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Sneak Previews & Whispers



Ian Atkins previews the first **Second Doctor Companion Chronicles** box set, due for release in June.

WHEN I was offered the chance to produce the **Second Doctor Companion Chronicles** set, my first thought was: Jamie. It was rare – especially in the classic era – to have a companion stay with the Doctor for almost the entirety of his run, and yet if you look at Jamie's time with the Doctor, it's not a period without change. The Ben/Polly, Victoria and Zoe stories all have a slightly different feel, while as Frazer Hines has observed, Jamie himself changes a lot from start to finish, even his voice.

I wanted the set to look at a few of the milestones in Jamie's times with the Doctor, moments that a series probably would have done today as they tend to be more character-orientated now.

So we have Ben and Jamie finding some common ground about their pasts – while trying to save Polly from a ghost-train! We look at how Victoria and Jamie get on if the Doctor's gone. There's Zoe teaching Jamie a valuable lesson – though it's not one about science or logic – and lastly is a story with Jamie drawing on one final acknowledgement of his time with the Doctor. Everyone's really stepped up to the challenge, and there are some really gorgeous moments in there. I can't wait for the release!

VORTEX

Editorial

I'M NOT sure how old I was when I bought my first book of short stories, but it's a format I've always loved. The chances are, it was *Peter Davison's Book of Alien Monsters*, which I bought from the Puffin Club at school, when I was eight. It was probably the first time that I learned there was more to science fiction than **Doctor Who**, **Star Wars**, **Flash Gordon** and **Buck Rogers in the 25th Century**. The story of *Semolina* terrified my younger self!

When **Doctor Who** short stories arrived with Virgin Publishing's *Decalogs*, I was in heaven, which continued with the BBC's **Short Trips** series. Big Finish's **Short Trips** series was fantastic, pushing the boundaries of the **Doctor Who** universe, and sadly, these are no longer in print.

That's why the **Short Trips** on audio are fantastic. If you've not tried any of them yet, I can heartily recommend them as they're a good bite-size fix of a tale from the TARDIS, featuring not just the TV Doctors and their companions, but also from the Big Finish universe as well. And for just £2.99, they are ideal for the fan on a budget.

I find I can squeeze in a whole short trip in my drive to work, which is a pleasant way to start the day. A personal favourite to date has been *Foreshadowing*, by Julian Richards, featuring the Eighth Doctor and Charley. It's a great wee tale, and provides a nice wee surprising twist at the end, as my favourite Roald Dahl tales do.

Of course, we all know now that next month sees the return of Sheridan Smith to Big Finish, to read a Lucie Miller Short Trip. I love Sheridan – she's brilliant in everything she does. She can make you laugh, cry, smile and sympathise, in the space of one scene. I can't wait to hear her back in the TARDIS again.

KENNY

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DOCTOR DOOM

There's a storm coming – and the River's rising – as Kenny Smith discovers the **Doom Coalition** is starting to come together...

VOLUME TWO is where some of the pieces of this 16-episode story really start to fall into place," says producer David Richardson. "Some seemingly throwaway lines from volume one become far more significant, and the scale of the story will grow too. From Earth to deep in the time vortex to an alien world facing a terrible threat, we'll nudge closer to what the Doom Coalition actually is."

Four new adventures – *Beachhead* by Nicholas Briggs, *Scenes From Her Life* by John Dorney, *The Gift* by Marc Platt and *The Sonomancer* by Matt Fitton – bring Paul McGann's Eighth Doctor, and his companions Liv Chenka (Nicola Walker) and Helen Sinclair (Hattie Morahan) into exciting situations and peril. Although, this being **Doctor Who**, to be honest, it's more of the latter...

This box set features the return of Mark Bonnar as The Eleven – a Time Lord whose previous incarnations exist within his mind all at the same time. He is delighted to be given a part with 11 characters at once.

Mark grins: "I was well chuffed. I'd done a couple of the plays before for Big Finish, and thoroughly enjoyed them – they are a great company to work for – and it's always exciting to do something **Doctor Who**-related.

"This is a gift of a part – or rather, parts! – and I'm glad they asked me – it was great fun.

"Before I went in for the first time, I hadn't spoken to any of the guys about it, but I had planned a variety of different accents for each one of his incarnations, which was a bit of a push as I can only do about eight reasonably!



Above (left to right): Alex Kingston and Paul McGann
Inset: Mark Bonnar

"He's pretty hard to pin down, which is one of the joys of playing him – he never gets predictable. The only predictable thing about him is his desire for power. That's about the only thing you can definitely say about him!"

For Mark, there's a real challenge in playing a complex character like the Eleven. He admits: "It's difficult to say how you get into the mindset for a character like this, but expressing the physicality helps.

"A character's physicality is important and affects the way you will be talking, so certain voices had a certain way of being performed, physically. They are written



"I had planned a variety of different accents for each one of his incarnations, which was a bit of a push as I can only do about eight reasonably!"

Mark Bonnar

with certain, strong characteristics. For example number six as aggressive and maniacal, or whatever. I tried to use those as a starting point and build from there."

Mark – who appeared as Jimmy with Matt Smith in *The Rebel Flesh*/*The Almost People* and played the evil Zoltan Frid in *The Labyrinth of Buda Castle*, where he met Tom Baker – reveals: "I loved **Doctor Who** growing up – Tom Baker was my Doctor, who I've been lucky enough to work with twice. It was a dream come true. I remember watching him on Saturday teatimes, with cheese on toast, from behind the couch!

"I remember Jon Pertwee too, but really, Tom was my Doctor. I was a huge fan growing up – I fell away as time went on, and by age 12 when secondary school started, I'd let go fully! My biggest highlight was meeting Tom. I very rarely get my picture taken with people 'off the telly' because we're all working together and it doesn't feel right somehow. However, in rare circumstances, when work is finished and I'll probably not see them again, I'll ask!

"After I had let the team hear a little bit, we had a chat and they reckoned it was more to do with attitudes rather than accents – it's the same person, but inhabited by the 11 different characters. Once we decided it was based on personality, everything slotted into place and it really worked. They just let me go with it.

"The most challenging part of it were the scenes where it was just me, talking to myself: hopefully it's all come together in the edit and they're happy with it.

