LISTENERS TO PICK UP DOWN THE LINE...

MATT FITTON

have had a great time together and with Paul. It's one of those things where the chemistry in studio was even more than we could have hoped for."

*Vortex* asks Matt about the ongoing series and asks how the conceit of the Causeway connection came about? Matt explains: "The idea came from Tim, really. It was his idea to start seeding things around Audacity's tenure in the TARDIS, which may go some way to explaining why this is the first we've heard of it. Things start to

come to more of a head now she's a bit of a seasoned traveller. She's really put through the ringer in the two stories in this set.

"It's sort of like the Bad Wolf connection in the Christopher Eccleston series, we're sowing seeds for the listeners to pick up down the line because, obviously, everything needs to work in its own right as a story. People can pick up individual releases, but we hope that once the bigger picture starts to emerge, they will then dip back in and see how the whole jigsaw has been put together."

Although we're now hearing about the Causeway, there's still a while to go until we find out who's behind the mystery.

Matt says: "Oh yes, we have more plans, Tim and I. Things are revealed in this set which are setting things up for the future... but we're not going to give that away now! We'll find out in time what's behind the Causeway."

How does Matt, as a fan, find working on long-reaching storylines when he knows the eventual outcome? He tells *Vortex*: "Yes, it does spoil the surprise a bit, but it's lovely to be involved in this because I know what it's like when you get those surprises.

"When I listen to other ranges and stories where I've had no input whatsoever, I get to be properly hoodwinked. It's such fun, feeding in the twists and turns, and working out how best to gradually reveal all the mysteries that we've built." **VORTEX**

### THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES CAUSEWAY



■ RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2025  
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

ORDER NOW: [bgfn.sh/bestie](http://bgfn.sh/bestie)







# MAVIC TRICKS

**A NEW DALEK MASTERPLAN THREATENS THE GALAXY. A DEADLY ALLIANCE IS BUILDING. CAN BERNICE SUMMERFIELD SAVE US?**

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

The third release in the latest series of **The New Adventures of Bernice Summerfield** is upon us, with Lisa Bowerman once more in the titular role facing off against the evils of the Daleks voiced by Nicholas Briggs.

The first adventure in *The Dalek Eternity 3* is *Quisling* by Sophia McDougall. *The Daleks* are hollowing out a world. *The remaining rebels* are exhausted and demotivated. Can Bernice Summerfield convince their leader of a way to win?

Producer James Goss said: "My heart sings whenever I talk about *Quisling*. It has Sophia's complicated dismantling of the psychology behind those familiar Dalek tropes of an occupied world and a doomed rebel leader. What would happen if the rebel leader just refused to die? Where does the story go? The answer is, some very complicated places."

## IT'S A LOVELY STORY ABOUT FANDOM AND ABOUT PROBLEMATIC RELATIVES.

**JAMES GOSS**

And the second adventure, *We Don't Talk About Mavic Chen*, has been written by Tim Foley. Mavic Chen was, of course, the Guardian of the Solar System whose lust for power led him to ally himself with the Daleks – but it didn't work out too well for him in the end.

*Every Dalek Masterplan needs a figurehead. Who better than the nephew of Mavic Chen, the greatest traitor in the galaxy? Someone has to break the news to Sidney.*

James is delighted with *We Don't Talk About Mavic Chen*.

He says: "Tim's episode arrived triumphant in my inbox and hasn't stopped making me grin ever since."

"It's a lovely story about fandom and about problematic relatives. It's about Sidney Chen, the infantilised younger scion of the Chen Dynasty, and his struggles to come to terms with his ancestor's murky past. But it's also beautifully funny."

Tim adds: "I'm really enjoying this new format for **Bernice Summerfield**. James and I realised the half-hour length is both useful for new writers to get to grips with audio writing, or for writers more familiar with Big Finish to try something a little experimental."

