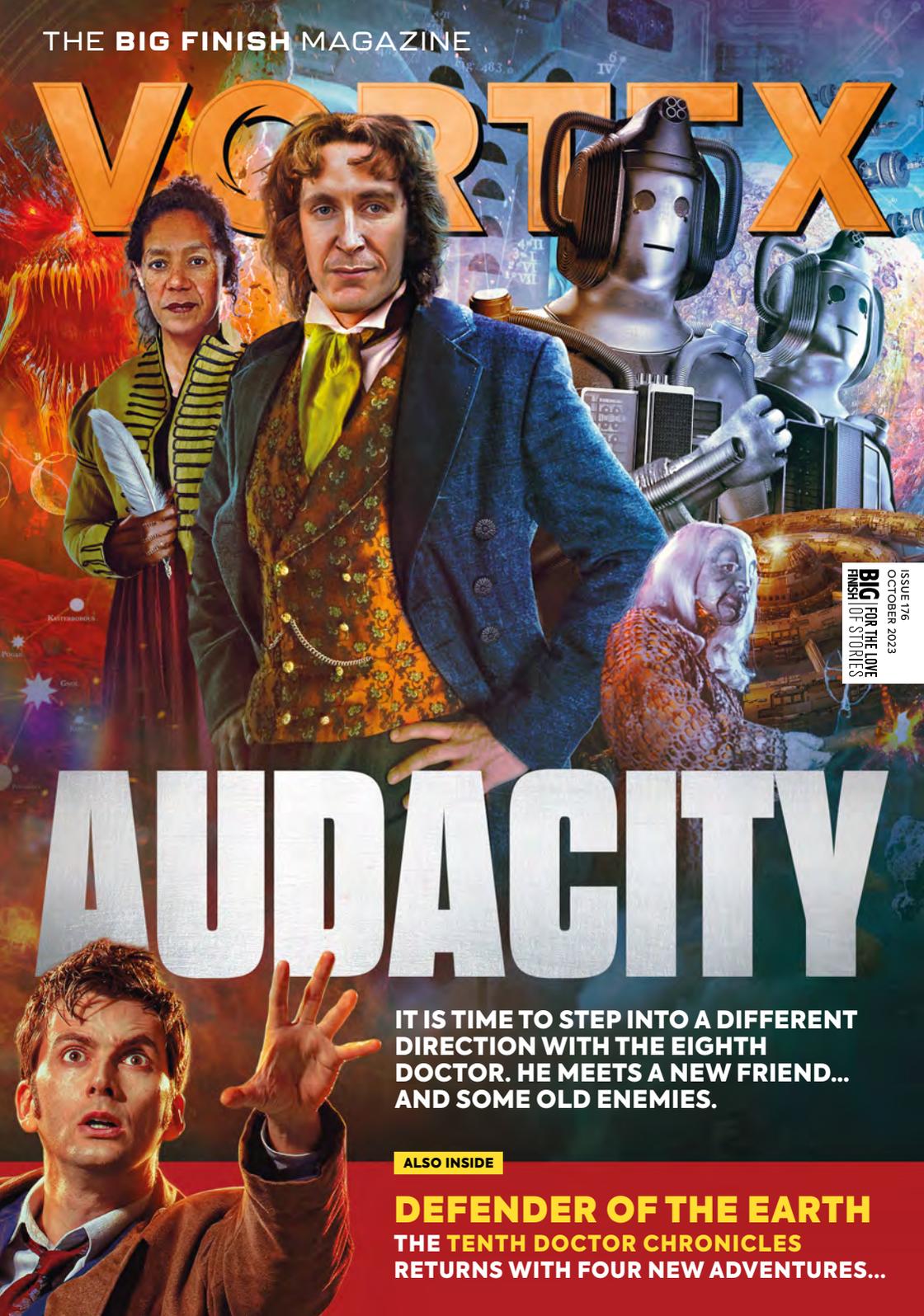


THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX



ISSUE 176
OCTOBER 2023
BIG FOR THE LOVE
FINISH OF STORIES

AUDACITY

IT IS TIME TO STEP INTO A DIFFERENT DIRECTION WITH THE EIGHTH DOCTOR. HE MEETS A NEW FRIEND... AND SOME OLD ENEMIES.