"He's kind of hard to describe as a character, because there are 11 of them! Mixed up is what the Eleven is – twisted because all these personalities are vying for dominance. The one we hear the most finds it very hard to control the others – who seem to appear willy nilly – sometimes he just has to be philosophical and give in to it!



Above (left to right): Nicola Walker and Hattie Morahan

"To date I've only got three photos of me with people I've worked with – the first was Christopher Biggins when we worked together on *Psychoville 2*, then Tom, and the third was just a few weeks ago – Carrie Fisher!"

Mark's particularly proud to have worked alongside a few Doctors. "It's three Doctors I've worked with now, or four, really, if you remember Sylvester McCoy was in my first scene. So four now – of course, I'd like to add more!"

DOOM COALITION was conceived by David Richardson and Ken Bentley, who's both script editor and director of the series. With the release being a story in 16 parts, does Ken, as script editor, have a file on his computer detailing roughly what happens in each episode?

He reveals: "I have a document that broadly outlines what happens across the four box sets. It doesn't go into detail on each episode. I tackle each box set on an episode by episode basis only when we need to send a brief to the

writers. But – for want of a better word – I do have a map of the journey we're all taking."

There's plenty of outstanding guest stars in the second box set. Speaking with his director's hat on, Ken adds: "We always knew we wanted a strong cast for **Doom Coalition**. Without giving too much away the story is about quite big themes. It needed a cast to match the scale of events.

"That said, we can approach actors, but that doesn't mean they'll be available or interested. It's clear that Paul McGann is the reason people have been keen to join us for the ride. Each Doctor is unique, and each is also uniquely charismatic. There's something about **Doctor Who** that's in the DNA of us all. We've all grown up watching it.

"The Doctor himself is a brilliantly positive mythological character and we're very lucky that most people are thrilled to join him on an adventure!"

"I often set things on an island and then 'blow up the Isle of Wight'! It's something I do because I had a bad school experience there..."

Nicholas Briggs

BEACHHEAD IS the opening play in this set. Written by Nicholas Briggs, the tale is set in Stegmoor Bay, where the villagers have more to deal with than the elements when a flash flood uncovers the remains of a Voord scout ship.

It's a return to the Eighth Doctor for the first time since the opening story of **Dark Eyes 2** for Nick, who was given an outline by the production team. Nick says: "I think they told me something like, 'set on an isolated island, with a Voord invasion attempt'. The island thing was an attempt to appeal to my storytelling tendencies. I often set things on an island and then 'blow up the Isle of Wight', as Barnaby Edwards puts it. It's something I do because I had a bad school experience there in my childhood, even though I love the place.

"So, anyway, I set it on the coast instead. See how versatile I am!?", Nick bursts out laughing as he says this. "Then I got the idea of tying it in with something that could have happened to the Third Doctor. I started to think, 'There might be Third Doctor stories we haven't heard about, when UNIT investigated things, but nothing came of it and they all went home.' So, in a way, this is a story about a mistake the Doctor made."

Terry Nation's 1964 creations the Voord make their second Big Finish appearance, after Andrew Smith's *Domain of the Voord*. Having written for aliens as diverse as Daleks, Cybermen and the Ice Warriors, Nick embraced



BBC
DOCTOR WHO

Doom Coalition 2

BEACHHEAD
SCENES FROM HER LIFE
THE GIFT
THE SONOMANCER

OUT: This month!

WRITTEN BY: Nicholas Briggs,
John Dorney, Marc Platt, Matt Fitton

DIRECTED BY: Ken Bentley

CAST: Paul McGann (The Doctor), Nicola Walker (Liv Chenka), Hattie Morahan (Helen Sinclair), Alex Kingston (River Song), Rebecca Night (Matilda Gregson), Julia Hills (Phillipa Gregson/Dispatch), Kirsty Besterman (Ishtek/Lilly), Andrew Dickens (Voord Guard/Police Sergeant/Mr Rogers), Emma Cuniffe (Caleera), Vincent Franklin (Lord Stormblood), Jacqueline King (Lady Sepulchra), Hamish Clark (Swordfish), James Jordan (Charles Virgil McLean), Paul Marc Davis (Pepé Gonzalez), Cory English (Sam Sonora), Laura Harding (Ethel Halliday/Mariam), Enzo Squillino Jnr (Aldo Deluca), Derek Ezenagu (Ruslan/Ivo), Janet Fullerlove (Yeva/Wife), John Banks (Husband/Guard/Mineworker/Galactic Heritage/Shopkeeper) and Mark Bonnar as The Eleven.



Above: Paul McGann

the chance to craft a tale for another classic monster:

"I enjoyed it. I wanted to be clear that the Voord commander has no compassion whatsoever. She's very matter-of-fact. She's basically a sort of James Bond character, with a specific mission. Everyone is expendable."

Going by the synopsis online, it sounds like a traditional tale – how much fun is it trying to bring something new to an established format? Nick grins: "Well, my dear friend Rob Shearman will tell you that's what I always actually do. He has this theory that, despite my reputation for being very traditional, I have a compulsion to 'break' the

format of **Doctor Who**. I don't think that's true, but I know what he's sort of getting at. So, in this one, even though it all seems 'the usual thing', I just wanted to make the character relationships different. And mindful of the ongoing prejudice against women in fiction, I just found it interesting to toy with redressing the balance a bit.

"So all the main characters are women, apart from the Doctor. I was sort of only half-aware that this is what I'd done, actually. But I'm a big fan of women. And I'm keen to write about them."

This was also the first time Nick had had to write for Helen, who joined the Doctor and Liv in the first **Doom Coalition** box set.



Above (left to right): Vincent Franklin, Jacqueline King and Hamish Clark



Above: Nicola Walker

"I got David, Matt and Ken to tell me about her," he says. "I'd also read the other scripts she'd featured in. She's had a very interesting journey with the Doctor. And I particularly liked that this story was her, Liv and the Doctor trying to have a break, after some really serious stress. I liked the fact that she was new to time travel, and I was really encouraged to make her want to get in touch with her family out of time. She's a great character. Very intelligent, self-willed and fiercely compassionate."

FOLLOWING A clue into the time vortex, the Doctor investigates a desolate city only to discover a horrifying plot to create a monster, in *Scenes From Her Life* by John Dorney.