"When we were coming up with the episode outlines, I thought the hook of this adventure was very cute. And having co-written the finale of last year's **Bernice Summerfield** series, *The Eternity Club*, I thought it would be nice to embrace the calm before the storm this time!

"We're with Benny on the planet Kimble, trying to persuade an unusual collector not to side with the Dalek menace. But as ever, not all is as it seems. My highlight is a 'recreation' of a piece of Dalek history..."

The cast on these adventures include Simon Kane as Gelwen, Luyanda Unati Lewis-Nyawo as Grizella, Rachel Atkins playing Tam, Alistair Toovey as Sidney Chen, Tom Kiteley as David and Chandrika Chevli as Umith, with Niamh Cusack as the Oldest. **VORTEX**

**THE NEW ADVENTURES OF BERNICE SUMMERFIELD  
THE DALEK ETERNITY 3**



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# BOOK CLUB

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

## BLAKE'S 7: GHOST SHIP



**BLAKE'S 7** is a series with story types of all kinds – political intrigue, thrillers, adventure and outright science fiction. Horror and scares were very much the order of the day in the full-cast adventure *Ghost Ship*, part of the second season of audios from Big Finish produced by Cavan Scott.

Writer Iain McLaughlin recalls: “*Blake's 7* has an emotional place in my heart because of watching it with my dad. I think I was 10, pushing towards 11, when it started and so we were still watching stuff together. There's a lot of family and relationship stuff tied in to my memories of *Blake's 7*, so having the chance to write for it was something I jumped at.

“I was asked to make this episode scary using a very small cast in terms

of numbers. The great thing was that I had Vila as an option. When it comes to *Blake's 7* and Vila being scared, I always think of the television episode *Orbit*. That wonderful bit at the end where Vila is hiding from Avon because he knows Avon's going to turf him out of the airlock. It was genuinely unsettling and that was how scared I wanted Vila to be now.

“We came up with making it a ghost story early in the discussions – possibly even the first chat. I think one of the scariest things you can do is make someone's home, the place they are used to feeling at their safest, into something very scary – so for Vila that would be the *Liberator*.”

Iain continues: “I've always liked a good ghost story, and I've always thought that darkness and silence are incredibly frightening. Absence of the usual noises is unsettling and

it makes any sound you do then hear all the more jarring. In the first draft, I tried to make silence almost like a character, something oppressive, but it didn't quite work and ran short. So I had a rethink and found a way to use the dark and silence.”

The adventure did pose a particular problem for Iain. He explains: “Having a character alone is a challenge on audio, giving them lines when they have nobody to talk to can be tricky. It can sound forced or false. The good thing for me is that Vila often talks to himself! So it wasn't a stretch for a scared Vila to speak out loud to avoid the oppressive nature of silence. And once I started to hear Michael Keating's voice as I was writing the dialogue, it really started to come together. “The final version is elevated by good performances, and I have to give a lot of credit to Cavan and script editor Justin Richards who nudged and shoved the story along in the right direction. I also really liked that they gave me that sort of shopping list at the start – small cast, spooky story, that kind of thing. There are a few things I'd probably do differently if I was writing it now, but I'm really pleased with how it turned out.” **VORTEX**

### BLAKE'S 7 GHOST SHIP



■ RELEASED: FEBRUARY 2015  
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# MEET THE MAKERS

**VORTEX CONTINUES ITS IRREGULAR SERIES TALKING WITH THE PEOPLE WHO BRING AUDIO ADVENTURES TO LIFE IN MEET THE MAKERS – WITH MATT FITTON.**



Above: Matt Fitton

**WHEN THE** *Sirens of Time* was first released in 1999, Matt Fitton immediately ordered a copy. He had been bitten by the **Doctor Who** audio bug from Big Finish. As a subscriber, he followed the ongoing adventures of the various Doctors and then, when a writer's opportunity arose to submit a single 25-minute episode, he sent in a proposal.

