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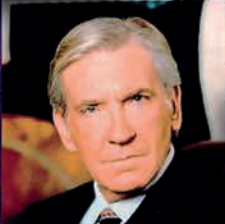
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Sneak Previews & Whispers

DARK SHADOWS BLOODLUST

Dark Shadows: Bloodlust

In January and February 2015, Big Finish will be releasing something that could be described as just a little bit different. **Dark Shadows: Bloodlust** is a 13-part supernatural murder mystery set in the small American town of Collinsport.

"The series will be released as twice-weekly downloads," says co-producer and writer Joseph Lidster. By the end of each episode you'll have more clues as to who the killer or killers are. It's very much in the vein of **Twin Peaks**, **The Killing** and **Broadchurch**."

The series will also be available in two CD boxsets. "Those who haven't tried **Dark Shadows** before needn't worry," continues Joe. "This is a brand new story that's completely accessible to new listeners." As a teaser into the series, the residents of Collinsport can be heard introducing themselves here: <https://soundcloud.com/darkshadowsbfp/sets/dark-shadows-bloodlust>. Although we can't promise that every character is being completely honest...

"This has been a real labour of love for everyone involved," says Joe. "We've been working on the scripts for over a year and actors have been coming into the studio, having not read the last episode, with their own theories as to who the killer is and what the story is actually about. Although, obviously, at least one of them knew the truth..."

VORTEX

Editorial

Iwonder how many of us can actually identify the moment when we stopped being just a Big Finish listener, to becoming a Big Finish fan? I've been buying Big Finish releases since the original run of **Bernice Summerfield** plays, and was of course excited when it was announced that the **Doctor Who** licence had been secured. I faithfully bought the plays, as a **Doctor Who** fan, but it was in January 2001 that I was totally blown away. Alan Barnes wrote the Eighth Doctor's triumphant return in *Storm Warning* – and to this day, it's still one of my favourite ever Big Finish plays.

As much as I love the other Doctors, there's something about Paul McGann's incarnation that still feels new and fresh to me. He's dynamic, hands-on, and having fun. Even though we finally know how he meets his end, courtesy of *The Night of the Doctor*, there's still so many stories to tell for the Eighth Doctor, and this month we get more of them in *Dark Eyes 3*. Like you, I can't wait to find out what happened to Molly and why the Master kidnapped her.

This month also marks the return of another hero of mine – Steven Pacey. The first series of **Blake's 7** that I remember watching as a child is series C, and I loved Del Tarrant. He was straight up, honest and forthright – and I can't wait to hear him make his return in *Scimitar*, and find out what's happened to Dayna.

There's so much to look forward to this month – and that's without mentioning **Dorian Gray**, the latest **Liberator Chronicles**, the Dalek Invasion of Scotland in **Doctor Who** monthly range release *Masters of Earth*, the latest **Pathfinder Legends**, and the **Early Adventures...**

Exciting times and places...

KENNY

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Molly O'Sullivan was kidnapped by the Master at the end of *Dark Eyes 2*, and writer Matt Fitton tells Kenny Smith how he's gone about resolving the situation

THE MASTER'S MASTERPLAN

THE THIRD instalment of Big Finish's award-winning *Dark Eyes* arrives this month, and it's all change.

Nicholas Briggs has stepped down as the series' writer and director, handing over the writing reins to Matt Fitton, with Ken Bentley charged with bringing the latest four adventures to life in the studio. Series two was written by Nick, Matt and script editor Alan Barnes, with Matt flying solo this time.

Paul McGann is back as the Doctor, with Nicola Walker at his side as Liv Chenka, while Ruth Bradley returns as Molly O'Sullivan. Listeners know that at the end of the last series Molly was captured by the Master, played once again by Alex Macqueen, who is accompanied by Dr Sally Armstrong, played by Natalie Burt. "After the release of *Dark Eyes*," says Matt, "I had a meeting with Nick and Alan Barnes, ahead of *Dark Eyes 2*, and had some ideas about where we would end up in *Dark Eyes 4*, so there was a plan to work towards with regards to the Doctor and the Dalek Time Controller – and the Master and the Eminence.

"When Nick passed *Dark Eyes 3* on to Ken Bentley to direct, and to David on the production side, I'd already decided to do a series that was Dalek-free for a change, and David came with a brief saying, 'Let's make it the Doctor versus the Master,' and I loved that, so ran with it.

"To write *Eyes of the Master*, I listened to *UNIT: Dominion* again, and it's pretty much all come from there. There are elements with Alex's Master which are great to work with – he can be all personable and full of charm one minute, and the next, he's completely psychotic. What Alex does really well is in the middle of a scene, he can do that almost self-effacing charm and then turn on a sixpence and turn to complete insanity.

"There's also the fact he's having fun – he's really enjoying what he's doing – the Master has lost that desperate need for survival that he had throughout the time when Geoffrey Beevers and Anthony Ainley were playing him. He's got a new lease of life, and he's enjoying it. Having seen Alex in action in the studio, I knew I could give him anything to do."



‘The Death of Hope is, essentially, the Master does *Pale Rider!*’

Knowing and trusting in the abilities of the actors gave Matt peace of mind when it came to pushing just what they could be given, especially the two companions. He explains: “Liv Chenka is now an official companion. With Nicola Walker, you can give her anything, dramatically, and she will just do it.

“What came out in *Eyes of the Master* and *Time’s Horizon* was how well Liv and Molly worked together as a friendship. Because of Molly’s circumstances, she and Liv are on a rescue mission. Liv is very strong and capable of a sarcastic line or two. She’s not afraid to cut the Doctor down to size.

“With Ruth Bradley and Molly, that voice is just so distinctive. She’s got this cutting relationship with the Doctor, and won’t take any nonsense. As she becomes aware of her circumstances, she goes back to her old self.”

There’s also more from the Master’s own companion, Sally Armstrong, who takes on the job of trying to wipe out a threat to the Time Lords.

“Natalie Burt is just brilliant as Sally Armstrong,” says Matt. “She makes a really great double act with the Master, and it’s such fun to write. She’s a really good companion to him, and the Doctor and Liv get the chance to call her out on it.

“It’s an extrapolation from that first series of *Dark Eyes*, as we now have an alternative version corrupted slightly by the

Master, into a ruthless and ambitious woman, who’s enjoying what she does.”

