

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

# WORLDTEXT

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WHEN I GET TO THE BOTTOM I GO BACK TO THE TOP OF THE SLIDE, WHERE I STOP AND I TURN AND I GO FOR A RIDE...

# HELTER SKELTER

THE TARDIS TEAM WHICH BEGAN TELEVISION'S SEASON 21 ARE BACK FOR MORE ADVENTURES...

THE BAD BATCH...

## RUTANS vs SONTARANS

A TALE TOLD ACROSS MILLENNIA..





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# RUN FAST, BE KIND

FANS MISSING the adventures of the Twelfth Doctor don't have long to wait now until he returns on audio. Slipping into Peter Capaldi's polished Doc Martens is Jon Culshaw with new adventures set between the television Christmas specials, *The Husbands of River Song* and *The Return of Doctor Mysterio*.

In **The Twelfth Doctor Adventures: Run Fast, Be Kind** the Doctor is joined by new companion Ash Wilton voiced by Gwithian Evans, a travelling bard from the end of the universe.

The Doctor and Ash's adventures are produced by the creative team behind the award-winning **The Eleventh Doctor Chronicles** series with Alfie Shaw as the producer and lead writer. The six episodes, which can be pre-ordered as a bundle, will be released one per week beginning in July. Once all the episodes have been launched, everyone who has purchased the bundle will get access to the downloadable box set. The adventures are: *The Second Death* by Alfie Shaw, *The Broken Man* by Rochana Patel, *The Beautiful and the Damned* by Katherine White, *Wings of Steel* by Alfie Shaw (based on a story by Alex Hewitt), *Duty of Care* by Christian Markham and *The Second Death of the Daleks* by Alfie Shaw. Producer Alfie says: "I love the freedom I had on **The Eleventh Doctor Chronicles** and now with **The Twelfth Doctor Adventures**. The Doctor and the TARDIS have to make it to the end, but everything else can be new. New companion, a sprinkling of existing monsters, no returning allies. If you're looking for somewhere to start with the Twelfth Doctor at Big Finish, this is the perfect place to jump on." **VORTEX**

## THE TWELFTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES RUN FAST, BE KIND

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# EDITORIAL

**MY EARLIEST Doctor Who** memories come from circa 1977 with the Fourth Doctor television episode *Image of the Fendahl* when I was about three years old.

I then watched the show regularly from Season 16 onwards, and Season 21 was one I approached as a full-blown fan, full of the expectations, hopes and dreams that we fans have! Having read the *Radio Times* anniversary special in 1983 with its full preview of Peter Davison's final year, I was ready to be thrilled and entertained having seen the designs for the Malus, amongst other things.

As a result, I've always had a huge soft spot for the TV stories from *Warriors of the Deep* through to *The Twin Dilemma* where the Doctor, Tegan, Turlough, Peri and Kamelion faced a host of dangers, whether undersea or slug-like.

I've more fond memories of **Doctor Who** from when I was nine years old. I remember I missed part four of the Fifth Doctor's *Frontios* as I was singing at a concert with the school choir. I recorded both parts of *Resurrection of the Daleks* onto my family's Video 2000 machine, then recorded the audio onto a cassette. And I watched the regeneration at Cambuslang Fire Station on a visit with the 138th Glasgow Cub Scouts!

It's strange to think that since Big Finish began in 1999, there's only been one story featuring just the Fifth Doctor, Tegan and Turlough in Steve Gallagher's *Lost Story, Nightmare Country*. But now, there are three more on the way in the latest Fifth Doctor box set.

And then, just when you thought you couldn't get enough of Mark Strickson, he's back alongside the Sixth Doctor and Peri in the next Sixth Doctor box set! **VORTEX**

*Kenny*



THE TARDIS TEAM WHICH BEGAN TELEVISION'S SEASON 21 ARE BACK FOR MORE ADVENTURES...

# TAKE THE FIFTH

**THE FIFTH** Doctor, Tegan and Turlough are set for their first box set of adventures together this spring. The Doctor (Peter Davison) is joined by his companions Tegan Jovanka (Janet Fielding) and Vislor Turlough (Mark Strickson) for three brand-new trips in time and space where they'll discover that having a wish come true can bring deadly consequences.

The three adventures in the *Helter Skelter* box set are *Field of Miracles* by Lauren Mooney and Stewart Pringle, *Helter Skelter* by James Moran and *Land of Fools* by Lauren Mooney and Stewart Pringle.

Producer Sonny McGann says: "Turlough, Tegan and the Fifth Doctor are back! We're returning to Earth where a new threat has emerged wielding immense psionic power. In an England suffering from post-war austerity, one village appears to have everything they've ever wanted. Some will pay any price to see a wish fulfilled – a choice which may ripple through time.

"Meanwhile, when a visit to an amusement park on a bio-engineered planet traps the Doctor and his friends in a time loop, one of our companions will have to step up to prevent the planet from tearing itself

apart. Three new stories full of wit, emotion and good technobabble – according to Peter Davison!"

**SCRIPT EDITOR** John Dorney tells *Vortex*: "I'm always interested in material written by Lauren and Stewart, and I've had some very interesting discussions with them. They brought really good ideas to the table for this one which gave some particularly interesting material for Tegan and Turlough – we got to lean into doing new and exciting things with them.

"Writer James has a very different tone and style to Stewart and Lauren.



Above (l-r): Sam Stafford, Emily Woodward, Peter Davison, Janet Fielding, Hiba Medina, Sarah Lambie and Jack Barton

Where they can be dark, serious and quite scary, James is always a little bit playful and can't resist throwing in the jokes. He was aiming at something a bit more comedic, wanting to do a timey-wimey story, and he said if he'd thought about it at the time he might have pitched it as *Groundhog G'day!* But it was a bit too late in the end and now it's called *Helter Skelter*, which has become the title for the whole box."

*Field of Miracles* by Lauren and Stewart sees the Doctor, Tegan and Turlough arrive in the quaint village of Heatherington in 1951. But something strange is happening.