John wrote the phenomenally popular *The Red Lady* in **Doom Coalition 1**. Humbly, he admits: "*The Red Lady* seemed to go down a treat, and I was very pleased that people got so enthused by it. I've been quite lucky with the Eighth Doctor, with *A Life in the Day*, *The Red Lady* and *Solitaire* all being well regarded. I was very excited that something which seems so unfriendly to audio really seemed to work.

"Every time you sit down to write something, you want to write a good story. So in my head, I think 'I'm going to try to write the best **Doctor Who** story ever', because if you set out to write the greatest **Doctor Who** story ever, chances are you're probably going to fail, but if you do, you'll still have something special because you aimed high. If you only set out to write a good, solid **Doctor Who** story, if you fail, it might just turn out as average.

"*The Red Lady* seemed to go down a treat, and I was very pleased that people got so enthused by it... I was very excited that something which seems so unfriendly to audio really seemed to work."

John Dorney

You just do the best you can, each time. It's a nice, continuous pressure."

The pressure is on with *Scenes From Her Life*. John says: "This one was an interesting brief. What unlocks a story – the point where you realise where it's going to go – is different every time.

"With *Scenes From Her Life*, I got a reasonably detailed brief and struggled to get my head round it. I had a discussion with Ken Bentley and I got an idea for the location and that then inspired the rest of the story.

"We haven't revealed what it is yet, but once I got that image in my head, everything else came together and shaped the rest of it. Sometimes, I can have a story in my head and it takes me a month to work it all out, but once I got it straight in my head with the location, I worked it out in a day.



"I wanted to have it filled with something that was a bit grotesque. I was thinking of something that was a bit **Gormenghast** – which I admit I hadn't read at the time, although I have since read *Titus Groan* – and there's a similar feel to it. There's characters with a degree of darkness about them."

John was particularly pleased with the actors who have brought his play to life. He reveals: "I've been lucky to get an amazing cast – Emma Cunniffe from **The Lakes**, Hamish Clark, and Jacqueline King is just fantastic as Lady Sepulchre. Vincent Franklin, from **Jonathan Strange**, is one of the most exciting actors around just now, and we've got him too, as Lord Stormblood. He's hugely well-regarded and plays it so well. I could have written it, just for him. It's one of the best casts I've ever had."

A **NOTHER** RETURNEE to **Doom Coalition** is Marc Platt, who has written the third story, *The Gift*. The story is set in San Francisco, 1906, and a desperate race is on, to prevent the destruction of

more than just the city from an earthquake.

Marc, writer of *The Galileo Trap* in the first set, has returned the Eighth Doctor to the city where he was 'born'. "You're dead right," says Marc. "I was about half way through plotting out the storyline when I remembered that the Eighth Doctor was 'born' in the city at the turn of the 1999/2000 millennium, and now he's back again, nearly a

century earlier. Because he already knows the historical significance of San Francisco in 1906, it feels uncomfortable and momentous for him – like a portent of doom circling above him."

With a story set in history, was a lot of research involved into the period setting? Marc explains: "On the morning of April 18, 1906, a massive earthquake shook San Francisco. The quake lasted less than a minute, but

Doom Coalition 3

DOOM COALITION will return in October this year, with the third volume of four plays.

Producer David Richardson reveals: "I've just finished reading the script of the first episode of volume three by John Dorney, and just sat and cried. It's some of the most powerful and beautiful writing for **Doctor Who** ever, written straight from the heart. It sounded wonderful

performed by the voices in my silly head, so I can't wait to hear what Paul McGann, Nicola Walker and Hattie Morahan make of it. An exceptional piece of drama."

What can Ken tease about series three? He puts his finger to his lips, River Song-style, and deadpans: "Important questions will be answered in series three."

And that's it!



Above (left to right): Laura Harding, Cory English, Janet Fullerlove, Nicola Walker, Marc Platt, Enzo Squillino Jr, Hattie Morahan and Derek Ezenagu

“I didn’t want to go down the road of saying this specific and spectacular historical event was caused by alien intervention.” Marc Platt

its impact was disastrous. It started several fires around the city that burned for three days and destroyed nearly 500 city blocks.

“The great thing is that because this is recent history, the amount of detailed information about what was destroyed and who was there (including writer Jack London, operatic tenor Enrico Caruso and actor John Barrymore) is huge.

“The very first piece of material I saw was a remarkable piece of film possibly shot only days before the quake demolished huge swathes of the city. A camera was fixed to the front of a cable car that travels the length of Market Street. In the course of about 12 minutes, horse-drawn vehicles, vintage roadsters and a wonderful array of characters criss-

cross, sometimes hair-raisingly, in front of us. I found myself picking out characters to put in the story. Most moving of all is that this is real and within a short time, much of this scene would be destroyed and many of the people would be dead.”

Disasters from history and the Doctor are always an interesting combination, such as the destruction of Pompeii. Marc says: “I didn’t want to go down the road of saying this specific and spectacular historical event was caused by alien intervention. It’s a fixed moment and it would have been disrespectful to the many people who were killed, injured or made homeless. That said, the quake presents an extraordinary looming, inescapable backdrop to the story. The Californian Gold



Rush of 1849 made San Francisco into a melting pot as people poured in from all over the world. It was prosperous, well to do and brim full of trouble. The sort of dream setting that a *Who* story slips easily into. To make things worse, there are alien forces aware of the imminent disaster and eager to exploit it for their own nefarious ends.”

Marc adds: “Since *The Gift* is a fragment of the *Doom Coalition* mosaic, Ken Bentley was specific about what he wanted in the story: obviously the earthquake is at its heart, but he also suggested the *Music of the Spheres*, a down on his luck American actor/manager, a theatre with possible Shakespearean references. And for extra measure, I threw in a gangland boss, an aspiring actress called Ethel and the Chop House that you pass in the film on the way down Market Street. I wish I’d been there to see Caruso on the one night he sang before the city fell apart!”

D OCTOR WHO past and present comes together in the fourth and final play of this set, the eagerly-anticipated *The Sonomancer*, by Matt Fitton.