Dark Eyes 3 opens with *The Death of Hope*, picking up from the cliffhanger of the previous story. Matt admits: “For the very first story, I wanted to give the Master an adventure of his own – he’s kind of the hero, even though he doesn’t realise it or want to be seen that way.

“*The Death of Hope* is, essentially, the Master does *Pale Rider* – he’s going into a colony frontier town which has been devastated as part of the war with the Eminence and the Infinite Armies. He wants to use these people, with Sally Armstrong and Molly O’Sullivan at his side.

“I knew that Molly was going to be with the Master in these stories to begin with, so I knew where I was going to go next. Once we decided there were going to be no Daleks, I wanted

to delve into this war with the Eminence, which we know lasts for 50 years. By having stories set in this period, I can explore issues like morality during wartime.

“Each story looks at it from a different angle, and how far we can push the Doctor as well. I’d picked up from interviews with Paul McGann that he felt the Doctor was a reluctant warrior and I

wanted to explore that. Then, along came *Night of the Doctor*, which I knew nothing about when I was writing for *Dark Eyes 2*, and it all fitted in, perfectly.”

The second story, *The Reviled*, gives the writer the chance to feature more of the war, and look at the issues it raises. Matt says: “This is more morality under wartime with a human colony world, after the war has broken out, and the Eminence is creating Infinite Warriors from the humans. The natives realise that having humans on their land isn’t conducive for everyone.

“When we meet the people, there has been a revolt from the native inhabitants against the humans, and decided they want them out. They just want rid of these human colonists, and are working on the best way to go about it.”

The story that everyone’s been waiting for, *Masterplan*, is the third part of the boxset. “With *Dark Eyes 3*,” Matt smiles, “I wanted to do a story where there was a lot of Doctor and Master dialogue, where they were stuck in the one place together and they can’t get out – and delve into their relationship. I knew giving him that kind of thing to play with would work well with Paul’s Doctor.

“*Masterplan* draws out the differences – and similarities – with each of them. I was aware with *Eyes of the Master* we were building up to the confrontation between them, and



Doctor Who: Dark Eyes 3

it was all about that scene. That was the scene I wrote first, and people have said they wished there were more like it.

"At the same time, Liv and Sally get their moment in the spotlight, in quite a claustrophobic setting, with a classic **Doctor Who** mad scientist. We get these two stories playing out at the same time, and the events in one influence the others."

Dark Eyes 3 concludes with *Rule of the Eminence*. Matt concedes: "It's very difficult to talk about this one without giving spoilers away. We

'The Doctor acting in a prejudicial way is always interesting'



know from *The Seeds of War* and *Destroy the Infinite* that eventually, humanity beats the Eminence, but it vanishes off somewhere.

"It's taking elements of that: world-building with Earth being a home for just a few politicians and grand administrators, and they want to welcome everyone home again. Against that backdrop, another of the Master's plans will play out, and the Doctor comes to stop him, aided by Narvin.

"Because we weren't having the Daleks, I wanted a CIA agent in there, so the Doctor would meet another Time Lord, but one he would be predisposed not to trust because he's with the CIA. The Doctor acting in a prejudicial way is always interesting.

"I did wonder, would Narvin fit into the *Dark Eyes* story after the events of the last few **Gallifrey** series. I was very pleased when David Richardson said run with it."

Matt, who has become one of the most prolific writers at Big Finish in the last few years, still has to pinch himself every now and again, given that he has gone from being a listening fan, to a writing fan. He admits: "Every time I get an email from David Richardson or Alan Barnes, I think, 'Is this real?' It's just kept going, and I'm getting a chance to do lots of different things – **Counter-Measures**, **The Omega Factor** and **Survivors**.

"But I always love coming back to **Doctor Who** – that's my first love and in particular, I love the Eighth Doctor. When those first Charley Pollard stories came out, they were the only new ongoing **Doctor Who** stories we had, and I loved them." **VORTEX**



YOU CAN always tell when a villain is played well – you love to hate them, and want to hear more of them. That's most definitely the case with Alex Macqueen's incarnation of the Master, who appears in all four stories in *Dark Eyes 3*.

Since making his debut in the **UNIT: Dominion** box set – playing the mysterious 'other Doctor' who turned out to be the Master – Alex returned in *The Eyes of the Master* for the final story in *Dark Eyes 2*. Alex tells *Vortex*: "It's a total gift of a part to play, and it's great fun as well.

"I think the writers are getting more of an insight into the character, as they can see what you are doing in the studio, working along with the other members of the cast, and see what your range is. It's great that the writers can feed that back into the scripts. Big Finish are such a nice company to work for.

"It's fair to say the writing is very strong in the first place, so a huge amount of your work is done for you. But the direction is so good that you are allowed to experiment with your delivery, while other directors might not be comfortable with that. That makes it even more of a joy."

Alex first appeared in a Big Finish play in *Paradise 5*. He recalls: "I first went into Big Finish to do a **Lost Story** with Colin Baker, and I remember saying to Nicholas Briggs at the time that I'd love to come back and do more, and I was really keen to play a villain. Then, a couple of years later, my agent got the call asking me to play 'the other Doctor' – who turned out to be the Master. It's a real privilege."

Alex admits that working alongside the Eighth Doctor is a dream come true. He smiles: "I've been a huge fan of Paul McGann for years, since he played 'I' in *Withnail and I*. It's a real honour to be working alongside him." **VORTEX**

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You might have thought that Big Finish's **Confessions of Dorian Gray** series was over after season two, but Kenny Smith discovers there's more to test the...

GRAY MATTER

LET'S BE honest – we shouldn't like Dorian Gray. He's only out for himself, and is living life after life of decadence... yet still, we have taken to him.

Alex Vlahos returns in **The Confessions of Dorian Gray** this month, for a new series of eight stories, featuring *Blank Canvas* by James Goss, *The Needle* by David Llewellyn, *We Are Everywhere* by Roy Gill, *Echoes* by Gary Russell, *Pandora* by Xanna Eve Chown, *Heart and Soul* by Cavan Scott,

Displacement Activity by producer Scott Handcock, and *The Darkest Hour*, also by Scott. Although it's the third series, Scott says there's nothing for listeners to be afraid of, if they've not tried **Dorian** before: "Every **Dorian** story is designed to be standalone – a half-hour horror story that's accessible to people whether they've heard the series previously or not.