Stewart says: "Tegan and Turlough are just great, aren't they? It's so lovely that this set is coming out right around the time of Season 21 landing for the Collection because it's such a glorious period of **Doctor Who**. It's quite a few years now since we wrote this, and it was one of the first **Doctor Who** stories we took on for Big Finish – we were both thrilled to be writing for this team. *Resurrection*

*of the Daleks* was always a big TV episode for both of us and obviously *The Caves of Androzani*, but I loved *Planet of Fire* too. A lovely woman called Avril worked in our school library and would occasionally order in **Doctor Who** VHSs for us to borrow, and *Planet of Fire* was one of the big ones. I remember going on holiday to Lanzarote and being very excited..."

**LAUREN SAYS** of their brief: "We're really looking back through the mists of time here, as Stewart says, we wrote this one a while ago. It was quite an open brief. We were given the lead characters and asked to send through three ideas for them, one period, one outer space sci-fi and one 1980s contemporary Earth. In the end Big Finish wanted to move ahead with two of our ideas, the period and the contemporary. I remember it being hugely exciting because this was our first Big Finish story outside the **Torchwood** range."

Stewart continues: "*Field of Miracles* is our tribute to the **Doctor Who**

TV episode *The Android Invasion* with shades of the horror film *The Wicker Man*. We wanted to do a proper folk story in a village, with a pub full of song-filled drinkers and a creepy priest and all of that. But we also thought there was something fascinating in the idea of war memorials, and the small towns scarred by heavy losses in World Wars I and II. Those 'pals brigade' towns, full of quiet absences and traumatised families; they feel like such haunted and fractured spaces. So that was our entry point, really. Where might a malignant alien intelligence choose to sink its claws? Where are the places in the 20th century that it might have found a horrible, clinging purpose?"

Stewart adds: "I think the secret of what's growing in that field of miracles is a favourite moment of mine. I had been tangentially working on a production of Friedrich Dürrenmatt's *The Visit* just before the COVID-19 lockdown, and some of the imagery from that bled into *Field*

of *Miracles* – sudden, inexplicable, malevolent plenty. So that was fun!”

The second adventure is *Helter Skelter*. James says: “I watched this team and loved them when I was a kid and Tegan, as I’ve said before, is one of the companions that set the standard and tone for modern companions. I had such a great time listening to her recording my stories in **The Death and Life of River Song: Ace and Tegan** box set, and I knew that next time I could throw a verbal obstacle course at her – and, well, here it is!”

“I always treat these Big Finish gigs with the same attitude: you might never ever get to do this again, so give it everything. Having said that, I hope they keep asking me back!”

Summing up the plot, James says: “I always refer to it as *Tegan Jovanka’s Groundhog Day*, which



Above (l – r): Hiba Medina and Jack Barton

kind of tells you all you need to know up front. It made me endlessly amused that I’d come up with a plot almost custom designed to make Tegan as angry as possible, and that was pretty much deliberate, to see how Janet would run with it.

“The pitch paragraph I used in the script doc was this: when a bio-engineered planet and amusement park undergoes a critical malfunction, the entire planet tears itself apart – and the Doctor, Tegan and Turlough are thrown back to their arrival, trapped in a repeating



Above (l – r): Jason Forbes and Beth Chalmers

I ALWAYS REFER TO IT AS TEGAN JOVANKA’S GROUNDHOG DAY, WHICH KIND OF TELLS YOU ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW...

JAMES MORAN

time loop. But for some reason, only Tegan can see the loop, not the Doctor – it has been hidden from him somehow. So why can Tegan see it, and how is she going to fix it?”

**JAMES ADMITS** that the nature of the story posed issues of its own. He explains: “As with any time loop story – and I had the same challenge on the episode of *Eve* I did where she’s stuck in a testing loop – you have to pick and choose which parts to repeat, which parts to skip, which parts are the funny/dramatic/

scary ones, and when you can start speeding up and jumping ahead.

“The biggest challenge is making sure everyone is in the same place at the same time on each loop, unless they’ve done something different or taken longer to do something. Actually, no, the biggest challenge is to avoid just ignoring the plot and writing 27 hours of Tegan dialogue – I will never get tired of writing for her.”

*Land of Fools* by Lauren and Stewart brings this set to a close.

Lauren tells *Vortex*: “*Land of Fools* is a very different beast in almost every way to *Field of Miracles*. It’s the Fifth Doctor in the 1980s with shades of *Resurrection of the Daleks*, but also a sort of vibe of the Sylvester McCoy years. We love the slightly shonky street slang of *Survival* and the sense of anti-Thatcher agit-prop in so much of the writing from that period. This is a proper little dystopia in a *Back to the Future Part 2* mould, and it leads somewhere that we hope is unexpected. This is also where that morally ambiguous Turlough story ended up going, so we’re really leaning into that strand of his character here.”

Stewart continues: “It’s quite an unusual story length and both



Above (l-r): Sam Stafford, Matthew Cottle, Helen Pearson, Peter Davison, Janet Fielding, Richard Goulding, Emily Woodward and Paul Bown

of our stories are two 25-minute episodes apiece. There aren't many of them in the classic series and they haven't always worked. But at their best, as in *The Awakening*, *The Rescue* or *Black Orchid*, they're really succinct and thrilling.

"But we quickly realised why it's such a challenging format, because you hardly have any time to get your pieces in place before you're at that first cliffhanger, and then only another 25 minutes to wrap it all up. It's a really different beast in terms of pacing, particularly if you want something quite atmospheric and character-led which is always our preference. But we hope we've pulled off something that people will enjoy."

"Absolutely," agrees Lauren. "I remember finding it a real challenge to open both of these first episodes. Something about the familiarity of the TARDIS as a setting and as a start point, it's hard to know how much time to linger there. I remember having the sense of a lineage which comes with its own pressure, but

## YOU HARDLY HAVE ANY TIME TO GET YOUR PIECES IN PLACE BEFORE YOU'RE AT THAT FIRST CLIFFHANGER...

STEWART PRINGLE

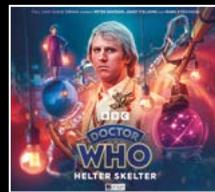
also a sense that there's not a lot of new ground to be broken. But once you're into the world and the characters' voices, it gets easier."