In August 2011, Matt's first script *A Most Excellent Match* was produced by Big Finish as part of **The Monthly Adventures** release *Recorded Time and Other Stories* with the Sixth Doctor and Peri.

Matt recalls: "My story was actually first submitted to the open writer's opportunity Big Finish held in 2010 so started life as a Fifth Doctor and Nyssa adventure. Entrants were

**IT SCRATCHES THE SPREADSHEET ITCH WHICH MY BRAIN LIKES!**

**MATT FITTON**

asked to submit a short synopsis plus a sample page of script. When it was announced that Rick Briggs's *Entropy Composition* was the chosen winning submission, I chalked it up to experience and thought no more about it.

"But I received an email several months later from Alan Barnes saying my entry was one of a few

other stories they'd liked and wanted to develop, and could I revise the synopsis for the Sixth Doctor. In fact, the premise worked even better with this most literary of Doctors, and after some tweaking to allow for Peri's part in the proceedings, the final storyline was pretty close to the original one I'd written for the Fifth."

**SINCE THEN**, Matt has become a mainstay of Big Finish, as a writer and script editor on a number of ranges. And now, he's taken the step up as producer of **The Eighth Doctor – The Time War** and **The Ninth Doctor Adventures** ranges.

Matt continues: "I was working in a day job alongside my Big Finish work over most of the time I was writing and script editing. I wanted to move more towards my creative side and I'd talked a bit with producer David Richardson about working with him in terms of possibly co-producing and working alongside him.

"The producer's job really interested me in terms of what it entails, beyond the parts of the process that I was already seeing as a script editor. As script editor, you're involved with the producer in the concept of a particular box set or story and in picking writers, then assigning themes or particular elements that you want to be included. But the producer sees the whole production through to the end release.

"Often, a script editor or writer will go into studio and hear the recordings happen, and I've always enjoyed that. So the idea of being a producer and actually organising those days, putting them together, was an interesting and fun aspect for me. There's also everything that comes afterwards in terms of what you don't do as a script editor, such as getting to hear the edits, picking sound designers and composers, then working with them towards the final release. You're also looking at cover art, and all of that really stirred my creative senses."

Matt admits that the organisational side of the job has an appeal too. He explains: "Yes, even all the organisation appeals – managing budgets, schedules and so on – it scratches the spreadsheet itch which my brain likes! I stopped working at my day job, which was an economic consultancy, so producing has fulfilled that side as well.

"This is about being able to put all





Above (l-r): Indra Ovi, Sam Stafford, Niky Wardley, Emma Campbell-Jones, Paul McGann, Sonny McGann, Louise Faulkner, Matt Fitton and Vineeta Rishi

## SOMETIMES, WITH GUEST STAR CASTING, YOU SHOOT FOR THE MOON...

MATT FITTON

the pieces together, as a producer you get to steer the whole ship. It's been really interesting and fun. I've really enjoyed it, and I particularly like working with the director and casting. That's one of my favourite things, working out which voices are going to work for each character and in which episodes, and I also enjoy approaching the agents and dealing with them. Sometimes, with guest star casting, you shoot for the moon and sometimes, you do get people you might not think would do a Big Finish. Some of the bigger name actors are interested if they've got a spare day and fancy doing a **Doctor Who!**

"Depending on the range, there's a challenge to capture the tone of the era, which is what we're currently doing with the Ninth Doctor and Rose, but then we want to do new



Above (l-r): Christopher Eccleston, Nicholas Briggs, Billie Piper, Helen Goldwyn and Matt Fitton

things inside that and fit what we can into the television run with Christopher Eccleston and Billie Piper.

"In contrast, with something like **The Eighth Doctor - The Time War**, all bets are off in a way. Here, we're in unknown territory, as we're dealing with an era where we can really be out there and strange, to go to weird and wonderful places with it. As the producer, you're really working on anything and everything between those two extremes."