"We ended series two in such a way that we drew a line under the series, partly because we had a story to tell, but



Alexander Vlahos

composer and script editor were otherwise busy, so we now have loan Morris and Rhys Downing on music duties (completely changing the sound of *Dorian*, alongside sound maestro Neil Gardner) and David Llewellyn keeping a close eye on all the scripts!”

David was delighted to join Scott on the production side, having written the very first **Confession** for Big Finish, *This World Our Hell*. “I think series three Dorian is a little hardened by everything he’s been through,” says David, “so it was quite a lot of fun writing for a more sardonic version of the character than the one who appears in, say, *Murder on 81st Street*. A challenge, too. He had to be charming, and sympathetic, but not too nice. This is a Dorian who

‘You won’t find Dorian battling robots in the year 2130AD or anything like that.’

also we weren’t sure if we would be coming back. But I always knew how we would if we got a third.

“So this time, James Goss opens the series with a story that resets the format and re-establishes the character of Dorian, so it’s a perfect jumping-on point for new listeners. We’ve a few recurring characters from previous releases – so it’s always worth investigating what came before – but all’s explained as we go. You won’t be kept in the dark! But you’ll certainly get more if you’ve followed him from the beginning...”

Scott reveals that although the stories are still recognisably **The Confessions of Dorian Gray**, there’s changes in store, saying: “He’s always going to be out for number one. He’s not necessarily nice to people, unless he has a reason to be – and his response to the new characters in this series (as well as the old) is coloured by that. It also keeps things fresh – for the audience, for me, for Alex – by not quite knowing who this man is any more.

“We’re in series three now – we want to keep our listeners engaged – so shaking up the format’s never a bad thing! And there were other changes too, behind-the-scenes: our



has been through some terrible and life-changing experiences.

“When you’ve got a central character like that, someone who is more or less immortal, likes to travel, hobnobs with the rich and famous and has a wayward moral compass, it allows you to tell a very diverse range of stories. You can be as funny or as scary or as sexy as you like; there are very few limitations, so I think that’s quite appealing. But mainly, I

think we’ve been really lucky

to work with some amazing actors throughout all three series, and however good the scripts are, it’s Alex and co, who really bring it to life.

“Series three is a definite change from what we’ve done before. We’ve played around with the format a little, but not too much. You won’t find Dorian battling robots in the year 2130AD or anything like that. But we did want it to feel very taught, very contemporary and very scary, while maintaining the gothic undercurrent you get in series one and two. I had a blast working on it. I was script editor this time around, and was in the studio throughout, and it was a joy meeting and working with everyone.”

Although some things have changed, Scott says others remain the same. He explains: “In some ways, we follow

The Confessions of Dorian Gray

the structure we've set up in the past – half-hour episodes, individual tales – ranging from haunted office blocks to serial killing stalkers, tarot cards, circuses... but they're all set in the same period, following on from James's opener. Dorian's been affected by events – there's a mystery about his reappearance – and elements build throughout the series to a dangerous finale.

"We've dropped the narration this time too – if we do more, in the past, it will be restored – but losing it meant we kept the series kinetic, and there's a genuine element of uncertainty as we enter each story. We no longer have the benefit of Dorian's hindsight, so they're fresh, with none of the characters knowing the ultimate outcome. I was also keen to distance Dorian a little bit too. We've grown to love him a bit too much

'One of the lovely things about the Dorian range are the great actors who ask to come in and join us.'

in recent stories – he's been quite nice – and I wanted to reintroduce the edge he had in the novel. Not getting inside his head keeps the audience at arm's length, so we won't always necessarily be on his side."

Previous series of **The Confessions of Dorian Gray** have been download only, with the box set of series one and two following much later. With series three, there's a simultaneous release on download and CD. "We're now on CD," says Scott, "which is nice! The box set format means we can experiment with the shape of the series. The download-only releases had been an interesting test for Big Finish – for which there was a very healthy uptake, hence series two – but what was surprising was the number of people interested in the series but who wanted a physical copy, so it's a CD and download combo this time round. And it means everyone will have all eight episodes, so we've been able to undertake a proper story arc this time."

One element that has particularly delighted Scott with season three has been the quality of cast he's been able to assemble. "One of the lovely things about the **Dorian** range are the great actors who ask to come in and join us," he reveals.

"So this year we've had the likes of Terry Molloy and Nicola Bryant from **Doctor Who**, Annette Badland as a misguided tarot reader, and some newcomers to Big Finish in the form of Edward Harrison and Sophie Wu. Then, of course, we have the likes of Bernard Holley, David Blackwell, Miles Richardson and Hugh Skinner – who all reprise previous roles to a greater or lesser extent as we build upon Dorian's world.

"And I can't forget the lovely Tracey Childs who plays a sinister and sexy recurring character in the form of Victoria Lowell: a character genuinely trying to make the world a better place, and who needs Dorian, but whose methods are sometimes questionable. She's a woman of secrets – and Dorian can't help but get sucked in!" **VORTEX**