Lauren concludes: "For *Land of Fools*, it was great fun to create some ambiguous Turlough business. He's a bit of an Edmund (from *Narnia*) isn't he? And he's got himself into a proper scrape... But really it's just a

thrill to write for this TARDIS team.

We've since gone on to write for much happier, closer TARDIS teams, especially the Eighth Doctor, Liv and Helen, and that has its own joys – but the bickering, friction and the lack of bonhomie gives this era such a delicious flavour of its own." **VORTEX**

### THE FIFTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES HELTER SKELTER



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THE DOCTOR AND PERI ARE REUNITED  
WITH AN OLD FRIEND - OR IS HE AN ENEMY?

# THE TRION GAME

**DOCTOR WHO** fans with long memories and large bookcases may remember the *Make Your Own Adventure with Doctor Who* series of books. There were 'choose your own story' style novels, giving readers options on how to proceed through the tale.

One of those books, *Crisis in Space*, had the Sixth Doctor, Peri and Vislor Turlough take on Garth Hadeez. And now, we're going to hear Colin Baker, Nicola Bryant and

Mark Strickson reprising their roles in **The Sixth Doctor Adventures: Expulsion**. How will the Doctor deal with a supposedly matured Turlough, and how will Turlough deal with a regenerated Doctor?

Producer Jacqueline Rayner says: "There's nothing wrong with having a returning character just for the pleasure of hearing them again, but it's even better if their presence really means something. Turlough's return is not only significant for himself and

for Trion, but it shines a new light on the Doctor and Peri's relationship too.

"It's fascinating to hear these three characters reunite, each of them having become a different person since they last met. In the past, they weren't actually together long enough to become a team so there's now a sense they're trying to recreate a relationship that never really existed in the first place! Can they actually form a bond as the people they are now and work



Above: Mark Strickson

together when they're all carrying so much baggage and expectations?

"I had a very definite ending for Turlough's story in mind when we started this set. We're not quite there yet, but every step takes us closer. This is supposed to be a journey of discovery for everyone involved, but it's never going to be a straightforward one! Turlough's mind has been described as 'twisty' and that's the sort of path we're following..."

**THE ADVENTURES** begin in *The Reckoning* by Nev Fountain.

Nev was delighted to write for this set, saying: "It was particularly exciting for me as I made the suggestion for Turlough to return. I emailed Jac pointing out that it would be a very interesting dynamic if an older Turlough turned up and travelled with the Sixth Doctor and older Peri for a time. She jumped on the idea and asked me to handle the introduction of Turlough at the end of *Red for Danger!*, the second story in **The Sixth Doctor Adventures: Bad Terms**, and write his first proper story.

## TURLOUGH KNOWS THE FIFTH DOCTOR MUCH BETTER THAN PERI, BUT PERI KNOWS THE SIXTH DOCTOR REALLY WELL, WHILE TURLOUGH DOESN'T KNOW THE SIXTH DOCTOR AT ALL.

NEV FOUNTAIN

"The Sixth Doctor/Peri/Turlough dynamic is quite a cocktail if you think about it. Peri knows Turlough a little, Turlough knows Peri a little and both know the Fifth Doctor. Turlough knows the Fifth Doctor much better than Peri, but Peri knows the Sixth Doctor really well, while Turlough doesn't know the Sixth Doctor at all. The Sixth Doctor knows both of them, but only knows Turlough through different eyes and a hazy memory. It's the kind of chequered history that suggests all sorts of interesting ways to go with the characters."

The relationships between this trio of travellers will be very interesting to hear. Nev agrees: "I think the dynamic between Turlough and Peri is very different to the TV episode *Planet of Fire*. Back then, Turlough was ending his time with the Doctor and Peri was an innocent who barely knew what she was getting into. Now, we join the TARDIS at a point when Peri has load of experience as she's been travelling with the Doctor for many years, and Turlough has to get to know the Doctor all over again.

"Peri acts as the peacemaker between Turlough and the Sixth Doctor as she knows them both. She can vouch for the Doctor to Turlough and defend Turlough from the Doctor's wilder accusations. I see their relationship as a diametric opposite to the Fifth Doctor's relationship with Turlough. The Fifth Doctor indulged Turlough and was almost passive when Turlough's secret was uncovered. He never brought up Turlough's attempts to kill him after the TV serial *Enlightenment* and was almost god-like in his capacity for forgiveness. He seemed to have an incredible faith in Turlough's ultimate redemption.

"The Sixth Doctor is, by his nature, a lot more suspicious of people and sees Turlough very differently. Think on this: if he attacked poor Peri after merely suspecting her to be an alien spy in the TV episode *The Twin Dilemma*, then how on earth would he react when he's reacquainted with an *actual* alien spy who once tricked his way into the TARDIS and played him for a fool?"

**IN THE** aftermath of the Battle of Agincourt, the Doctor and Turlough find themselves aligned with opposing factions in *A Crucible of Queens* by Lizbeth Myles. Writer Lizbeth says of writing for this team: "My first thought was something like, 'Ooh, that's interesting,' as this is both Peri and Turlough back with the Doctor after their original exits. They're both veterans of time travelling adventures: Peri's ruled a planet, Turlough's fighting for his, so figuring out who they are now was a lot of fun.

"The Doctor, Peri, and Turlough arrive in France in the aftermath of the epic French defeat at Agincourt.

France is divided between making peace with England and fighting on. And, naturally, the TARDIS team become drawn into the civil war. On one side is King Louis the Mad and his queen, Isabeau of Bavaria, who want to make peace. On the other is Yolande of Aragon and her future son-in-law, the Dauphin Charles, who would be disinherited in the peace treaty where the French crown would be passed to Henry V of England.

"It's basically a bit of the Hundred Years' War that takes place between the much more famous Battle of Agincourt and Joan of Arc, but it's a bit I love and loved playing with (Yolande was a massive supporter of Joan and she funded the army Joan led to raise the famous siege at Orleans).