ALSO INSIDE

DEFENDER OF THE EARTH
THE TENTH DOCTOR CHRONICLES
RETURNS WITH FOUR NEW ADVENTURES...



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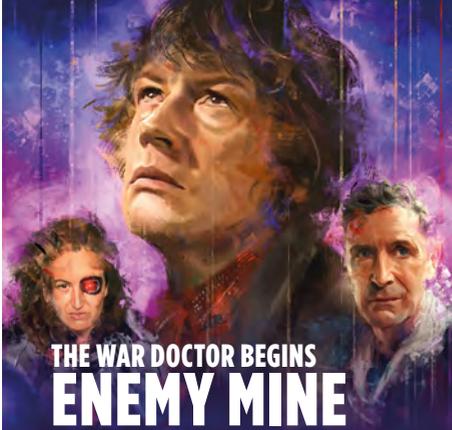
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THE WAR DOCTOR BEGINS ENEMY MINE

THE EIGHTH Doctor and the War Doctor, together, in the same story? This sort of thing only happens in the gravest of emergencies...

The War Doctor Begins: Enemy Mine brings to a close the story of Case (Ajaz Awad), the Berserker Class cyborg Dalek/human hybrid fighting the Time War. At the end of the last box set, *Comrades-in-Arms*, the Daleks got their grubby little protuberances on Case – and now we’re going to hear the consequences.

The first episode is *The Hybrid’s Choice* written by Ajaz Awad-Ibrahim. *The War Doctor believes Case is dead. But her true fate may be worse – embracing her Dalek nature, recruited to the enemy’s cause. But serving her new masters is not easy. The Dalek Time Strategist knows that Case’s inner self is in conflict, and seeks a way to seal her fate forever.*

The second episode is *Fear Nothing* by Mark Wright. *The War Doctor is summoned to a remote TARDIS dry dock. Commodore Tamasan has a dangerous proposition, but what is her true agenda?*

Meanwhile, Case has been unleashed by the Daleks to eliminate a Time Lord asset who could change the course of the Time War. With nothing left to lose, Case has nothing left to fear... And *Exit Strategy* has been written by Matt Fitton. *Case is with the Daleks – but the Emperor is not yet convinced of her effectiveness as a weapon. The Dalek Time Strategist will not give up and takes her for ‘readjustment’.*

The War Doctor will not give up on Case either. He hopes she can still be rescued. But he is not the man he was – and he may not be the man to save her. **VORTEX**

THE WAR DOCTOR BEGINS: ENEMY MINE

- RELEASED: DECEMBER 2023
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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EDITORIAL

THIS MONTH’S *Vortex* is a packed one – with four extra pages! We’re previewing next month’s releases and there’s an awful lot going on at Big Finish to mark **Doctor Who’s** 60th anniversary.

We have the Eighth Doctor meeting a new friend in *Audacity*, a great box set which introduces us to Lady Audacity Montague. I can say with authority that she’s fantastic, having heard Jaye Griffiths in studio earlier this year. We’ve also got the first Big Finish appearance of *Revenge of the Cybermen*-type Cybics, which presses one of my inner fan buttons given how often I watched that story on VHS!

We’ve a double Doctor encounter in *The Box of Terrors*, the latest audio novel inspired from an idea by the man who performs it, Jon Culshaw. Jon is so excited about this one, and I can’t wait to hear the Third and Fourth Doctors meeting.

We’ve more **Chronicles** for the Tenth and Eleventh Doctors on the way as the wonderful Jacob Dudman does his uncanny takes on David Tennant and Matt Smith.

My friend Mark Wright has written a new Big Finish book, *The Art of the Audio Adventures*, highlighting 100 of the amazing cover artworks which have featured on **Doctor Who** audio releases since 1999 – it is a beautiful book and a must-read!