Season finales always have high expectations placed upon them, and there’s no denying that *The Sonomancer* is one of these tales. After all, it’s got River Song, trying to stop a mining company from exploiting the Syran people –



Right: Alex Kingston
Below: Paul McGann



“It’s fantastic to see how much Alex Kingston has embraced Big Finish... She’s absolutely delighted to be doing these stories and is just so lovely.”

Matt Fitton

River, but in **Doom Coalition**, we find a different way to do it and get round the problem of them meeting before they do in *Silence in the Library*.

“River’s interested in the company her husband kept before she met him – and she’s very impressed by Helen and Liv for a lot of the story.

“But as to how she meets him... well, you’ll have to listen and find out. She’s still very much dancing around those continuity issues.”

Matt has been particularly pleased with the way Alex Kingston – still in demand on TV and film – has enjoyed working with Big Finish.

He reveals: “It’s fantastic to see how much Alex has embraced Big Finish. She’s absolutely delighted to be doing these stories and is just so lovely. Every time she’s

been in, we’ve always had a great laugh – there are often people she’s worked with before and the studio has such a good atmosphere.

“I think, as we go along, we will go deeper into it. Steven Moffat has indicated he’s happy for her to work with the earlier Doctors, but I’ve got a few ideas about how we can do it.

“But River realises she has to be careful, and the Tenth Doctor is when it all changes.” **VORTEX**

only to discover the miners have uncovered much more than they bargained for.

We’ve got more from the Eleven too. Matt says: “With the Eleven – you couldn’t have asked for a better reaction, and Mark Bonnar has just taken it and run with it.

“We’ve very different styles in each of the stories, and here we have one that’s action orientated.

“We’ve also got River Song. People may have heard **The Diary of River Song** and the meeting between the Eighth Doctor and



JACKS TO THE FUTURE

Kenny Smith meets a science fiction legend, who reveals plenty about her amazing life this month...

A REAL hit in recent years with Big Finish devotees has been the interview releases. So far, **This is Colin Baker and Tom Baker at 80** have presented candid discussions with the stars of **Doctor Who**, while **Benjamin and Baxter** featured an in-depth chat with the actors behind **Jago & Litefoot**.

This month sees the fourth release in this series, with **Call Me Jacks**, featuring **Blake's 7** legend Jacqueline Pearce in conversation with Nicholas Briggs.

Nick reveals: "The interview range was never really intended to be a range. One day, David Richardson and I had exactly the same thought at very probably exactly the same time. Listening to Trevor Baxter and Christopher Benjamin chatting in the green room, it struck us what absolute treasures they were. Not just lovely people, but fascinating

people with experiences and anecdotes that seriously, in our view, needed to be preserved in some form. So we agreed we had to interview them and record it.

"When Tom turned 80, David suggested the same would be appropriate for him... Likewise, we thought Colin had something great to offer, and he, more than the others, in my view, was full of surprises. We rarely hear of Colin's life experiences as when we talk to him it's always about **Doctor Who** and the scripts he's working on."

Picking the latest interviewee wasn't a difficult thing to do. Jacqueline Pearce has lived an amazing life. When *Vortex* calls her, she's having a evening in with a friend. Was she surprised when Big Finish asked her to talk about her life?

"Good God, no, darling! Not at all! I was in the studio and they asked if I would like to do an interview, so I said, 'Yes!'"

“I’ve registered with a new doctor after moving back to the UK, and when he realised I was Servalan, well, I’ve never seen a man so excited!”



Above: Jacqueline Pearce



It’s fair to say that Jacqueline has certainly lived her life to the fullest.

She gives a dirty laugh: “Oh, you can say that again, honey!”

JACQUELINE TRAINED at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts, and over the years, she has featured in a number of British TV shows which have a cult following, including *Danger Man*, *Man in a Suitcase*, *Callan* and *The Zoo Gang*.

Jacks appeared in an episode of the fourth season of *The Avengers*, in the episode *A Sense of History*, with

Patrick Macnee and Diana Rigg. The part that Jacqueline will always be remembered for is, of course, Servalan. It’s not just science fiction fans who know who she is.

She chuckles: “I still get people recognising me, which is rather nice.

“I’ve registered with a new doctor after moving back to the UK, and when he realised I was Servalan, well, I’ve never seen a man so excited.”

Vortex suggests that she still has a certain effect on men.

Jacqueline laughs heartily again – and her friend, who has just opened a bottle of wine, overhears this query. It makes her chortle too.

“Well, darling, it’s very kind of you to say so... It’s nice to still be able to do that! Servalan was so interesting to play because she was the bad guy.

Everyone says it, but it’s true – bad guys are always far more fun to play and watch. It’s like Steerforth

in *David Copperfield*. He’s far more interesting than *David Copperfield*.


“What made *Blake’s 7* so popular was the actors. We had three of us who all felt it was our show, with dear Gareth Thomas and Paul Darrow! That was the difference between *Blake’s 7* and *Doctor Who* – *Doctor Who* is always changing, but with *Blake’s 7*, there were Servalan, Blake and Avon.”

IN RECENT years, Jacqueline has been living in South Africa. She says: “I came to a point in my life where I decided that I wanted to do something different from acting. I had had cancer, and after I had gone through all the treatment, I wanted to do something else.

“So, I started working as a volunteer and looked after orphaned Velvet Monkeys. It was one of the most rewarding things I’ve done. I was over there for 10 years, but I came back when I found out I had cancer again. I don’t do things by halves,” she laughs.

Nick adds: “Jacqueline is a one-off. When David asked her if she wanted to do an interview, she loved the idea. There’s a lot in her story that’s actually quite moving and difficult to listen to, but the fact that she communicates it in such a unique way makes it extremely poignant. She’s very succinct in what she says, and sometimes you really have to delve deep. But she’s such fun and when you’ve spent a couple of hours chatting with her, especially for a recording like this, you feel as though you’ve got very close to some of the fundamental questions about human existence. I know that sounds a bit pretentious, but I genuinely felt — and not always in an entirely comfortable way — that I’d experienced something quite breathtakingly unique.” **VORTEX**

*Please note that *Call Me Jacks* features some material may be unsuitable for younger listeners.*



Kenny Smith finds out more about the **Doctor Who Short Trips** range!

GET SHORTY!