"By far the biggest challenge was making quite a complicated part of history – this family feud taking place in a civil war while at war with another nation – into a narrative that could be followed by someone who had no idea what Agincourt even was. I assume I succeeded because the script editor didn't send me an irritated email informing me this was supposed to be a play not a history lecture!"

**THE FINAL** adventure of the set is *The Curse of the Duergar* by Julian Richards where Shieldmaiden Hervor braves the ghosts of her ancestors to claim her birth right – the sword Tyrning.

Julian says: "As soon as I knew Jac was going to be producing **The Sixth Doctor Adventures** I dropped her an email asking if I could come and play in them at some point. Happily, she managed to fit me in and gave me a brief that was, effectively, 'It's got Peri and Turlough in it!'

"I don't want to give too much away as this is an adventure that's very much a mystery box waiting to be unpacked moment by moment as it progresses. But we start with Vikings and ghosts and magic swords, which I think gives a sense of what to expect throughout."

How did Julian find writing for the Doctor, Peri and Turlough? He tells *Vortex*: "Writing for the Sixth Doctor is one of the great joys of my life, and this was my first chance to write for him with Peri. The two of them work really well together, and have come so far in their understanding



Above (l-r): Colin Baker and Nicola Bryant

**I ASSUME I SUCCEEDED BECAUSE THE SCRIPT EDITOR DIDN'T SEND ME AN IRRITATED EMAIL INFORMING ME THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A PLAY NOT A HISTORY LECTURE!**

LIZBETH MYLES

and trust of each other. By this point they're one of those TARDIS crews that know they can completely rely on each other, come to the same conclusions, tell when something's wrong with each other and hold each other to task when it's called for.

"Then into this mix we add Turlough, a companion not to be trusted up against a Doctor not to be trusted, and all of that careful balance the Doctor and Peri have cultivated is suddenly in limbo. There's always a dynamic to be explored when a companion is present for a regeneration and has to get to know the new Doctor, more so when it's a long-standing companion, and it's a transition

Turlough only just missed. So now he's here facing the twin dilemmas of what to make of this new Doctor and how to help his own people.

"There is a trio of companions – Sarah, Rose and Clara – who've spent a long time with one Doctor before they've regenerated then become even closer to the new one. Now we get to see how Turlough copes." **VORTEX**

**THE SIXTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES  
EXPULSION**



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## THE LOST STORIES

# ANIMAL



Above (l-r): Sylvester McCoy, Beth Chalmers and Sophie Aldred

**WHEN ANGELA** Bruce returned as Brigadier Winifred Bambera in the Seventh Doctor *Lost Story Animal*, it wasn't writer Andrew Cartmel's original intention to bring her back. But to find out why, there's a bigger picture.

*Animal* has an interesting history with the story first being mentioned in a *Doctor Who Magazine* feature by Dave Owen on what *Doctor Who* Season 27 might have looked like had it been made. While details emerged on the stories that later became the *Lost Stories Thin Ice* and *Crime of the Century*, little information was given on *Animal*.

According to Wikipedia: "Common themes and techniques in Cartmel's novels include: animal rights; the use of animal perspectives; and extended metaphors of animal behaviour."

Andrew recalls: "I did some research on what was out there in terms of fan perception of what the season would have included, and for this foray into

the lost stories of the season I wanted all the adventures to be fan favourites.

"I read the details about *Animal* on the internet and that got me thinking that it would be good to return to some of the issues that had most preoccupied me at the time; I thought that I'd be able to put my heart into it. So it was great to write for one of my obsessions, animal testing.

"When writing *Animal* I tapped into something that I knew everyone would recognise, the university setting. Whether you've been to university or not, there are certain places we can all relate to or understand with some knowledge of the environment – the student bar, teachers, labs, classrooms and such like.

"If your story is set in a sparse anonymous isolated region – on an alien world, for example – it doesn't have the same emotional resonance that somewhere like a university campus does. One of the real strengths

of this story is the recognition factor that it provided for the listener. It drew them in and made them feel involved. You have to get your audience to develop an emotional relationship with the characters, but you also have to set them in an environment the audience can relate to."

### PRODUCER DAVID

Richardson adds: "Andrew's original script for *Animal* featured UNIT but not Bambera. But as I read it, I simply could not believe that this would have made it to the screen without her. I just felt that John Nathan-Turner would have taken one look at it and said, 'We need to turn that character into Brigadier Bambera'. It required a small bit of rewriting, with new drafts going through her creator Ben Aaronovitch, but it was worth it as it made the finished product sound more authentic for the period."

Andrew confirms: "Yes, it was David's idea. I'd sent the storyline off to him and he came back with the suggestion that we change the UNIT officer to Bambera, which made perfect sense. I really hadn't thought of it, but I checked in with Ben and he said it was fine for me to use her." **VORTEX**

### THE LOST STORIES ANIMAL



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HISTORY COLLIDES WITH  
2006 IN THE POWELL ESTATE...



# PRESENT AND INCORRECT

**YESTERDAY IS** history in **The Ninth Doctor Adventures:**

*Pandemonium* by Katharine Armitage. Producer and script editor Matt Fitton says: "Katharine did such a fantastic job with *The Beautiful Game* in our solo Ninth Doctor series – dropping in on the beginnings of the English Football League – so I was always going to ask her back again. Because we had this initial arc based around the Powell Estate and Katharine is great at human stories with strong character threads, I thought she'd be able to handle Jackie Tyler and her neighbours, as well as

the various historical elements that she's thrown into the mix. It's a really interesting exploration of the location looking at how its past affects the present.

"As listeners will have gathered, after dropping Rose back home to help her recover from her recent experiences, the Doctor is now finding that the TARDIS is unable to get away. Someone or something seems to be drawing him back, time after time, and he is starting to wonder if the strange events and visitations centred around the Powell Estate might all be connected..."

**KATHARINE TELLS** *Vortex*:

"There are not words to describe how excited I was to write for the original dream team! As a child of the wilderness years, Christopher Eccleston and Billie Piper were my first Doctor and companion, and I still think they are hard to beat: effortless chemistry, comedy timing, perfectly judged emotion and growing love... I could go on!