We’ve also got *Rogue Encounters*, the next **War Master** box set, along with *Oodunnit* from **Torchwood** and a lovely interview with senior producer, John Ainsworth. Now you know why we needed the extra pages! **VORTEX**

The Time Lord meets a Lady...



THE SHEER AUDACITY!

The Eighth Doctor is back with a fantastic new companion!

PAUL MCGANN returns in six episodes over two box sets being released in November and December, and the Doctor makes a new friend along the way – Lady Audacity Montague.

Producer David Richardson says: “It is time to head in a new direction with the Eighth Doctor. That’s not to say the Liv and Helen stories are over – they most certainly are not. But *Audacity* allows us to step into an earlier era of the previously unexplored Eighth Doctor’s life. We

are before Lucie, before *Dark Eyes*... it’s a different tone, a different time.”

Script editor Matt Fitton says: “It’s always fun to create new companions, especially the type of person who will bounce off the Eighth Doctor in a different way to other companions, giving an alternative dynamic and feel to things.

“*Audacity* was always going to be from nobility and I liked the idea of a Regency era companion. I think it’s fun to have someone who is an actual ‘Lady’ meeting someone who refers to himself as a Time Lord – and calling him out on that as well. *Audacity* is also more mature and won’t stand for as much of the

Doctor’s nonsense as some of his more impressionable companions might!

“I think the Eighth Doctor works particularly well with period characters, such as Mary Shelley or Charley. *Audacity* is ahead of her time. She’s constrained by the period she lives, so meeting the Doctor gives her a chance to break free and have adventures beyond the fun she’s already been creating for herself. She’s lived quite a life already by the time we meet her. *Audacity* puts a new spin on the role of the companion.”

Lisa McMullin, who has written *The Devouring* which introduces *Audacity*, tells *Vortex*: “This is the first time I’ve invented a new companion so,



Above (l-r): Joseph Millson,
Jaye Griffiths and Richard Reed

obviously, I was very excited – but it nearly broke me! I was so conscious of wanting to get her just right that I ended up getting myself stressed out.

“I was in the process of writing *The Devouring* at the Gallifrey One convention in February, and kept disappearing back to my room to try to complete it. But I was writing the ‘wrong’ story for a while. It was only when I realised what it was really about that everything clicked into place. It’s about entitlement – and Audacity’s reaction to it.

“David and Matt had told me they wanted a Regency period heroine to fly off with the Doctor and I knew exactly what kind of person I wanted her to be. Her name encapsulates who she is. She’s audacious at a time when women were not meant to be, where they were meant to get married and quietly get on with having babies. Audacity is married into the aristocracy and is trying to dismantle it from within.”

David adds: “Matt and Lisa pitched a brief for the character of Audacity and it was an instant yes. She’s just thrilling: she steps into a room (or a scene) and you know she’s in it. She’s a character that turns heads!”

The part of Audacity is played



Above: Nicholas Briggs

by Jaye Griffiths, a familiar face on British television since *Bugs* in the 1990s, and more recently as UNIT scientist Jac on *Doctor Who*. David explains: “I’ve worked with Jaye before, most recently when she played the enigmatic character Hieronyma Friend in the *Time War* box set *Cass*. Jaye has qualities of Audacity herself – she’s exciting and full of energy – and she’s wonderful to spend time with. I knew she had a good rapport with Paul, we all know she’s a brilliant actor and she ticked every box. When someone is

great at what they do and is a lovely person, you want to keep them around.

“The chemistry was there before we recorded the first scene. Jaye and Paul were both in studio when we recorded *Cass*, and they were

This is the first time I’ve invented a new companion so, obviously, I was very excited – but it nearly broke me!

LISA McMULLIN

constantly laughing and firing off each other. I knew then that it was going to work beautifully.

“We may be stepping back into the Eighth Doctor’s past but it all feels new again. We’ve got two contrasting tales that work perfectly side by side – the best platform to launch from!”

Matt continues: “In *The Devouring*, Lisa gets to create Audacity’s origin story. We gave Lisa the sketch of who the new companion was, what the setting would be, her home period.