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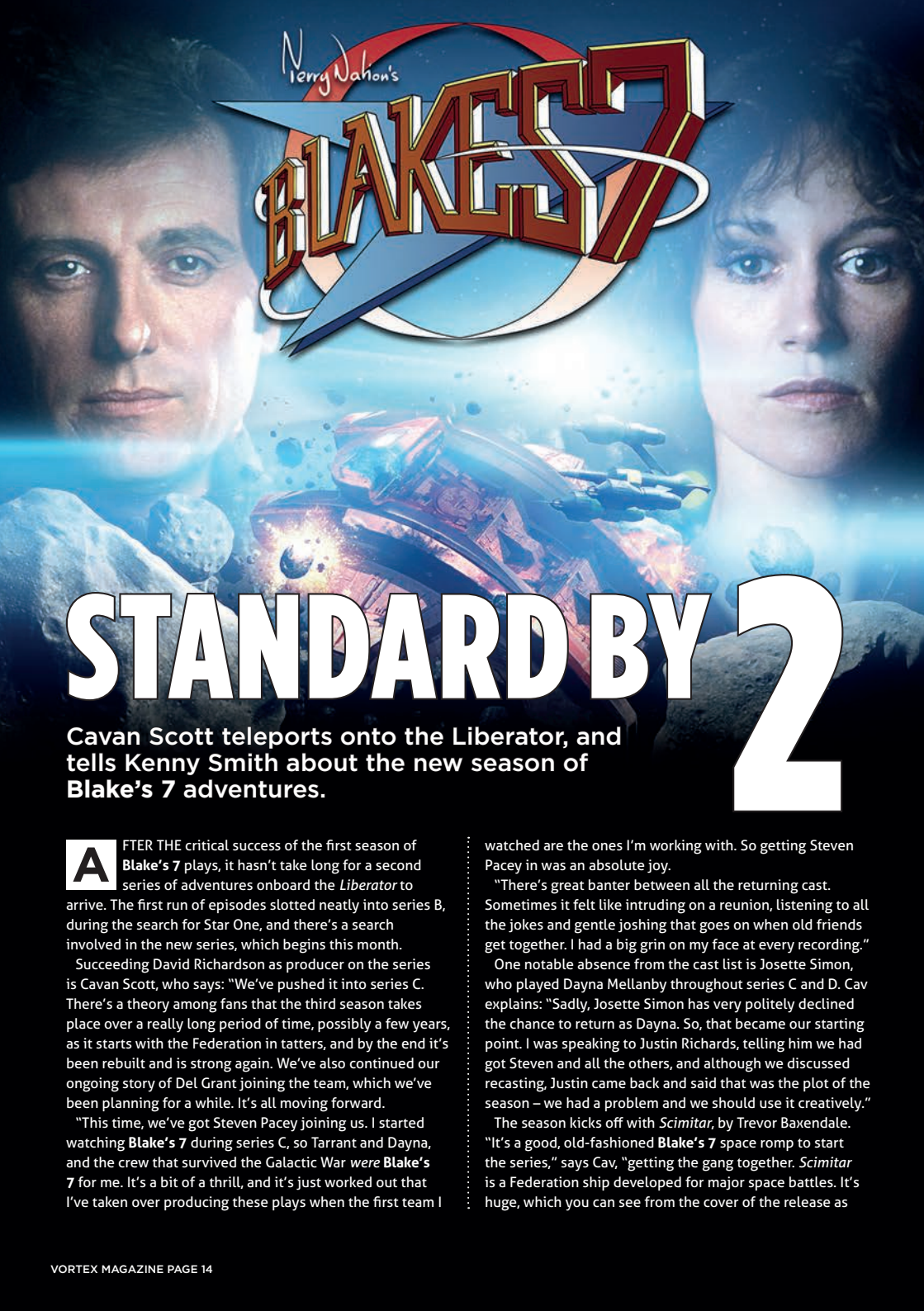
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Nerys Nahon's

BLAKE'S 7

STANDARD BY 2

Cavan Scott teleports onto the *Liberator*, and tells Kenny Smith about the new season of *Blake's 7* adventures.

AFTER THE critical success of the first season of *Blake's 7* plays, it hasn't take long for a second series of adventures onboard the *Liberator* to arrive. The first run of episodes slotted neatly into series B, during the search for Star One, and there's a search involved in the new series, which begins this month.

Succeeding David Richardson as producer on the series is Cavan Scott, who says: "We've pushed it into series C. There's a theory among fans that the third season takes place over a really long period of time, possibly a few years, as it starts with the Federation in tatters, and by the end it's been rebuilt and is strong again. We've also continued our ongoing story of Del Grant joining the team, which we've been planning for a while. It's all moving forward.

"This time, we've got Steven Pacey joining us. I started watching *Blake's 7* during series C, so Tarrant and Dayna, and the crew that survived the Galactic War were *Blake's 7* for me. It's a bit of a thrill, and it's just worked out that I've taken over producing these plays when the first team I

watched are the ones I'm working with. So getting Steven Pacey in was an absolute joy.

"There's great banter between all the returning cast. Sometimes it felt like intruding on a reunion, listening to all the jokes and gentle joshing that goes on when old friends get together. I had a big grin on my face at every recording."

One notable absence from the cast list is Josette Simon, who played Dayna Mellanby throughout series C and D. Cav explains: "Sadly, Josette Simon has very politely declined the chance to return as Dayna. So, that became our starting point. I was speaking to Justin Richards, telling him we had got Steven and all the others, and although we discussed recasting, Justin came back and said that was the plot of the season – we had a problem and we should use it creatively."

The season kicks off with *Scimitar*, by Trevor Baxendale. "It's a good, old-fashioned *Blake's 7* space romp to start the series," says Cav, "getting the gang together. *Scimitar* is a Federation ship developed for major space battles. It's huge, which you can see from the cover of the release as



From left: Alistair Lock, Michael Keating, Jan Chappell, Daniel Brennan, Buffy Davis, Stephen Pacey, Tom Chadbon and Paul Darrow

'We had a problem and we should use it creatively'

it dwarfs the *Liberator* and it's a kilometre long. It was lost in its first battle and was left drifting, but now it's been located in an asteroid field, and there's a secret onboard. *Scimitar* was never meant to be lost and abandoned, so there's people wanting to get their hands on it because of that. Also, we reintroduce Del Grant for those who don't know much about him, and he's effectively taking Dana's place as a weapons expert."

The second part of the season is *Fortuitas*, by George Mann. Cav says: "Among other things, George writes amazing *Sherlock Holmes* novels, so my brief to him was to do Avon as Holmes, as he's so logical, and thought it would be fun to have Orac as another Holmes, so they are both trying to out-Sherlock each other. Orac goes off-ship and investigates why people are disappearing on a distant colony."

There's a welcome return for Big Finish veteran Jacqueline Rayner, who has written the third story *Mindset*. Cav explains: "Not all of the stories in the original series were the same – some were hard science fiction, others were space opera and then there's others by the likes of Tanith Lee which were more space fantasy, with almost dreamlike atmospheres at times. Getting Jac to write one was something I really wanted to do, because she always writes good, human stories, and we didn't want to go down the route of having the Federation in every story."

"We've got more variety in the writing and it's quite a loosely-linked series anyway. This story is a very Cally-

centric episode, and dealing with her reaction to what's happened to her home planet and her people, after *Children of Auran*, and looks at her relationship with the crew, and one member in particular..."

Another writer with long-standing Big Finish credits returns, with Iain McLaughlin, who created the Fifth Doctor's companion Erimem in *Eye of the Scorpion*. Cav continues: "I wanted to bring Iain back into the Big Finish fold and my brief came in the form of a question: What happens to the person left on teleport duty when the others are off having adventures?"