"Writing for a pair so iconic was a little daunting but then, when I sat at my keyboard, I found it kind of flowed. I know these characters

so well that something deep in my brain took over and I had a blast!

"The main heft of the brief was that it was to be a story set on the Powell Estate, which made me so happy as I am a Londoner, born and bred, and I love writing about my city – especially the parts that don't often make it into a story. Matt also gave me the guidance that my episode is a small part of something much bigger, which was really fun to play with as well."

gets to come out with the things most of us are thinking but are too shy/polite to say and it's deeply refreshing to use that sort of voice. I also adored trapping Jackie, cheek by jowl, with Edith Nesbit, a real hero of mine but someone who says exactly the right things to drive Jackie round the bend!"

**DIRECTOR HELEN** Goldwyn tells *Vortex*: "Pandemonium was, ironically, one of the most

stretch!), my first pick was Kate Harbour who is a 'human jukebox' of voices. For the roles of Samuel Pepys and Paul, I was lucky that someone suggested Nick Denning-Read, who I hadn't worked with before. He was brilliant and is definitely on my list for future roles. For Violette Szabo we had the lovely Holly Jackson Walters, who is also extremely versatile and (as a fluent French-speaker) is always most useful in roles requiring a French accent. And for Glen, Clive Hayward was my first choice as he always brings believability and warmth to every role.

"The premise of all these historical characters randomly arriving at the Powell Estate is such a fun one, and the fact that the residents just welcome them and put up with their eccentricities is a great indication of the community spirit they have. The most fun one for me to learn about was Violette. What a story she has in real life – well worth a bit of research."

Matt concludes: "The recordings have been an absolute joy with Chris and Billie really diving into the story. They appreciated the themes that Katharine explores here: the rich social history of places and the idea that you don't need to travel far to uncover fascinating characters. It was quite a busy studio – lots of characters. Helen assembled a great guest cast, some of whom were on double duty. It can be a logistical challenge with a more complex script but everything came together brilliantly." **VORTEX**



Above (l-r): Nick Denning-Read, Kate Harbour and Clive Hayward

Katharine found creating this script emotionally challenging, as she explains: "The most difficult part of this script was that I was writing it only three months after the death of my best friend and the story is about grief so it was all rather raw.

"I wanted to write something about coming to terms with death and letting the people we love go but I was months away from actually being able to do that myself. It was somewhat 'fake it until you make it' writing those scenes. Now, another year and a quarter on, I'm finally beginning to live the things I wrote about, which is a little strange."

Katharine adds: "I loved writing for Jackie, who wouldn't? She

**I'M FINALLY  
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THE THINGS I WROTE  
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LITTLE STRANGE.**

KATHARINE ARMITAGE

chaotic episodes to cast and direct because we had a lot of random characters! When I knew I needed a female actor who could double up as Edith and a Celtic warrior (quite a

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**THE SHAPE-SHIFTING ALIENS ARE BACK IN THE SECOND BOX SET OF ZYGON CENTURY...**

# ZYGON ERA

**THE ZYGONS** have come to claim the Earth, and this time they're playing the long game.

Producer Jonathan S Powell explains: "Zygon Century is back with the second set, *Transformation*, and the invasion's gone international! After the success of the first box set, *Infiltration*, script editor Jonathan Barnes and I were keen to push ourselves further and show our band of Zygons on the offensive."

The set opens with *1922: The Black Cadre* written by Jonathan Barnes where we catch up with the paranormal investigator

Herbert Scott (voiced by *Father Brown* star Jonathan Rigby) who we last saw in *Infiltration – 1901: The Unknowing Mirror*.

Jonathan Barnes says: "I was really pleased with how all of the stories in the first box set came out but I was also aware that we were merely scratching the surface of the world. This time we're exploring wider than before; it's far-reaching and more ambitious than the first set.

"It was always my intention to be able to dot around the whole of the twentieth century, sometimes going backwards and sometimes going

forwards. Hopefully this will keep things relatively unpredictable...

"I also wanted to revisit some of our protagonists from the first series, hence the reappearance of Herbert Scott, as well as Vorvoren and Caldwell later in the set. A lot of these stories are about life on Earth when the Doctor isn't around so it's fair to say that these characters are not 'safe' and that not all of them will make it out of these adventures unchanged.

"Producer Jon was very keen for this second set of stories to have a more international flavour than before and for the Zygons to have a few more



Above: Jonathan Rigby

victories alongside the occasional set-backs to their plan... so we've leaned into both of those elements with some very interesting results."

Summing up *The Black Cadre*, Jonathan says: "The one-hundred-year plan continues! The story returns us to the world of Herbert Scott but in a country that's been changed substantially from the one he knew. The flavour here is 1920s, even a touch of Lovecraft amid the folk horror. I can't wait for people to hear it."

**THE SECOND** adventure, *1968: An Incident in Death Valley* by Lauren Mooney and Stewart Pringle, features Vorvoren, a Zygon previously held captive by humans, who investigates a cult in California.

Summing up their brief Stewart explains: "It's basically, what did Vorvoren do next? We'd originally intended *1935: The Miracle of Pendour Cove* in the first box set as a one and done, but when we heard what a terrific job the two Jonathans and the cast had done with it, and how brilliant Charlie Russell is in the part, we were

excited to bring the character back.

"Jonathan Barnes wanted a very different setting for this one so we took Vorvoren to America, to Death Valley, to a world that feels a little inflected by the Manson Family murders – but she's a very different Zygon by then too. The Hippy Dream is well on the way to burning out and stories of a mysterious cult known as the Ark seep across the flats. Vorvoren makes a new friend in a greasy diner off a benighted desert road, while the cult's shadowy leader, the Arkon, has questions that only a Zygon can answer."