We had already cast Jaye when Lisa came to scripting so she had an idea of the voice that she was writing for. But beyond that, the detail of Audacity's life and situation have all come from Lisa. And it works really well. It's a lovely introduction, giving us a kind of Jane Austen-esque period piece with a sci-fi spin."

Lisa continues: "Audacity's on the side of the poor and the disenfranchised. Even though she lives in a world of great entitlement, she rails against it. And, as she points out, everything belongs to her husband – not to her – without him she has nothing of material worth at all.

"Audacity is an astronomer and she looks to the stars as her own world in 18th century England is so

Tim has embraced the fact that the *Revenge* era Cybermen are different, and he's provided a fiendishly clever reason for that within his story.

DAVID RICHARDSON

small. She feels stifled by it and so does what she can to expand it by creating adventures for herself.

"But, as she's been gazing up at the stars dreaming of what's out there, of worlds beyond her own, something in the stars catches her eye – and it's looking back. And it decides it wants Audacity for itself. It starts devouring everybody that comes into contact with her in a bid to get its metaphorical claws on her. But Audacity isn't going quietly!"

Lisa was delighted by the casting. She tells *Vortex*: "The casting is perfect. Jaye's phenomenal. I listened in to the recording and she's even better than I could have dreamed of.

"I've seen Jaye acting before on lots of TV shows, but the chemistry between her and Paul is incredible. They're absolutely brilliant together. I couldn't imagine anybody else playing the part."

WITH THE pair surviving their initial encounter, they head out into space for *The Great Cyber-War* by Tim Foley, which marks the Big Finish debut of the type of Cybermen who appeared



Above (l-r): Trudie Goodwin and Diana Yekinni



Above: Emily Woodward

in *Revenge of the Cybermen*. David admits: "I'm excited by the idea of bringing these Cybermen back. What's really lovely is that Tim has embraced the fact that the *Revenge* era Cybermen are different, and he's provided a fiendishly clever reason for that within his story. He's taken what was perhaps a flaw within *Revenge of the Cybermen* and made it a strength!"

Matt confirms: "David was keen we did a prequel to *Revenge of the Cybermen*, to do something in that particular period of the Cyber-War which we haven't touched at all at

Big Finish. We've hinted at this era, but not told any stories here yet.

"*Revenge* was set in the aftermath of the war with the last few Cybermen as stragglers. Here, we are in the midst of the huge conflict between the Cyber race and humanity, with Voga playing a key part."

Tim was delighted to help create a new era for the Eighth Doctor: "I was a wee nipper when the Eighth Doctor/Charley era kicked off. I loved the new frontiers it promised and the growing threat of Charley's survival across the various stories. If this



Above (l-r): James MacCallum and Karen Archer

I was terrified! I find writing for returning monsters tricky, and emotionless ones even more so!

TIM FOLEY

series can replicate just a hint of that era with Lady Audacity Montague by the Doctor's side... I'll be a very happy bunny. It's so lovely that Big Finish can now create eras within their own eras, it allows for all kinds of possibilities!

"Audacity is great, a breath of fresh air. I wanted to make sure that her first trip in the TARDIS... well, was pretty intense, there's no easing Audacity into the fray!

"She's an older, haughty, more assured figure than the Eighth Doctor normally travels with, so that keeps him on his toes. She cuts through the

romantic wishy-washy of the early Eighth Doctor and that's a delight to script as well. I love her costume too – which is a funny thing to say on audio – but it's a great visual image having a character do action scenes in regency garb on a golden space station. That is peak **Doctor Who**."

TIM WAS also given the Cybermen to work with. He says: "Honestly – I was terrified I find writing for returning monsters tricky, and emotionless ones even more so! But after a great deal of

thought, I tried to work out how I could turn that to my advantage.

"Traditionally, some of the best Cyber stories have them skulking around, the threat of conversion forever lingering... but I wanted to challenge myself. This is the Great Cyber-War, we need these horrors en masse. I love the *Earthshock* TV episode cliffhanger where the whole army emerges and

marches down the corridor, an unstoppable force. I needed that scale – especially for a two-hour story.