BIG FINISH loves stories. Some are longer releases, such as **Doom Coalition** (telling one big story in 16 parts), while others are box sets with three or four stories in an overall arc. There's monthly releases in the **Doctor Who** range, with four episodes in each tale, or the two-part Fourth Doctor stories. And then there's **Short Trips**.

Every month, a little gem, of around 30 minutes is released by Big Finish, read by a single performer, for just £2.99. These are produced by Ian Atkins, who says: "I've been really fortunate at Big Finish to be trusted with three **Doctor Who** ranges – the **Subscriber Short Trips**, the **Companion Chronicles**, and then the monthly **Short Trips**.

"But this only came about because I happened to be working two days a week in the Big Finish office when my friend of 15 years, Paul Spragg, died suddenly. So to be honest each time I've been given a range, I tend to feel sad and guilty, because it should have been Paul's. And then I get started, and there are so very many self-inflicted

moments I know he and I would laugh about, and it's not fair I have to do the laughing for the both of us.

"For the Subscriber Short Trips I'd met Stephen Crichtlow in studio during the recording of *Gallery of Ghouls*, and he not only has a great range of voices (including a killer Fourth Doctor) but knew his **Doctor Who** (his education is of the Target novels variety!) and he reads these really well.

"It's a bonus of the range that we can do stories from any point in the show's run, and I've tried to explore eras that would otherwise be difficult to do. For example, Chris Wing's superb *The Horror at Bletchington Station* is a First Doctor and Dodo story, which sadly we'd struggle to bring to life in another range."

There's a real difference in studio when recording a **Short Trip**, compared to a full-cast production.

"They tend to be very intense for the actors," Ian reveals. "On a full-cast production, no one's in every scene, and everyone eventually gets a chance for a chat, a coffee and



Above: Sheridan Smith

Above: Katy Manning

“I can tell you, those years of playing Lucie with Paul McGann were so much fun, and I’m very grateful and happy to be back in studio.” Sheridan Smith

a doughnut in the Green Room: but for a **Short Trip** reading, you’ve got a single person in a booth who is reading every word on the page. And they have to do it with the same energy at the beginning as they do at the end. I think it’s an astonishingly difficult thing to do, and have been really impressed by the performances we’ve had.”

A **PRIL SEES** a surprise reader in the range, for *The Curse of the Fugue* by Alice Cavender, with the return to Big Finish of national treasure Sheridan Smith. Since finishing her run as Lucie Miller, alongside Paul McGann’s Eighth Doctor, Sheridan has gone on to become one of the most in-demand actresses in the country, starring in a number of highly-rated BBC and ITV dramas –

as well as winning major awards for her stage work.

Getting hold of Sheridan for recording was a huge hurdle to get over, as Ian reveals: “When I first got given the range, director Lisa Bowerman and I had a meeting, and we made a list of those we really wanted to get, if everything was equal. Pretty much top of the list was Sheridan Smith’s name. And, oddly, that first contact wasn’t a ‘no’. It wasn’t a ‘yes’, but it was enough of a ‘hmm... maybe’ that I wanted to keep going. So I commissioned a couple of stories, planning to turn them into **Subscriber Short Trips** when Sheridan’s people finally said no so that they weren’t wasted.

“And that moment just kept on not coming. This was late July when we started, and every few weeks I’d try again, and it wouldn’t be ‘no’. But she



was busy with prep on *Funny Girl*, and then she’d actually be in it, and realistically I didn’t think it would happen. I made one last final attempt once I was back in January, where a ‘no’ would mean giving up. And suddenly we had a date, but no confirmation it would actually happen.

“When you’re in a West End show you’re on voice-rest during the day, and even the slightest sniffle means you have to cancel things at short notice. And then on the intended morning I’m seeing a taxi webpage indicating that they’ve picked up ‘S Smith’. This was going to happen...!

“When I spoke to Sheridan during recording, the secret was revealed: she loves Big Finish. She really couldn’t have said nicer things about her time recording the four series with Paul McGann, and therefore she’d really wanted to find time to do these short stories.”

Speaking at the recording, Sheridan said: “Quite a lot has happened since I last saw you, doing different telly and theatre shows, but I’ve missed Big Finish and playing Lucie.

“I can tell you, those years of playing her with Paul McGann were so much fun, and I’m very grateful and happy to be back in studio.

“If I could do her forever, I would – I think she’s a great character and the fans have been great. They write really lovely messages on Twitter and meet me at the stage door with the CD covers to sign. I’m very grateful for being given such a great character to play – I’ve missed her.” **VORTEX**



Kenny Smith talks **Torchwood** series two and finds the production has been a...

HUB OF ACTIVITY

I T'S BEEN so wonderful, listening to these new **Torchwood** stories as they roll off the presses. If they still have presses," Russell T Davies tells *Vortex*. The **Torchwood** creator, and former **Doctor Who** executive producer, has been just as excited as everyone else to hear about the exploits of Captain Jack Harkness and his team members, in the new audio adventures.

He continues: "I'm experiencing all this as brand new, with every new story, and it's been a joyous ride. To be honest, I just keep thinking: God, we cast this well, back at the beginning! Aren't they amazing? It makes the thought of those full-cast **Torchwood** adventures yet to come so exciting.

"And I'm lucky enough to hear some of Big Finish's plans for the future – oh my God, it's thrilling. There

are glories to come, I promise you. With such amazing writers. Good times!"

T HE GOOD times continue this month, as the second season of **Torchwood** plays begin. The initial six releases proved so popular that the second was announced almost as soon as the first play, *The Conspiracy*, was released.

Series two is wrapped in mystery, but series producer James Goss has confirmed the first three stories will be *The Victorian Age*, with Captain Jack and Queen Victoria, written by A.K. Benedict, *Zone 10* by David Llewelyn and featuring Toshiko Sato, and *Ghost Mission*, by Guy Adams, with PC Andy Davidson taking centre stage. James admits he was taken aback by the speed at which series two was



Above: Naoko Mori

commissioned, especially coming so quickly after series one was announced.

He reveals he was: "Stunned. I thought we'd have a month or two off while they pondered our fate. But no. It was an enormous delight to be told 'More. Immediately.'"