Lauren adds: "Even though with Big Finish you have licence to travel all over the universe, we've had a tendency to pitch smaller, more intimate stories, mainly set on Earth and almost always in some odd little corner of the UK, so there was something really fun about leaning into the sense of place in this, trying to free ourselves from any consideration of set and budget, and just enjoy picturing these scenes as taking place on the edge of a mad huge desert on the west coast of America."

**THE FINAL** adventure is *1974: The Caldwell Restitution* by Ken Bentley where we follow secret agent Caldwell on a new mission which takes him to the Soviet Union.

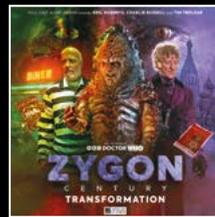
Ken says: "I was thrilled to bits when Jonathan Barnes asked me to write for **Zygon Century**. I really like what he's doing with the series, how he's leaning into other genres, and genres rooted in specific time periods. It's an exciting format.

"It's their duplicity that make **Zygons** fun. As a writer you can misdirect the audience as to who someone really is and what their true motive might be. It hopefully makes for very dramatic reveals when you find out who has actually been a Zygon all along.

"Jonathan Barnes and I have worked together a lot and we have a shared love of post-war political thrillers. He wanted a **Doctor Who** story in that style. It's something we don't get to do much of for Big Finish so it was a real treat to write it.

"I've always enjoyed period storytelling and the discipline that comes with understanding how dramatic storytelling can be rooted in a particular time – how they used certain story tropes and how language has changed. I grew up watching thrillers from the mid-1970s, so this period is very familiar to me and gave me an excuse to rewatch a lot of films that I love." **VORTEX**

ZYGMEN  
CENTURY  
TRANSFORMATION



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UNIT IS BACK WITH THE...

# DAWN OF AN ERA

**BIG FINISH'S** range of adventures featuring UNIT, the Unified Intelligence Taskforce, enters a new phase with the launch of the latest series, **UNIT – Eras**.

**Eras** will highlight heroes from across the history of the organisation beginning with *Hostile Universe*, a four-episode anthology starring Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart (Jon Culshaw), Kate Stewart (Jemma Redgrave), Osgood (Ingrid Oliver), Sarah Jane Smith (Sadie Miller) and Harry Sullivan (Christopher Naylor).

Melanie Bush (Bonnie Langford) and the Vlix (Nicholas Briggs) feature, plus it's the Big Finish debut of Colonel Mace (Rupert Holliday-Evans) from the television episodes *The Sontaran Stratagem*/

*The Poison Sky*, as well as the first Big Finish adventure set during the Fifteenth Doctor's era of the show.

Producer Heather Challands says: "After the end of **UNIT: Nemesis**, Big Finish was keen to create more UNIT stories. Like the Doctor themselves, UNIT is an organisation of changing faces and the anthology format can give us, such as character, time period, genre and different writers. It also takes us away from the larger series arc which makes each set a perfect jumping-on point for new listeners."

*Rise of the Valiant* has been written by Andrew Smith. Heather says: "We open this range with a real bombastic story, *Rise of the Valiant*. Proper adventure stuff! The Brigadier, Harry

Sullivan, Colonel Mace! With Daleks! In the Peruvian jungle! Written by Andrew Smith! What's not to love?"

"Then we have Ken Bentley writing for Kate and Osgood in *The Indigo Child*. Ken has directed Gemma and Ingrid since they started with Big Finish; he knows them as actors and he knows the characters. We got to give them a real thriller to deal with, it's like a backdoor pilot into a previously undiscovered part of UNIT history."

**KEN TELLS** *Vortex*: "There's a big chunk of time in the TV series where Kate vanishes. After the attempt on her life she drops off the radar for several years, then reappears leading the resistance.



Above: Jon Culshaw

So the brief for this one was to establish what happened to Kate in those intervening years. *The Indigo Child* is a supernatural conspiracy thriller about the discovery of a young girl who has an unusual gift – I don't want to give too much else away!

"The biggest challenge was to have an entirely non-speaking character. There's a convention in theatre of an unseen character who has a big impact on the story but never appears, they're only ever spoken about by other characters. I purposefully extrapolated from that and wondered if it was possible to have a character in an audio play who never speaks, but who we still have empathy with."

*The Life and Death of Eddie Wise* by Hannah Kennedy is set during the classic UNIT era and features Sarah Jane Smith. Heather explains: "I felt we were allowed to take a risk with this one. Eddie Wise is any anonymous soldier that could walk past in the background of any adventure. But here, Hannah has put him front and centre, revealing what is it like to be plunged into a

world of monsters and secrets."

"Hannah says: "When script editor Jonathan S Powell first got in touch, he asked me to consider some UNIT stories I might be interested in exploring and to pitch a few ideas spanning the organisation's entire history. We then both pretty quickly homed in on the concept of telling the story of an ordinary person who works for UNIT and examining what their life might be like, and the effect that working for an organisation like UNIT might have on an individual."

**DEADSTAR BY** Joshua Pruett and Jonathan closes the set. Heather says: "*Deadstar* is set just after the 60th anniversary specials. Again, a very different iteration of UNIT to those we've had before so it provided us with a blank slate, really. What Joshua and Jonathan have come up with is great, pushing the characters that we're starting to know that little bit more into unfamiliar territory. That's the joy."

Jonathan says: "It was equal parts treat and challenge to tackle

a current series episode because – to begin with – we only had the TV episode *The Giggle* to go on.

"Joshua and I developed the outline over a number of months until we were happy, ensuring that it worked in conjunction with what was evolving in the TV series, and then sending scenes back and forth. Joshua produced the first 5,000 words, which brilliantly told the story from start to finish, and then I went in to add the other 5,000, fleshing out the arcs of Isla, her mother and Mel in particular. We then honed the final script between us from there."

Joshua adds: "The chance to jump in and do a modern UNIT story was just an extraordinary opportunity, and I am thrilled that Jonathan and Heather invited me in to play in this world. The concept of the 'zombie stars' is one I've been percolating on for years, and using them to inform and build a brand new UNIT character in Isla Ellis felt like something we could all really sink our teeth into. Also, there are rolly chairs! Exciting!"