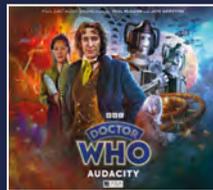
"There's lots to take from *Revenge* as a story – the glitter-guns, the curious characterisation of the Cybermen – but I didn't just want this to be a box-ticking exercise. I really tried to imagine what the Cyber empire was like at this key point in their history, and how the humans and the Vogans allied themselves against it.

"It's the last days of the Great Cyber-War. Victory is in sight but it's still the last place the Doctor wants to be with his new best friend. Audacity's about to see what life in the TARDIS is really like and, if I may tease something particularly juicy, it's safe to say by the end of this adventure nothing about her travels will be the same again!"

Tim adds: "This is unlike anything I've ever written before, a war story that's a tinderbox and – when it finally explodes – hopefully never lets up! I really enjoyed the chance to try a whole new genre. There's a particularly tense sequence that's timed to last precisely 79 seconds and I'm looking forward to hearing how that's turned out."

Matt concludes: "Tim is just brilliant at emotional drama, but here we're getting a bit of a different spin using other parts of his wheelhouse. It's a big action drama and Tim was happy to embrace doing something different for the Doctor with an epic full-on Cyber invasion of a space station. But it's got the signature Tim character drama, emotional touches and tugging at the heartstrings all the way through as well." **VORTEX**

THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: AUDACITY



■ RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2023
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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JUST WHEN WE THOUGHT **THE ELEVENTH DOCTOR CHRONICLES** WAS COMING TO ITS END, THERE'S GOING TO BE A BONUS RELEASE...

HEARTS OF THE MATTER

OVER THE past year, Big Finish's **Eleventh Doctor Chronicles** have become something of a cult hit. With Jacob Dudman playing the Time Lord and Safiyya Ingar as his companion Valarie Lockwood, they garnered smash reviews. The range is due to end with the final box set being released in February 2024 as Jacob is stepping away from the part.

However, the events of *Curiosity Shop*, the last story in the previous box set (*All of Time and Space*), have inspired a new bonus release, *Broken Hearts*.

Producer Alfie Shaw intends these **Chronicles** to have an exceptional final run. Alfie says: "*Broken Hearts* came about because of a few different things really. One was due to a conversion Jacob and I had about possibly making more. Ultimately, we decided that stepping away after the resolution of this story arc was still the right move, and we didn't want to do any extra stories that were set before the end but released after the fact.

"Another reason was a question that Safiyya asked during the recording of *Spirit of the Season* (from the

upcoming volume – *Everywhere and Anywhere*), about how long it had been for the characters since *Curiosity Shop*. In our re-jigging of the series arc, there was a character point that we hadn't been able to properly explore.

"The third and final factor was Lisa McMullin, who said she'd love to write a story that dealt with that character point – and that was before I told her about Safiyya's question.

"So it all seemed a bit fated. I asked Jacob and Safiyya if they would be up for recording a bonus episode, and they both jumped



Above (l-r): Jacob Dudman and Safiyya Ingar

at the chance – and luckily so did creative director Nicholas Briggs and senior producer John Ainsworth.”

LISA TELLS *Vortex*: “To be honest, I pretty much begged Alfie to let me be involved! I’d listened to what he has done with the series and desperately wanted to be a part of it. I’m obsessed with these **Chronicles** – I think it’s a series that we should have had on television. I just think it’s brilliant. But Alfie had already commissioned the writers for the remaining two box sets, and said they were going to be Jake’s last recordings as the Eleventh Doctor. I was gutted. “This story came about because my reaction to James Goss’s brilliant

MY REACTION TO JAMES GOSS’S BRILLIANT *CURIOSITY SHOP* WAS VISCERAL – I WAS LIVID WITH THE DOCTOR!

LISA McMULLIN

Curiosity Shop was visceral – I was livid with the Doctor! He pays Valarie for her body parts – makes her pull herself to pieces and then uses her components to build a weapon without telling her what he’s doing! I texted Alfie – absolutely fuming on Valarie’s behalf and I thought no way would Valarie let that lie.