"We had a chat about this and had the idea of the *Liberator* being haunted. We knew who we had to leave on duty – Vila. It also ties into an ongoing theme which myself and Mark Wright had written about – that Vila's not so much the coward that he makes himself out to be, but this really tests his mettle. Iain turns the *Liberator* into an unforgiving, scary place, somewhere you don't want to be when the lights go out."

Steven Pacey takes centre stage in *Devil's Advocate*, by Steve Lyons. "This is very much a Tarrant-based story," says Cav, "dealing with what he was doing before *Blake's 7*, when he just pops up after the war. He's never really been given a backstory – the majority of the other characters are, but not him. We know he's been a good Federation officer, which I think is fun to play with. He's not always trustworthy, but seems to be quite a good man, with principles."

"It's the usual thing, to think of every Federation officer as a scheming villain, but Tarrant is the opposite of that. We start to develop his backstory, and will return to it at some point. We learn of his links to the Federation hierarchy, with a returning voice that the Big Finish *Blake's 7* fans may very well recognise..."

Concluding the season is *Truth and Lies* by Justin Richards. Cav concludes: "Justin gave me this with the mystery of what had happened to Dayna, and how to finish it. We bring it all together, as the trail for Dayna comes back into it as the *Liberator* finally tracks her down."

"It was a nice way to bookend the series, and everyone gets lots of things to do. I'm very pleased with it all, as we've got an ensemble story where the regular cast all get something meaty to do." **VORTEX**

The latest Big Finish original **Blake's 7** novel is released this month, as Trevor Baxendale tells Xanna Eve Chown it's a dream come true

CRIMINAL DAMAGE

C **RIMINAL INTENT** is the sixth book in the exciting **Blake's 7** Big Finish range. Written by Trevor Baxendale, who has written scripts for Big Finish's

Doctor Who, **Robin Hood** and **Highlander** audio plays, as well as this month's full cast **Blake's 7** audio *Scimitar*.

"I loved **Blake's 7** from the moment it started," admits Trevor. "I was 11 and already obsessed with **Doctor Who** and **Star Wars**. A brand new science fiction series was coming to BBC 1 – I can remember the **Radio Times** article trailing it just before the new year. I could hardly wait. And boy was it good. It was different, for one thing. It felt like it had an edge. The characters were unlike anything else I'd seen. And remarkably it still holds up to today.

"The production values and techniques are immaterial. It's the concept, the dialogue and the characters that make **Blake's 7**. And, of course, the *Liberator* – undeniably one of the truly great spaceship designs, inside and out. I remember people comparing **Blake's 7** to **Star Trek** – but I knew it was more than a British **Trek**. It was the Anti-**Trek**. It was brutal, mean, sarcastic and violent. It had characters that people could genuinely relate to. And – unusually in those days – it had an ongoing, developing narrative. We take that for granted now in TV series, but **Blake** did it first. No wonder we loved it."

Criminal Intent started out as a proposal for a novella. Trevor says: "I was asked to work it up into a full novel, much to my surprise and delight. I didn't need asking twice. I introduced a couple of secondary plots and themes and then got down to it. I felt like I had been waiting all my life to write a **Blake's 7** novel. It's different to writing **Doctor Who** – for one thing, it has a large regular cast who all need good stories and development. Plus, **Blake's 7** characters all feel like real people and they exist in a much harsher reality. It's fun getting to grips with that. I do like a bit of grit. But anyone who enjoyed my **Doctor Who** novels *Fear of the Dark* and *Prisoner of the Daleks*, will definitely enjoy *Criminal Intent*.

"*Criminal Intent* takes the crew of **Blake's 7** from the first TV series back to their roots – a spaceship full of criminals bound for a penal colony. Blake sees the chance to strike at

the Federation's routine justice system – a daring raid on a prison ship en route to the penal planet that might also result in some new followers. We know why **Blake's 7** is '7' but why didn't they ever try to bolster their ranks at all? This is the story of one such attempt – but as always with **Blake's 7**, there's more to this particular prison ship than Blake thinks. In fact there's more to it than the prisoners think – or even the crew... Very soon things are going badly wrong for just about everyone, with the *Liberator* crew fighting for survival."

Trevor particularly enjoys writing novels, as it allows him to fully flesh out the established characters. "Writing a novel really allows you to explore the individual

characters" concedes Trevor, "to get inside their thinking, their motivations, their real fears and weaknesses. And the beauty of **Blake's 7** is that it has many characters so rich in all those things. Blake himself is quite a tormented character, in many ways: he's a freedom fighter, and nominally our hero figure, but he's terribly flawed. He's fighting against a powerful enemy while not really being a natural fighter. He's a leader but he's driven by an obsession that blinds him to risk. He's an idealist but he uses questionable methods to achieve his aims. But perhaps most interestingly, he has been subjected to appalling betrayal, violence, torture and brainwashing at least twice. "What must be going on in his mind?"

Trevor also found the Federation itself fascinating, not just its leaders and its soldiers, but also the people living under it. He concludes: "*Criminal Intent* looks at all of these characters and types and pushes them to expose their real motivations and feelings. Each party views the others as the criminals – what are their intentions, and who will be successful? But this is a Trevor Baxendale book, so you can be sure that our heroes – and our villains – are in for a hard time: there will, as they say, be blood." **VORTEX**



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2014 has been a busy year for Scotland, with the Commonwealth Games, the independence referendum and the Ryder Cup - and now Kenny Smith discovers there's also a Dalek invasion...

MCSTERMINATE

IF YOU think about the Daleks coming to Earth, you tend to think of them being in London. After all, they've done it on TV in *The Dalek Invasion of Earth*, *Resurrection of the Daleks*, *Remembrance of the Daleks*, *Doomsday*, *The Stolen Earth*, and *Victory of the Daleks*.

So, a change of scenery is always welcome, even for the most evil race in the universe - after all, it's nice to go somewhere cold and wet, every now and again. Welcome to Scotland. For co-writers Mark Wright and Cavan Scott, they were delighted with the challenge of an out-of-the-ordinary Dalek setting for *Masters of Earth*. "It was interesting to be writing for characters with a different vernacular than we were used to," says Mark. "Having to think about slang words and constantly checking on that made the writing of dialogue a bit more challenging. I hope we successfully achieved that."