"Writing for the Vlinx was a particular joy for me, trying to tune in to its very specific tone and sense of humour. In watching the handful of episodes where he appears, there is absolutely some bite and a clip to his dialogue, and wanting to nail that down was vital to making this work. And of course, getting to write for the inimitable Jemma as Kate was a real bucket-list dream-come-true commission – I felt like I'd been recruited by the Brigadier himself!" **VORTEX**

## UNIT – ERAS HOSTILE UNIVERSE



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THE RUTAN/SONTARAN  
CONFLICT IS RAGING ONCE MORE...

# THE BAD BATCH

**ONE OF** Big Finish's recent hit series was **Sontarans vs Rutans**, which saw various incarnations of the Doctor encountering his old warring enemies. The series garnered rave reviews, which has resulted in a second series, but it's a little different this time around – get ready for **Rutans vs Sontarans!**

*Vortex* asks producer David Richardson if it's fair to say the success of the first run of **Sontarans vs Rutans** was better than expected?

David says: "I must admit I was a little surprised when senior producer John Ainsworth contacted me and asked if I'd be happy to produce a second run of **Sontarans vs Rutans**. My initial thought was that the

story had been told; it was very self-contained and there was nowhere else to go with the original thread.

"But the Sontaran/Rutan war is long lasting and massive, so what we've done is tell a new over-arching story, this time from the perspective of the Rutans. This second set feels totally fresh and has its own identity."

This four-story mini-series begins with *Betrayal of the House of Sontar*, a direct sequel to a lost Sixth Doctor story, *The First Sontarans*, which was adapted for audio by its original writer, Andrew Smith.

David says: "I think that *Betrayal at the House of Sontar* was John Dorney's suggestion and I was very happy to return there, especially as it meant

we'd have the opportunity to work with Anthony Howell again reprising his role as Kaveetch scientist Meredith Roath. Director Ken Bentley, John and I all worked on **The Avengers** together and Anthony is one of our favourite people. There were lots of hugs and huge smiles when we were all reunited at the studio – *The First Sontarans* had actually been Anthony's first role for Big Finish."

**WRITER JOHN**, also the series script editor, continues: "If I remember rightly, when we had our first meeting discussing what we wanted to do with **Rutans vs Sontarans**, David said, 'Well, we appear to have had a hit,' which was



Above (l-r): Abi Harris, Anthony Howell and Jo Martin

very exciting! There was a very positive vibe about the series and the stories involved in that arc.

"We talked about trying to get everyone back who had worked on **Sontarans vs Rutans**, but we couldn't quite manage it for various reasons. The kicking off point for me was that the stories in **Sontarans vs Rutans** all eventually tie together so it felt like it was the same battle with some of the same Sontarans. For this next set, I thought it would be interesting to try and do the opposite of that and make it as wide-ranging as possible, which meant reaching across the biggest time frame imaginable."

*Vortex* asks what Jo Martin's incarnation of the Doctor means for these adventures? John explains: "I'd been allocated the Fugitive Doctor right from the get go. With this Doctor, it really gave me the opportunity to do something to make it feel a bit different from your standard Sontaran story. For **Rutans vs Sontarans** we wanted to heavily lean into the Rutans because the first series veered a shade more towards the Sontarans – they're

**DAVID SAID, 'WELL, WE APPEAR TO HAVE HAD A HIT,' WHICH WAS VERY EXCITING!**

JOHN DORNEY

more present in the first and third adventures than the Rutans are. But, ironically, *Betrayal at the House of Sontar* ended up without Rutans in it for plot reasons! I set it in the pre-history before the Sontaran-Rutan war, which fits really nicely with the Fugitive Doctor because it means that you're getting a story that has a slightly different feel to anything you're going to see

anywhere else in **Doctor Who**, which I think is the key to getting a Fugitive Doctor story right.

"I used a lot of the mythology from Andrew's brilliant adaptation of *The First Sontarans*, which has the Sontarans as the armed force developed by the original people of Sontar, the Kaveetch and leaning into that."

John adds: "Technically, they're not called Sontarans at this point, as they are actually Kaveetch, but I refer to them as the Sontarans because I decided that they're the Sontar Astro Navy which makes them the Sontar AN. That is not intended to be a suggestion where the name came from because obviously the name is because they originally came from the planet Sontar. It meant I could call them Sontarans without them actually technically being Sontarans in the story, if that makes sense! So, it's pre-cloning, pre-war."

John concludes: "The overall story will feel unlike any other **Doctor Who** story. I think you'll get to the end of it and realise why it could only be done with the Fugitive Doctor."

David adds: "We had a lovely group of people for this one. Jo is a really special human being, someone who emanates warmth and empathy, and everyone in the studio responds to that. I was keen that our Sontarans should be played by actors who knew the classic series well, and both Jonathon Carley and Nigel Fairs came in with their Linx voices perfectly tuned." **VORTEX**

**DOCTOR WHO: RUTANS vs SONTARANS**  
**BETRAYAL AT THE HOUSE OF SONTAR**



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**DARK GALLIFREY IS ABOUT TO ENTER SOME VERY DIFFERENT TERRITORY ...**

# GARRY ON, MONK

**DARK GALLIFREY** has spawned four releases to date with very different types of storytelling featuring the War Master, Morbius, Missy and the TV Movie Master. Now, another renegade Time Lord – or in this case, Time Lords – are taking centre stage with the Meddling Monk (Rufus Hound) and his female incarnation, dubbed the Nun (Gemma Whelan), as the pair find themselves stranded with a broken TARDIS in what sounds like a radio sitcom.

Over the six episodes, with two episodes released on one disc each month, they become involved in a series of odd escapades – buying a house, getting a job, having a dinner party – but the greatest challenge is still to come...

The adventures are *Monkey House*, *Monkey Business*, *Monkey Nuts*, *Monkey Magic*, *Monkey Puzzle* and *Monkey About*. Producer Robert Valentine says: "This instalment in the **Dark Gallifrey** saga certainly starts off

light and fun, but as you can probably guess, there are plenty of dark and terrible things lurking beneath the radio sitcom surface. The Monk and the Nun are both back for this one played by the incomparable Rufus and Gemma, and the situation in which they find themselves is a sort of comic purgatory. It was an absolute ball hearing them together. John Dorney has written them as a literal comedy double act in this story which is a stroke of genius."