“Safiyya said in one of the behind-the-scenes interviews that they didn’t feel Valarie had closure. So I really wanted to write a story where Valarie kicked back against the Doctor. Saffy and Jake were up for it and I’m delighted I got a chance to be part of this phenomenal series.

“It feels serendipitous, getting to do this bonus story, like putting a final piece in a puzzle. It means Jake and Saffy get a whole series run of 14 episodes too. You don’t need to listen to this release to make sense of the series arc, I don’t want people to feel they must have it for the series to make sense.”

As a result, we have a bonus story which fits neatly between two other adventures, with a cast of the two lead actors. Lisa adds: “Writing for Jake and Saffy was so much fun. They play all the characters in this story – it’s one of my favourite things that I’ve ever written.

“Jake is just perfect at capturing Matt Smith’s performance whilst doing his own thing at the same time. In studio, it’s really interesting to see Jake performing as he does all the mannerisms with his hands that Matt does on screen.

“This was the first recording of one of my stories that I’d been to since lockdown, and it was just so fantastic to be there. It was great to listen to the actors bounce their ideas around and see the work in progress. I am such a fan girl, I got them to sign my **Eleventh Doctor Chronicles** CDs!”

JAKE SAYS: “It was great to hear Lisa was going to write this. Saffy and I have both been feeling quite sad about the range coming to the end – even though we made the decision to end it, which is a strange thing in itself!

“Alfie floated the idea of a continuation of the last story in *All of Time and Space* as a one-off special release, and explained the direction he wanted to take it in. It felt like there was one more story to tell before the forthcoming box set was released, and this really brings the whole thing together.

“It was great to do. I’d sort of come to terms with the fact that we were only doing two more box sets, and that was it. But I couldn’t help myself and agreed to do this special because they are the most fun. And what a script!



Above (l-r) Safiyya Ingar and Jacob Dudman

“The Doctor and Valarie go really well together and in this episode, more than in any other we’ve done, we see that – after what they’ve gone through together. It was fun to play, and also, to have a two-hander with Saffy was great because we haven’t done that before.”

Safiyya adds: “*Broken Hearts* has a real level of intimacy. You rarely have that opportunity with actors you work with, it’s what you strive for. I’ve been on productions where you do weeks of team building and bonding exercises at the beginning of rehearsals, to try and be galvanised and make yourself feel like a coherent group.

“I remember when Jake and I met when we were recording the first box set. We came out for lunch and someone asked, ‘So how long have you guys known each other?’ And we were like, ‘We just met three hours ago!’ and it was the most rewarding feeling to just know that we already had that bonding from the off.

“Just knowing that I’m part of something this special is incredible. I’m so proud of this. I don’t think words can do it justice. Everything about these box sets

JUST KNOWING THAT I’M PART OF SOMETHING THIS SPECIAL IS INCREDIBLE. I’M SO PROUD OF THIS.

SAFIYYA INGAR

makes me excited and honoured to be a part of this universe.”

Alfie concludes: “It’s a strange range, the **Eleventh Doctor Chronicles**.

As it doesn’t feature the actor that originated the part, there’s an extra pressure on it. The first set had to be a hit or else the next three would have withered into obscurity. The second needed to be a hit or else the first one could just be written off as a fluke! The series only really succeeded if we got listeners telling other people, ‘Yes, it isn’t Matt Smith but you have to listen to it anyway – it’s that good.’

“Fortunately, the reaction has been extremely positive. It’s immensely gratifying to see people adding episodes from this run to their favourite Eleventh Doctor stories or

adding Valarie to their list of favourite companions. We knew this was our final run. We knew this might well be the last Eleventh Doctor episode at Big Finish for a while. The goal was always to have a series for Eleventh Doctor fans that people could listen to and say, ‘Here’s a run of Big Finish stories for you, and they are great.’ So far, we seem to be on track to deliver on that which is very satisfying.” **VORTEX**

**THE ELEVENTH DOCTOR CHRONICLES:
BROKEN HEARTS**



- RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2023
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THE OMEGA FACTOR SERIES ONE



SPOOKS AND scares can come in many forms. In 1979, BBC Scotland's Edinburgh-set, occult drama **The Omega Factor** terrified the nation, leading campaigner Mary Whitehouse to dub it 'thoroughly evil'.