Has James found the feedback to the first run to be very heartening, especially as the plays have all

had positive reviews to date? He says he's: "Delighted. Ours is a very affectionate take on **Torchwood** – we all really love the show and it's great that the fans have immediately got what we try to do with it."

THE FIRST series introduced the mysterious Committee, an organisation lurking in the shadows and causing trouble for

"OURS IS A VERY AFFECTIONATE TAKE ON TORCHWOOD — WE ALL REALLY LOVE THE SHOW AND IT'S GREAT THAT THE FANS HAVE IMMEDIATELY GOT WHAT WE TRY TO DO WITH IT."

James Goss

Captain Jack and his team. James reveals: "Well, the Committee are still beavering away in the background, and their terrible work turns up here and there. Mostly, however, it's six standalone adventures, taking us from Victorian London to the Russian wastes to a strange and distant time."

Talking of the Victorian age...

James says: "You get Queen Victoria having an adventure with Captain Jack. A couple of other surprise faces appear, and we meet the ghost of a 1950s Torchwood agent."

As Torchwood's founder, Her Majesty would no doubt be amused to know that her encounter with Jack features in *The Victorian Age*.

AK – or Alexandra to *Vortex* – reveals: "The brief was 'Queen Victoria and Captain Jack', with an emphasis on fast-paced excitement. I couldn't ask for a more delicious brief for my first Big Finish story.

"I loved every second of writing for both Jack and Victoria. It's the most fun I've had with a mouse in my hand. Writing Queen Victoria's putdowns has been a career highlight!

"I've been a **Torchwood** fan from the start, adoring the humour, pathos and the team itself. I love the creepier stories in particular *Ghost Machine*, *From Out of the Rain* and *Children of Earth* and ones that show the characters' faultlines.

"*The Victorian Age* features a gun-toting queen at the end of her reign, a chase across London and a decision that could change the British Empire. Oh, and ice-cream."



Above (left to right): Geoffrey Breton, Anna Volkova, Naoko Mori and Maxim Ivanov



only really has any resonance when you're a bit older.

"So you can write – or try to write – that kind of scene, and really push it as far as you can go, without worrying that younger viewers, readers or listeners will start nodding off. That doesn't mean **Torchwood** can't or shouldn't be silly and fun, too – of course it should. It's basically about a bunch of people chasing aliens around Cardiff in a fancy 4x4. But aiming at an older audience means you can maybe tackle a wider range of ideas."

Guy Adams, who has written *Ghost Mission*, says that the thing he loves most about **Torchwood** is: "The characters, nothing else is important really. We wouldn't be writing any of this if it weren't for the people at the heart of the story."

WHAT DOES producer James reckon it is about **Torchwood** that has made it so popular with its fan base? He grins: "Oh, I have no idea – but I utterly love the fans. They've helped make it so popular, and have done more even than John Barrowman to publicise it."

James says the recording sessions have been a great experience.

"Honestly, the studio days have been gorgeous. Hearing John Barrowman flirt, being sworn at by Eve Myles (as only she can), watching Gareth David Lloyd be lanto, and helping Tracey-Ann Oberman pick which pair of heels to act in. It's all so much fun, and I hope it comes over in the recordings." **VORTEX**



"I HAD A LOT OF FUN EXPLORING WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU TAKE TOSH AWAY FROM CARDIFF, AND DUMP HER IN FOREIGN TERRITORY, SURROUNDED BY COMPLETE STRANGERS!" David Llewellyn

and dump her – literally – in foreign territory, surrounded by complete strangers!"

What is it that David loves most about the series? He reveals: "I think at its best, **Torchwood** allows you to explore some themes that are a bit too grown-up for **Doctor Who**. And I don't necessary mean sex, swearing and violence (though all three are fun to write!). I'm thinking more about scenes like the horrible moment in *Children of Earth* when the Cabinet are discussing which children should be given to the 456, and someone says, 'Well, what are the league tables for?' It's this stomach-churning line with echoes of historic crimes against humanity that would be lost on younger audiences, the kind of thing that

A **BELOVED** **Torchwood** character makes her Big Finish debut in *Zone 10*, as Naoko Mori returns to play Toshiko Sato for the first time since 2008.

Writer David Llewellyn says: "I was asked to write a story for Tosh, working on her own, and set in Russia. I'd featured **Torchwood**'s Russian counterpart, the KVI, in my novel *Trace Memory* and the audiobook *Fallout*, and James Goss and Steve Tribe were keen for me to bring them back in some shape or form!

"It was particularly fun writing something that's so focussed on Tosh, because her character is often sidelined by the others. I had a lot of fun exploring what happens when you take Tosh away from Jack, Gwen and the others, away from Cardiff,

VORTEX MAIL

IMPRISONED

Thank you, thank you so much in getting the audio rights to **The Prisoner**; and then releasing **The Prisoner** volume one! I have been a fan of **The Prisoner** ever since the series was rebroadcast by my local PBS back in the 1990s. To me, at least, **The Prisoner** is as relevant today as the show was back in the 1960s. I am enjoying the first volume of **The Prisoner**'s audio adventures very much! Mark Elstob does an incredible job as Number Six. He invokes the spirit of Patrick McGoohan in his audio performance, while adding his own unique spin to these audio adventures. I love how Big Finish added an extensive behind the scenes, as I always love hearing the thoughts of the actors and Nicholas Briggs. Nicholas said it was uncertain if volume two would be done or not. I am anxiously awaiting for news about **The Prisoner** volume two!

Michael Koo

Nick Briggs: As you may well know now, Michael, volume two is confirmed, and I'm working on storylines. I'm so glad you loved the first volume. Not surprisingly, I agree with all you say about Mark's performance. That's exactly what he and I were aiming for. A tricky balance, but Mark really pulled it off.

SIXTH SENSE

I just wanted to say how much I've enjoyed your recent box set of **The Prisoner**. I've been a long time subscriber to Big Finish, collecting the various **Doctor Who** ranges since **Sirens of Time** way back in 1999. Over the years I've watched/listened to your productions get ever more technically complex and skilled. That said, when I heard that Big Finish had acquired a license to produce plays based on **The**

Prisoner I have to say I greeted the news with more than a little caution, despite the success rate with **Doctor Who** and **The Avengers**. There have been a few novels released over the years based on **The Prisoner** (both in text and comic strip format) as well as the AMC reboot. As all previous attempts to resurrect Number Six have failed I approached your version with more than a little trepidation. I am pleased to say I couldn't have been more wrong! For the first time since 1968 there has been a **Prisoner** production that has got things absolutely perfect at every level, from the immersive sound design and the reimagining of the original stories, as well as the fresh new story, *Your Beautiful Village*. My thanks to everyone involved with the production, especially to Nick Briggs, Mark Elstob, Sara Powell and Helen Goldwyn..