**SCRIPT EDITOR** and writer John says: "I'd been thinking about something like this for ages because I started my career in radio comedy. The very first gigs I did as a writer were for a radio sketch show called *Recorded for Training Purposes*, which was made about 20 years ago and was really good fun.

"I also appeared in a radio sitcom and remember thinking how strange it was – there's no other performance quite like it. The one I was in had a live studio audience and it was

explain to other writers what **Dark Gallifrey** is, as it does go weird! We wanted this range to be pushing the boundaries – a concept album.

"I was really lucky, as I basically got the entire cast I'd written for. I've always been a massive fan of John Finnemore, the radio comedy writer. I really wanted the main guest character to be someone who's part of the radio scene and once I thought of John, there really was no one else. He's a massive name in comedy, and he doesn't really do masses for other media other than, say, co-writing

*Good Omens* and things like that.

"I'd met Carrie Quinlan before, who was in the cast of John Finnemore's *Souvenir Programme* on the radio and she is great. I thought she'd be good but I didn't want the entire thing becoming fan fiction for John Finnemore's *Souvenir Programme* so I slightly balked at suggesting Big Finish regular Simon Kane as well. But then, I bumped into Simon at the theatre. He is a delightful human being and I thought to myself, 'Why am I avoiding this? He's perfect for it!' Simon's got an amazing history with the programme on the basis that his dad is John Kane who was Tommy in *Planet of the Spiders* and then went on to write *Terry and June*."

John adds: "I adore Gemma and Rufus's performances. I created the Nun, which was an idea I had back in lockdown, and I've worked with Rufus a few times now. He's always very kind about my writing so when **Dark Gallifrey** came up I very much wanted to be writing for the Monk and the Nun.

"I thought it would be a fun idea to play with and it very much was. I was determined to keep these guys together as much as possible because that's where all the best jokes land – they are really funny people."

John concludes: "I think these work best if you listen to all three discs in near succession. Maybe an episode a day. The story was designed as a six-part sitcom so it is, in effect, a six by 30-minute storyline." **VORTEX**



Above (l-r): Carrie Quinlan, John Finnemore, Rufus Hound and Simon Kane

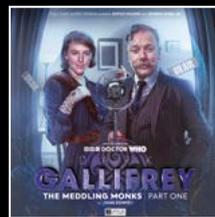
very weird that the people who were directly in front of me were the people we were performing to but that they're the tiniest fraction of the audience because ultimately this is going out on the radio to millions of people. It is a genuinely unique experience."

John continues: "The concept was there pretty much from the get-go of the inception of **Dark Gallifrey**. This adventure was initially going to be the third release, which in hindsight might have given people a better steer of the overall direction of the series earlier on. But as the script editor, it meant that I was able to use the idea and

**I DIDN'T WANT  
THE ENTIRE THING  
BECOMING FAN  
FICTION FOR JOHN  
FINNEMORE'S  
SOUVENIR  
PROGRAMME...**

JOHN DORNEY

**DARK GALLIFREY  
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# VORTEX MAIL



## EXCELIS REVIVED?

I was interested to see a **Companion Chronicles** to accompany *The Legacy of Time*. With this in mind, how long before the Eighth Doctor visits Excelsis? Or even a whole new Excelsis trilogy featuring the Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Doctors? Keep up the good work. I love stories.

**Calum Rigby**

*Nick: Interesting thought, Calum. We'll bear this in mind.*

## TORCHWOOD'S LEGACY

I am surely not alone to mourn the recent announcement that **Torchwood** will be coming to an end at Big Finish. I'm sure you've got something excellent planned for the send-off in *Legacy*. The **Torchwood** range has been a consistently impressive endeavour and it will be missed. Will the existing plays be available indefinitely? And would you even be able to tell us if they weren't? I know in the past licence

issues have caused ranges like **2000 AD** and **The Tomorrow People** to be pulled permanently. Is something like this on the cards for **Torchwood**?

**Mark Dolan**

*Nick: Good question, Mark. As far as I'm aware, these stories will remain available as long as we continue to have the Doctor Who licence.*

## STEPPING BACK IN TIME

I really enjoyed listening to the new behind-the-scenes material on **The Eighth Doctor and Charlotte Pollard Series One** compilation release, and the bonus making of *Sword of Orion* on the Big Finish podcast. Is there any chance we could hear more about how other older Big Finish stories were made?

**Stephen D**

*Nick: Definitely, Stephen. Courtesy of our wonderful Vortex editor, Kenny Smith, you'll be able to listen to more behind-the-scenes material about our older releases.*



## TIME WAR WARRIORS

I've been really enjoying the **Time War** ranges, but would you consider a range following soldiers fighting in the Time War, creating new characters, to show the horrors of the actual battles of the time war across various worlds from a common soldier's point of view? This would give a greater sense of the vastness of the Time War and how it impacts more than the main Time Lord characters we already know.

**Callum Mahon**

*Nick: This is a great idea, Callum, and one that I feel sure some of our writers are already working on.*

## DARK DAYS

I would like to express my enjoyment of **Dark Gallifrey** and can't wait to see (or rather hear) which other evil renegade Time Lords will show up. But it did get me thinking about a certain unproduced story with Dark in its title. Perhaps it's something for the **Lost Stories** range?

**Adam Waskiewicz**

*Nick: Great to hear you are enjoying Dark Gallifrey, Adam, but I can, very nearly categorically, say that this will never happen. VORTEX*



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THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

# VORTEX

ISSUE 205  
MARCH 2026  
**BIG** FOR THE LOVE  
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# EXPULSION

**THE DOCTOR AND PERI ARE REUNITED WITH AN OLD FRIEND - OR IS HE AN ENEMY?**

THE BAD BATCH...  
**RUTANS vs SONTARANS**  
A TALE TOLD ACROSS MILLENNIA..