Starring Louise Jameson as Dr Anne Reynolds, the show ran for only 10 episodes on television, but Big Finish resurrected it on audio in 2015 and Department 7 continued to investigate the unknown. Louise reprised her role as Anne with John Dorney playing Adam Crane, a young man with blossoming psychic powers.

The Omega Factor launched with four scripts: *From Beyond* by Matt Fitton, *The Old Gods* by Phil Mulryne, *Legion* by Cavan Scott and *The Hollow Earth* by Ken Bentley.

Natasha Gerson was delighted when Big Finish got in touch to ask about a new run of **The Omega Factor**. Natasha owns the rights to the series which was created by her late father, Jack, and she also

IT WAS ALWAYS ONE OF MY DAD'S FAVOURITES AS HE WAS REALLY INTO THE SUPERNATURAL...

NATASHA GERSON

played Morag in the TV series. She recalls: "I received an email from David Richardson wanting to know if Big Finish could licence my father's favourites as he was really into the supernatural – he was disappointed that it never came to a second series on TV. I know he would have been just thrilled by this new life on audio."

Script editor Matt Fitton tells *Vortex*: "Essentially, we take the set-up of a top-secret government department that investigates the strange and uncanny with a view to using it and gaining an understanding of the 'Omega Factor' – life beyond death. We've

taken that premise with Department 7 and moved it to the present day.

"Louise's character has now become head of Department 7, and we get a chance to explain what's happened to her in the intervening period. That way, people who come to it fresh don't have to have already watched the TV series. **The Omega Factor** is a great framework in which to tell scary stories, in a **The X-Files** kind of set-up."

David tells *Vortex*: "The idea was that the new **The Omega Factor** was built very firmly on the foundations of the old. This is a continuation of the story, decades later. Louise and Natasha are intrinsic parts of that developing story, and quite rightly so."

John plays the son of Tom Crane (James Hazeldine) from the original series. David continues: "John was absolutely perfect casting. Actually, he is extraordinary in this series. He's a brilliant actor anyway but that can be overlooked sometimes in favour of his superb scripts. But **The Omega Factor** allows him to take centre stage and show everyone what he can do – and he can do great things."

John was delighted to join the cast, and says: "I've known Louise for quite a long time now and I've always rated her highly as an actress – it's great to be able to work with her.

"It makes such a difference when you're already familiar with someone as you know each other's rhythms and way of working. On this there were none of the initial moments you sometimes get at the start, where you take your time in the early days just getting used to people. Louise and I didn't have to worry about any of that." **VORTEX**

THE OMEGA FACTOR SERIES ONE

- RELEASED: JULY 2015
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/omega23





CASE FOR THE DEFENCE

Get ready for four new adventures with the Tenth Doctor as the **Chronicles** return...

ALL OF space and time is at our audio fingertips thanks to ranges such as **The Doctor Chronicles** as they allow narrators and performers to bring eras of **Doctor Who** to life when the regular cast aren't available.

The Tenth Doctor Chronicles returns this November with *Defender of the Earth* led by Jacob Dudman who is joined in each release by a guest performer.

In 2020, Alfie Shaw took over from Scott Handcock as producer of this set, and tells *Vortex*: “*Defender of the Earth* is a real blast from the past for me. It was already written when I became producer of the various **The Doctor Chronicles** ranges and we recorded one story a week over the early days of lockdown. We were all still getting to grips with remote recording and it was a bit of a learning curve. But it was a real comfort having the recordings to look forward to during those strange and trying times.

“In this set we’ve got a suspenseful World War Two horror, a cerebral tale on a moon base, a surreal historical involving the suffragette movement and a thoughtful ecological thriller set in the near future.”