Moving the play north of the border meant that director Nicholas Briggs had to find some Scots actors to bring the play to life, bringing in Big Finish regulars Hugh Ross and Sean Biggerstaff, as well as Tracy Wiles and Brian McCardie.

"I looked for Scottish people!," laughs Nick. "Scottish people who were good and who, preferably didn't want us to pay for

them to travel all the way down from Scotland! But it's a fact that our studios are in and around London and our budgets don't stretch to travel for artistes. But seriously, I wanted someone really strong as Moira. She had to be believable as a genuine heroine of the rebellion against the Daleks, and yet she needed to be just an ordinary person too. The ultimate reveal about her character had to be plausible too, so Tracy had quite a job on her hands to get this right. Fortunately, she's an extremely experienced radio actress and pitched it just right."

As well as directing and providing the Dalek voices, Nick also undertook the musical duties on *Masters of Earth*. He explains: "Right from the word go, David Richardson suggested that I do the music for this one. I leapt at the chance. I love doing the music. It's quite time consuming and working at the very edge of my abilities, but as I get older, the music is starting to be my favourite thing to do. And this was quite a challenge. I worked out a few key sounds and gave a nod to the original Hartnell story [*Masters of Earth* being set during *The Dalek Invasion of Earth*] by using a lot of percussion. But I used the full 'orchestra' of brass and wind instruments, plus a load of great synthetic sounds."

Working with Nick on sound design was Martin Montague (who's half-Scottish, on his father's side). "I loved working with Nick on this one!" he says. "It's a full-on action romp from Mark and Cavan, providing me with plenty to get my teeth into as a sound designer. And with the story being set in Scotland, I thought it could have been called *The Dalek Invasion of Perth*, but I was over-ruled. Some people, eh?"

When tackling a story set in Scotland, how does a sound designer go about creating an audio backdrop that effectively conveys the country? Martin points out: "Well, it's not like having a story set in London, where the chimes of Big Ben



Colin Baker and Nicola Bryant

and the throaty rattle of a black cab instantly tell you where you are: it's a bit of a cliché, but it does the trick. A blare of bagpipes would be a similar aural shorthand to say 'this is Scotland' but that's always struck me as a little bit patronising, so I avoided it.

"Instead the accents of the supporting cast did most of the groundwork for me; I think it would have been harder to convey if it were a story concerning a group of non-Scots making the same journey across Scotland. When I record wildtracks I try to be as authentic as I can, but given that I live in County Fermanagh in Northern Ireland, I couldn't just pop out and record North East Scotland, so it's been a bit of a fudge so a lot of the external atmos was recorded near me. To the west of where I live is the Atlantic Ocean and that brings with it weather systems that are not too dissimilar to those coming in from the North Sea where our story is set – so it's a similar

sort of sound. And if it was done for TV, it would be shot in Wales, so geographically I'm closer to the real location!

"The rest was stock FX of birds and the like which I hope are accurate for the location. There is one scene though, set in a deserted village which I mixed with lots of bird effects because in reality if a place is deserted birds will take over. But Nick quite rightly pointed out that it made the village sound 'nice' whereas the plot needed an air of doom. And that's a problem you have with (audio) drama sometimes: you have to be flexible with reality and a place that is visually nice needs to 'sound' deserted. So the birds were largely removed from

'THE DALEK GUN SFX WAS DEBATED AT LENGTH: THE ONE USED IN '65 SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE HAVING A WEE IN A BOILING KETTLE!'

the mix and replaced with a low wind."

Martin found there was a curious fusion in his sound design, having to make it sound like three eras – the sixties, the eighties, and contemporary too. He explains: "In terms of overall sound design it's a curious beast because it's an audio drama made in 2014 that's 'honouring' the style of the Sixth Doctor series from circa 1986, set around the time of a TV story made in 1965.

"I discussed with Nick how to approach the Daleks in this and we decided to stick as close to the SFX of *The Dalek Invasion of Earth* as we could, but to bear in mind that this is audio not TV so certain alterations would need to be made. For instance, Daleks in 1965 didn't whirr as they moved, but they do here to give the audio impression of movement (if we'd stayed true to the '65 TV serial they may have sounded like a rusty shopping trolley). And the Dalek gun SFX was debated at length: the one used in '65 sounds rather like someone having a wee in a boiling kettle, and without the TV pictures you've no idea what the sound actually is.

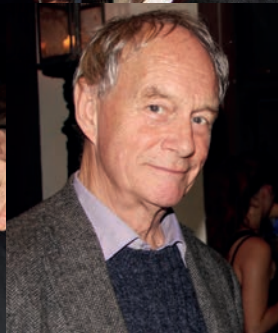
"The Dalek gun needs to sound powerful; it needs to sound like an energy weapon that can fry you. My preferred SFX is the one that first appeared in *Destiny of the Daleks* and has been used with modifications ever since: the harsh bzzzzzzt! noise. But that's not the SFX that Nick likes, so in the end we went with one that he preferred; the one he made for *Curse of the Daleks*.

Nick adds: "The 'period' voices for *Dalek Invasion of Earth* would be rather painful for us to listen to now, so I prefer to think of the lack of ring modulation in that story as a production mistake. I did make the delivery a bit more staccato, though. We also gave them a very old fashioned gun noise." He concludes: "It was great fun to work on. The bleakness of the original *Dalek Invasion of Earth* is in this. But the landscape is different. Not so much urban decay, but the desolation of the countryside. Martin Montague has done a fantastic job in making all that come to life." **VORTEX**

THE BIG FINISH ANNIVERSARY PARTY

On Sunday 19th October, Big Finish held a party in Covent Garden to celebrate 15 years of **Doctor Who** audio dramas. Much fun was had!





Listen again...

BLAKE'S 7: WARSHIP

We turn the clock back to an epic adventure, as the crew of the *Liberator* encounter the alien invasion fleet, at the end of their hunt for *Star One*.



IT'S A busy month for the *Liberator*, with the release of volume nine of **The Liberator Chronicles**, and the start of the second series of full-cast audios. And it's hard to believe that **Blake's 7** has only been a part of the Big Finish stable since February 2012, but those **Chronicles** dramas were so well received, that they led to the start of the full-cast adventures, with the release of *Warship*.