Matt concludes: "It's all been a real joy so far, but if you pressed me

to pick out one single highlight, it would have to be taking the reins on **The Ninth Doctor Adventures** and working with Chris and Billie. It's been so good seeing just how engaged and happy they are with the scripts and the productions. They're obviously enjoying being back together again and you can hear that in the final product. Everybody who's working on this range has a real love for the material, and recapturing that is very, very special." **VORTEX**

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AND USE VORTEX MAIL AS THE SUBJECT

# VORTEX MAIL



Above: Steve Wallace and some Old Friends

## GO FORTH!

With the release of the new Big Finish Christopher Eccleston and Billie Piper adventures, I decided to listen to my personal favourite stories which are the Scotland arc range which climaxed in the Ninth Doctor battling *The Forth Generation* Cybermen converted from the iron and steel from this most iconic bridge. Sometimes, it's good to check on the Doctor's work and I can assure you all that this bridge is now perfectly safe to travel and free from those silver menaces. The Doctor did a good job and so did all at Big Finish involved in these ranges.

**Steve Wallace**

*Nick: Cheers, Steve, and we're loving the photo!*

## DREAMING OF DREAMLAND

News of the upcoming **Smith and Sullivan: Reunited** series made me wonder whether we might one day have a resolution to the cliffhanger ending of *Dreamland*, the final story in the wonderful **Sarah Jane Smith** series aborted when Elisabeth



Sladen returned to the TV show in *School Reunion*. Perhaps even a continuation of the series now that Sadie Miller is embedded into the role and the Big Finish family? Or will **Smith and Sullivan: Reunited** start with a casual line from Sarah

to Harry about her once having been trapped on a doomed spacecraft?

**David Canfield**

*Nick: We have no plans to do this at the moment, David, but it's a great idea. Just imagine.*

## A STITCH IN TIME

I really enjoyed *Snare*, it was absolutely fantastic to hear Christopher Eccleston and Billie Piper back together as the iconic duo, the Ninth Doctor and Rose Tyler. I look forward to the rest of the series in the coming months. Meanwhile, are there any plans to bring David Tennant back in for more Tenth Doctor adventures reuniting him with Rose, Martha and Donna?

**Adam Parkin**

*Nick: It was really an amazing moment when we knew Billie and Chris would be back together. We're always open to David returning and have a standing invitation to him. He's just... well, you know, a bit busy!*

## HOPING FOR HEBE

Having recently relistened to **The Sixth Doctor Adventures: The Purity Saga** – not forgetting the sublime *Water Worlds* – I'm wondering if there is any chance, at all, that Hebe Harrison may return to Big Finish? As a disabled fan, I love Hebe and everything she brings to the TARDIS, whether that's her cheekiness ("Melanie-Mel" is a favourite!), her determination or her compassion. I believe it's time her story was continued, with more adventures in the TARDIS yet to be seen (or heard?). She could be travelling solo with the Doctor or with Mel and the Doctor, either way, I feel as though the TARDIS needs to welcome back Dr Harrison and her marine expertise.

**Andalucia Armstrong-Squires**

*Nick: Hebe was great, wasn't she?*

*No plans for a return at the moment, Andalucia, but I'd always be open to a return for her character.*

**VORTEX**



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SUMMERFIELD  
*The Dalek Eternity 2* **DTO** **1CD**

SHERLOCK HOLMES UNTOLD  
*Episodes 1–5* **DTO**

BLAKE'S 7  
*Afterlife* **DTO**

DW | THE CHIMES OF MIDNIGHT  
*Novel* **BK**

DW | JUBILEE  
*Novel* **BK**

## NOVEMBER 2025

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*Causeway* **DTO** **3CD**

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SUMMERFIELD  
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*Episodes 6–8* **DTO**

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**3CD** TRIPLE CD PLUS SLIPCASE

**4CD** QUADRUPLE CD PLUS SLIPCASE

**LP** VINYL RECORD SET

**SP** SPECIAL RELEASE

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THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

# VORTEX



ISSUE 200  
OCTOBER 2025  
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