Steve White

*Nick Briggs: Thanks, Steve. I think of all our recent releases, the initial news of **The Prisoner** was greeted with the most suspicion and negativity I can remember us receiving. It was quite demoralising for me at the time, but entirely understandable. It's a source of great relief to me that everyone seems to think we got it right, thanks to a wonderful team of people.*

A PLUNGE IN THE LAKE?

Do you think we might ever have an audio featuring Jackson Lake and Rosalita from *The Next Doctor*, perhaps covering that time before the Tenth Doctor found him and restored his memory? I would love to hear David Morrissey on one of your audios. I also wanted to thank and congratulate you on three box sets I recently purchased:

Diary of River Song set one, **War Doctor** set one and **Doom Coalition** set one. All three are superb and have really made some otherwise trying months for me personally much more enjoyable. These works gave me something to look forward to on my long work drives and in the evenings. For that, I am grateful, thank you and to the actors, producers and writers for such superior entertainment.

Jim Johnson

Nick Briggs: Thanks, Jim. We hadn't thought of that. Hmmm... Well, I'd never say never. Just imagine! (I keep saying that, don't I?)

PEACE AND QUIET

I have purchased all three **Survivors** releases and listening to them again, I wish there was a peaceful episode, one where the characters just existed. The original series had moments like these in which deciding which field to hoe, or whose job it was to take the rubbish out. It seems to be becoming an adventures series which the original was not. I miss these moments of celebration and day to day existence. Just a thought for future episodes.

Teela Brown

Nick Briggs: Your comment is duly noted, Teela. I'll leave it up to David Richardson and Matt Fitton to mull over that one.

EMAIL US AT:

feedback@bigfinish.com and remember to put 'Vortex Mail' as the subject...

HEXAGORA

Kenny Smith finds a **Doctor Who** story which was once lost!



JACQUELINE PEARCE has made a strong return to Big Finish over the last few months with her ongoing role as Cardinal Ollistra in the War Doctor box sets, and this month also sees the release of her talking about her life, **Call Me Jacks**.

One of her previous Big Finish roles was in 2011 in the **Doctor Who Lost Stories** range, in *Hexagora*.

Originally entitled *Hex* (the title was changed because of the Seventh Doctor's companion of the same name), the outline came from Peter Ling, who wrote *The Mind Robber* in 1969, with his writing partner Hazel Adair. The pair later created ITV soap **Crossroads**.

Jacqueline plays the part of Queen Zafira, who rules the planet Luparis, and in a surprising twist in the tale, wants to marry Peter Davison's Doctor!

Producer David Richardson says: "*Hexagora* was the first time I'd worked with Jacks – though of course we've done many **Blake's 7s** and War Doctor episodes since! I'd been sent an email advising that she was in the country (visiting from Africa) for a few weeks in the summer and I

was determined to find a role for her. And the guest role in *Hexagora* seemed irresistible!

"I am actually intrigued by *Hexagora*... Certainly in the 80s producer John Nathan-Turner was rumoured to be pursuing a story with the working title *The Doctor's Wife* (which of course has since been used on a new series episode!). *Hexagora* seems a likely contender to be that slot surely, seeing as it features a wedding ceremony for the Doctor. But, yes, I cast Servalan as the Doctor's wife!

"Paul Finch did a lovely job with the adaptation, and it all feels very much of its time in the best possible way."

Paul had form with the **Lost Stories** range, having discovered and then adapted his late father Brian's script, *Leviathan*, for the first series of plays. Whereas his first **Lost Story** had a family connection, through his father, Paul came to Peter and Hazel's script fresh.

Paul explained: "With *Leviathan*, I had a full shooting script to work from, but with *Hexagora* it was little more than a storyline.

"The original storyline only existed in the form of a photocopy of an old article in the *Doctor Who Magazine*; at least, that was the version I saw. Don't get me wrong, there was plenty to go at, but it wasn't as if I was being asked to develop an existing screenplay.

"David and I bounced a few additional ideas around as well, and finally thrashed out a version that we thought would really work."

Paul happily looks back on writing *Hexagora*. He added: "It was a thoroughly enjoyable experience, and I have fond memories. It gave me the opportunity to work with David Richardson and Ken Bentley, the director, again, both of whom were on *Leviathan*. It was also an amazing experience to write for Peter Davison, Janet Fielding and Sarah Sutton. In particular I had a lot of fun working on Tegan's 'love interest' thread – Tegan is one of the iconic **Who** characters, and I think I'm right in saying that Janet hadn't done much audio work for Big Finish before this, if any at all, so it was really quite an honour.

"I liked the end result very much, particularly as I could easily envisage it being a television story-line during the Fifth Doctor era." **VORTEX**

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Forthcoming audio releases.

MARCH 2016

- **DOCTOR WHO: THE PETERLOO MASSACRE** (210, Fifth Doctor, Tegan and Nyssa)
- **DOCTOR WHO – THE FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE PARADOX PLANET** (5.3, Fourth Doctor and Romana II)
- **DOCTOR WHO: DOOM COALITION 2** (Eighth Doctor)
- **DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS: WASHINGTON BURNS** (6.03, Seventh Doctor, Download only)
- **PATHFINDER LEGENDS – MUMMY'S MASK: SECRETS OF THE SPHINX** (2.4)
- **TORCHWOOD: THE VICTORIAN AGE** (2.1)
- **CALL ME JACKS** (In conversation with Jacqueline Pearce)