"*Warship* was originally planned to be the opening episode in volume six of **The Liberator Chronicles**," recalls producer David Richardson. "However Andrew Mark Sewell of B7 Media liked the storyline so much he encouraged us to do it as a full-cast production. That made it really special – the first time in many years the whole cast had acted together, and the first opportunity to tell a 'missing' segment in the TV series, to fill that gap between series B and C.

"It felt very special to produce, and there was a real buzz about the recording. And it was so lovely that Jacqueline Pearce dropped in to record her cameo appearance, despite the fact that she was ill at the time – but now, I'm so relieved to say, back on great form."

Handed the task of developing his **Chronicle** into a full play was Peter Anghelides. "The original outline was a bit unusual for a **Liberator Chronicle**," he says. "It used

'It was the first time the actors had come together in studio to record a new Blake's 7 tale in over three decades...'

the enhanced audiobook format, but with a larger cast. It already had scenes that would be narrated by Blake, Jenna, Avon, Vila and Cally. When Andrew Mark Sewell and David Richardson suggested it could be a full-cast play, I already had a structure that placed each character at the heart of key scenes of their own.

"It was good to know I could also feature Zen and Orac, and even better when my begging email about including Servalan met with approval. The suggestion, I mean – not the begging."

Was there any added pressure, knowing it was the first time the actors had come together in studio to record a new **Blake's 7** tale in over three decades? Peter says, "Whatever you write, you always want to create something that readers or listeners or viewers will enjoy. And of course you need the editor or producer to like it enough to commission it. But unlike novels, audios have another audience – you want the cast to enjoy performing it.

"Actors love working for Big Finish, but if they don't have a good script then they won't have fun in the studio. And if they didn't have fun, they wouldn't do more episodes. So I was very conscious that Gareth, Sally, Paul, Michael, Jan and Jacqueline had to have something exciting and motivating. I think that was the principal pressure – not disappointing my heroes from a show I'd always loved."

David adds: "When I heard Alistair Lock's final edit, I was blown away. *Warship* really is the soundtrack to a TV episode that sadly never existed." **VORTEX**

Blake's 7: Warship is available now on CD and download from www.bigfinish.com

VORTEX MAIL

We love to hear from you, so if you have something to say, write to us at enquiries@bigfinish.com. Remember to put 'Vortex Mail' as the subject.

MAGGIE STABLES

I was so sorry to hear of the loss of Maggie Stables. She was so perfect for the role of Evelyn and the character was such an important foil for the Sixth Doctor and such a big part of how you guys did Colin more justice than the BBC ever did. Though Maggie has gone, *Spectre*, *Projects Twilight* and *Lazarus, Jubilee, Doctor Who and the Pirates and Medicinal Purposes* will forever be a treat to listen to, as they were in the latter days of the TV famine.

Chris Stobart

Nick: Thanks, Chris. It's a very sad loss indeed. She did some great work for us.

On hearing the terrible news that Maggie Stables has passed away I just had to email you. When the Sixth Doctor returned via Big Finish I was happy to hear him with Peri, then when you announced he would be having a NEW companion I didn't know what to expect. What on earth was going on?! But I was so pleasantly surprised – Evelyn wasn't just the best companion to be paired up with Sixie she was solely responsible for tackling him, softening him up and making him such a fantastic character to listen to. For me, Evelyn represents the way Big Finish saved *Doctor Who* in the twilight years. It was always in safe hands and Maggie, Colin and the team re-invigorated the Sixth Doctor's era with such care and attention. Bless you Maggie, and thank you Evelyn – a companion I would've loved to have had a slice of cake and a cup of tea with. I'm off to listen to *Lanyon Moor*, still one of my very favourite Big Finish stories.

Ian France

Nick: Yes, I think Gary Russell did a fantastic thing when he created Evelyn Smythe. Then Jac Rayner's script brought

the character to life on the page. Maggie, with customary gusto, seized the opportunity to make Evelyn loveable.

I have recently gotten into listening to Big Finish stories and have especially enjoyed series three of *The Fourth Doctor Adventures* and am looking forward to the fourth. I am excited and intrigued by *The Fate of Krelon* and *Return to Telos* as it's got my two favorite companions (Leela and Jamie) along with my favourite version of the Cybermen, in no small part due to the voice. It's ideally suited for audio and will no doubt send listeners running for the hills. Add the Fourth Doctor into the mix and you have an absolutely must buy couple of stories which I have very high hopes for. I was also wondering when the trailer or cover will be released for *The Exxilons* as after listening to *Zygon Hunt* I really want to have a look a what's coming next.

Luke Stevens

Nick: I've just heard the first sound effects edits of The Exxilons. I'm absolutely delighted with what the brilliant Alistair Lock has done with this story. The cover artwork has just been approved by the BBC, so it and a trailer should be up, possibly even before this issue is published.

TOM BAKER AT 80

Sacre bleu, the *Tom Baker at 80* release is excellent! I don't necessarily agree philosophically with everything Tom said, but he's a relentlessly entertaining interview subject. Even when he morally annoyed me I kept seeing that timeless grin on the cover and felt myself disarmed – tied up by the scarf. Tom's jovial wit and the probing candour of some of Nick's questions had me gulp down the entire programme all in one sitting. How about a *Tom Baker at 81*

1/2? No? Then how about a series of Nick Briggs *Doctor Who* interview discs – a *Myth Makers* for the 2010s? The CD extra conversations are one of Nick's all-time great innovations. Let's have a standalone range, please.

Frank Jay Gruber

Nick: Hi Frank, the Myth Makers are still going, actually and are about to have a renaissance! It was glorious interviewing Tom. He's a one-off, isn't he?

Tom at 80 arrived, *Tom at 80* was listened to and wow, wasn't it brilliant! Many thanks, another triumph. Any chance of a BF version of his autobiography which I think only ever saw the light of day on cassette?

Chris Fenn

Nick: No plans for that. I think the rights are tied up elsewhere. Tom recently said it was an awful book. I'm not sure if he was joking or not. No change there...

WRITING SHADOWS?

I was listening to Joseph Lidster's comments on your *Dark Shadows* podcast and thought it might be interesting if he were to open up his search for writers to American fans of the show. I don't mean a contest, but a one-time limited submission process with Mr Lidster setting the topic as he does with his stable of writers. Just a suggestion, keep up the great work.

W Byron

Dark Shadows producer Joe Lidster: *I'm always keen that we find and use new writers although these have mostly been through mutual friends or writers I've found in the London fringe theatre scene. The suggestion of having a one-time submission process is great and definitely something I'd like to try in the future if we have the opportunity.*

Coming up...

RELEASE SCHEDULE

New and forthcoming audio releases

NOVEMBER 2014

- Doctor Who: *Masters of Earth* (193, Sixth Doctor and Peri)
- Doctor Who – The Early Adventures: *The Bounty of Ceres* (1.3, First Doctor)
- Doctor Who: *Dark Eyes 3* (Eighth Doctor)
- Blake's 7: *The Liberator Chronicles – Box Set 10*
- Pathfinder Legends: *Rise of the Runelords – Sins of the Saviors* (1.5, Full Cast)
- Blake's 7: The Classic Audio Adventures 1: *Scimitar* (Full Cast)
- Blake's 7 – Book 6: *Criminal Intent*
- Dorian Gray – Series Three box set

DECEMBER 2014

- Doctor Who: *The Rani Elite* (194, Sixth Doctor and Peri)
- Doctor Who – The Early Adventures: *An Ordinary Life* (1.4, First Doctor)
- Doctor Who: *Trial of the Valeyard*
- Doctor Who: *The Highest Science*
- Blake's 7: The Classic Audio Adventures 2: *Fortuitas* (Full Cast)
- The Ordeals of Sherlock Holmes: *Box Set*

JANUARY 2015

- Doctor Who: *Mistfall* (195, Fifth Doctor, Tegan, Nyssa and Turlough)
- Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *The Exiles* (4.3, Fourth Doctor and Leela)
- Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor by Gareth Roberts *Box Set: The English Way of Death/The Romance of Crime* (Fourth Doctor and Romana)
- Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor by Gareth Roberts: *The English Way of Death* (Fourth Doctor and Romana)
- Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor by Gareth Roberts: *The Romance of Crime* (Fourth Doctor and Romana)
- Doctor Who – Short Trips: *The Flywheel Revolution* (05, Download only)
- The Avengers – The Lost Episodes: *Volume 3* (Box Set)
- Pathfinder Legends: *Rise of the Runelords – Spires of Xin-Shalast* (1.6, Full Cast)

- Blake's 7: The Classic Audio Adventures 3: *Mindsett* (Full Cast)
- Dark Shadows: *Bloodlust – Episodes 1-7* (Full Cast)

FEBRUARY 2015

- Doctor Who: *Equilibrium* (196, Fifth Doctor, Tegan, Nyssa and Turlough)
- Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *The Darkness of Glass* (4.2, Fourth Doctor and Leela)
- Doctor Who – Short Trips: *Little Doctors* (06, Download only)
- Blake's 7: *The Liberator Chronicles – Box Set 11*
- Blake's 7: The Classic Audio Adventures 4: *Ghost Ship* (Full Cast)
- Dark Shadows: *Bloodlust – Episodes 8-13* (Full Cast)
- Vienna – Series 2 (Full Cast)
- Gallifrey: *Intervention Earth* (Full Cast)

MARCH 2015

- Doctor Who: *The Entropy Plague* (197, Fifth Doctor, Tegan, Nyssa and Turlough)
- Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *Requiem for the Rocket Men* (4.3, Fourth Doctor and Leela)
- Doctor Who – Short Trips: *Time Tunnel* (07, Download only)
- Blake's 7: The Classic Audio Adventures 5: *Devil's Advocate* (Full Cast)
- Blake's 7: Lucifer Revelation: *Audiobook of Novel* (Read by Paul Darrow)
- Jago and Litefoot: *Series Nine Box Set*

APRIL 2015

- Doctor Who: *The Defectors* (198, Seventh Doctor)
- Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *Death-Match* (4.4, Fourth Doctor and Leela)
- Doctor Who – Short Trips: *The Ghost Trap* (08, Download only)
- Doctor Who: *Dark Eyes 4* (Eighth Doctor)
- Blake's 7: The Classic Audio Adventures 6: *Truth and Lies* (Full Cast)
- Terrahawks *Volume 1* (Full Cast)

MAY 2015

- Doctor Who: *Last of the Cybermen* (199, Sixth Doctor)
- Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *Suburban Hell* (4.5, Fourth Doctor and Leela)
- Doctor Who – Short Trips: *The King of the Dead* (09, Download only)
- Doctor Who – Novel Adaptations *Damaged Goods / Well Mannered War* (Special edition)
- Doctor Who – Novel Adaptations *Well Mannered War* (Fourth Doctor)
- Doctor Who – Novel Adaptations *Damaged Goods* (Seventh Doctor)
- Blake's 7: *Novel 7* (Lucifer: Genesis)
- The Omega Factor: *Series 1 Box Set* (Full Cast)

JUNE 2015

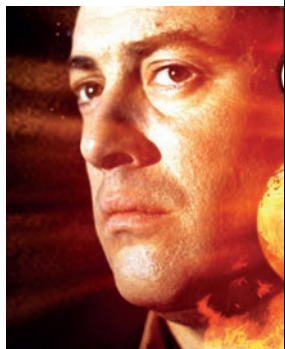
- Doctor Who *The Secret History* (200, Fifth Doctor)
- Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *The Cloisters of Terror* (4.6, Fourth Doctor and Leela)
- Doctor Who: The Companion Chronicles – *Box Set 1*
- Doctor Who: Short Trips *As Good As a Rest* (10, Download only)
- Survivors – Series 2 *Box Set* (Full Cast)


JULY 2015

- Doctor Who: *We Are The Daleks* (201, Seventh Doctor and Mel)
- Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *The Fate of Krellos* (4.7, Fourth Doctor and Leela)
- Doctor Who: Short Trips *Dark Convoy* (11, Download only)
- Counter-Measures – Series 4 *Box Set* (Full Cast)
- The Avengers – The Lost Episodes: *Volume 4* (Box Set)

AUGUST 2015

- Doctor Who: *The Warehouse* (202, Seventh Doctor and Mel)
- Doctor Who – The Fourth Doctor Adventures: *Return to Telos* (4.8, Fourth Doctor and Leela)
- Doctor Who: Short Trips *Foreshadowing* (12, Download only)
- Blake's 7: *The Liberator Chronicles – Box Set 12*







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