APRIL 2016

- **DOCTOR WHO: AND YOU WILL OBEY ME** (211, Fifth Doctor)
- **DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE LEGACY OF DEATH** (5.4, Fourth Doctor and Romana II)
- **TERRAHAWKS: VOLUME 02**
- **DOCTOR WHO – THE NOVEL ADAPTATIONS: NIGHTSHADE** (Seventh Doctor and Ace)
- **DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS: THE CURSE OF THE FUGUE** (6.04, Eighth Doctor, Download only)
- **BLAKE'S 7: THE LIBERATOR CHRONICLES** (Box Set 12)
- **THE AVENGERS – STEED AND MRS PEELE: THE COMIC STRIP ADAPTATIONS** (Volume 1)
- **TORCHWOOD: ZONE 10** (2.2)
- **JAGO AND LITEFOOT: SERIES 11** (Box Set)
- **PATHFINDER LEGENDS – MUMMY'S MASK: THE SLAVE TRENCHES OF HAKOTEP** (2.5)

MAY 2016

- **DOCTOR WHO: VAMPIRE OF THE MIND** (212, Sixth Doctor)
- **DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: GALLERY OF GHOULS** (5.5, Fourth Doctor and Romana II)
- **DOCTOR WHO – THE TENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: TECHNOPHOBIA** (1.1, Tenth Doctor and Donna)
- **DOCTOR WHO – THE TENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: TIME REAVER** (1.2, Tenth Doctor and Donna)
- **DOCTOR WHO – THE TENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: DEATH AND THE QUEEN** (1.3, Tenth Doctor and Donna)
- **DOCTOR WHO – THE TENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: VOLUME 1** (1st Edition Box Set, Tenth Doctor and Donna)

- **DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS: THIS SPORTING LIFE** (6.05, First Doctor, Download only)
- **GALLIFREY: ENEMY LINES** (8, Romana II, Leela and Ace)
- **TORCHWOOD: GHOST MISSION** (2.3)
- **BIG FINISH CLASSICS: DRACULA**
- **PATHFINDER LEGENDS – MUMMY'S MASK: PYRAMID OF THE SKY PHARAOH** (2.6)

JUNE 2016

- **DOCTOR WHO: THE TWO MASTERS** (213, Seventh Doctor)
- **DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE TROUBLE WITH DRAX** (5.6, Fourth Doctor and Romana II)
- **DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS: LOST AND FOUND** (6.06, Second Doctor, Download only)
- **DOCTOR WHO – THE COMPANION CHRONICLES: THE SECOND DOCTOR – VOLUME 1** (TBA)
- **UNIT: THE NEW SERIES: SHUTDOWN** (2.1, TBA)
- **SURVIVORS – SERIES 4: BOX SET** (Full Cast)
- **TORCHWOOD: MOVING TARGETS** (2.4)
- **DARK SHADOWS: 50TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL**

JULY 2016

- **DOCTOR WHO: A LIFE OF CRIME** (214, Seventh Doctor, Mel and Ace)
- **DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE PURSUIT OF HISTORY** (5.7, Fourth Doctor and Romana II)
- **DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS: TBA** (6.07, TBA, Download only)
- **DOCTOR WHO: CLASSIC DOCTORS NEW MONSTERS** (Volume 1)
- **THE NEW COUNTER-MEASURES: WHO KILLED TOBY KINSELLA?**
- **TORCHWOOD: TBA** (2.5)
- **THE AVENGERS – THE LOST EPISODES: VOLUME 6** (Box Set)

AUGUST 2016

- **DOCTOR WHO: FIESTA OF THE DAMNED** (215, Seventh Doctor, Mel and Ace)
- **DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: CASUALTIES OF TIME** (5.8 Fourth Doctor and Romana II)
- **DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS: TBA** (6.08 TBA, Download only)
- **SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE SACRIFICE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES** (Box Set)
- **YOU'RE HIM, AREN'T YOU?** (Audiobook, Paul Darrow)

SEPTEMBER 2016

- **DOCTOR WHO: MAKER OF DEMONS** (216, Seventh Doctor, Mel and Ace)
- **DOCTOR WHO: THE WAR DOCTOR: AGENTS OF CHAOS** (Box Set, The War Doctor)
- **DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS: TBA** (6.09, TBA, Download only)
- **GRACELESS: SERIES 4** (Box Set)
- **DOCTOR WHO: THE EARLY ADVENTURES: THE AGE OF ENDURANCE** (3.1, First Doctor)

OCTOBER 2016

- **DOCTOR WHO: THE MEMORY BANK AND OTHER STORIES** (217, Fifth Doctor)
- **DOCTOR WHO: DOOM COALITION 3** (Eighth Doctor)
- **DOCTOR WHO: THE EARLY ADVENTURES: THE FIFTH TRAVELLER** (3.2, First Doctor)
- **DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS: TBA** (6.10, TBA, Download only)
- **CHARLOTTE POLLARD: SERIES 02** (Box Set)
- **JAGO AND LITEFOOT: SERIES 12** (Box Set)
- **THE CONFESSIONS OF DORIAN GRAY: SERIES 5**

NOVEMBER 2016

- **DOCTOR WHO: ORDER** (218, Sixth Doctor and Constance)
- **DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS: TBA** (6.11, TBA, Download only)
- **DOCTOR WHO: THE EARLY ADVENTURES: THE RAVELLI CONSPIRACY** (3.3, First Doctor)
- **SURVIVORS – SERIES 5: BOX SET** (Full Cast)
- **THE AVENGERS – STEED AND MRS PEELE: THE GRAPHIC NOVEL**
- **THE AVENGERS – STEED AND MRS PEELE: THE COMIC STRIP ADAPTATIONS** (Volume 2)
- **UNIT: THE NEW SERIES: TBA** (3.1, TBA)

DECEMBER 2016

- **DOCTOR WHO: ABSOLUTE POWER** (219, Sixth Doctor and Constance)
- **DOCTOR WHO: QUICKSILVER** (220, Sixth Doctor and Constance)
- **THE NEW COUNTER-MEASURES: SERIES 1**
- **THE OMEGA FACTOR: SERIES 2**
- **DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS: TBA** (6.12, TBA, Download only)
- **DOCTOR WHO – THE NOVEL ADAPTATIONS: ORIGINAL SIN** (Seventh Doctor)
- **DOCTOR WHO – THE NOVEL ADAPTATIONS: TBA** (TBA)
- **DOCTOR WHO: THE EARLY ADVENTURES: THE SONTARANS** (3.4, First Doctor)

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