The Thing in the Forest written by Trevor Baxendale opens the set. He says: “I’d been watching quite a few WW2 films at the time and my mind

went straight to that environment: drop the Doctor behind enemy lines and see what happens! Bearing in mind it was effectively a two-hander, it meant the Doctor and the guest voice would need to be fairly isolated, so I began to think of a forest setting with soldiers searching for the Doctor. Norway seemed like a good place – somewhere the Doctor hadn’t really been much before.”

SUMMARISING THE story, Trevor tells *Vortex*: “Norway, 1943 (or thereabouts). Lisa, a member of the Norwegian resistance, is waiting to meet a British agent behind enemy lines. She then meets the Doctor – and immediately assumes he is the British agent. The Doctor and Lisa are soon being hunted by German troops tasked with finding a British parachutist, but the German troops



Above: Jacob Dudman

are themselves being hunted: an unknown, inhuman killer that makes no differentiation between Axis or Allies is on the prowl through the Norwegian forest..."

Trevor found it an interesting experience to get used to the format of the range: "It took a couple of rewrites before I got the balance right between the narrative side and the dialogue, and got to grips with how to format it. Once that was in place it was great fun to write, and the Tenth Doctor is always a treat – whether it's David Tennant or Jacob.

"It's funny to think now that David is very much the face of **Doctor Who** for its relaunch this autumn: his cultural presence in 21st century **Doctor Who** across all media is colossal, as both the Tenth and Fourteenth incarnations!"

The second adventure is *The Opacity Factor* by Carl Rowens.

It took a couple of rewrites before I got the balance right between the narrative side and the dialogue...

TREVOR BAXENDALE

Speaking of his brief, Carl says: "It was pretty straightforward – it needed to feel that it could fit within the later days of the Tenth Doctor's run when they were doing all those specials without Rose or Donna or Martha. Beyond

that, Scott gave me a free hand. I think he wanted more sci-fi than historical, which suited me. I remember enjoying the TV story set on the Mars space base, so a slightly claustrophobic base suited me well!

"The Doctor has to solve a mystery while dealing with a fairly antagonistic group of people who neither trust him nor believe that the danger he is warning them about is real. I always imagine that if you were working somewhere and a random stranger said, 'Excuse me, you've got it all wrong and you're about to die,' you simply wouldn't believe them."

Working with the **Chronicles** format was a new one for Carl, who adds: "It was my first experience of creating something to be read and that was a challenge because you're telling a story but you can't really go in depth into the Doctor's point of view. But I knew it was going to be Jake reading it, so I knew it was going to be *told* from the Doctor's point of view. So that was an interesting balance."

He adds: "The Tenth Doctor is definitely my favourite of the post-2005 lot, so I was excited to try and capture the mood and atmosphere of Russell T Davies's run."

THE THIRD episode, *Freedom or Death* comes from Alice Cavender. She says: "Scott asked for a story with a strong companion character and gave me licence to go to what would have been very expensive settings had they been realised on-screen, so I made the most of that!

"I had been enjoying the suffragette centenary at the time I was asked and so really wanted to create a campaigner from that period, but not the stereotypical images of the educated woman on a platform or a stealthy silent midnight arsonist. I wanted my campaigner to have her own back-story that touched on the tough lives being lived in and out of prison to inform her relationship with this seemingly well-to-do handsome stranger.

"The Doctor pays a visit to the oft-romanticised world of 1913 where British politics were riven by the slippery body of resistance that was the suffragist movement



and the chaotic attempts of the establishment to repress it. The population is weighing up being on the right side of history against individual survival or, at least, their freedom.

"In this pre-war hotbed of idealism, spies and agitators thrive and the Doctor must help one brave soul discover the source of her own personal suffering of other-worldly nightly excursions so that she might survive her friends and a cause whose relevance is even bigger than she imagined. But is she really going to take the hand of a man with the charm and looks of a well-heeled trickster?"

Alice particularly enjoyed writing in this historical setting, and explains: "I really relished being able to dive into the pre-war period where domestic tensions were high and everyone seems to have some skin in the political game, whether it's trying to stave off starvation in the East End slums, fighting for all adults to be allowed to vote rather than just some of the men, or those fighting to preserve their domination of the status quo.

"It was a time where a social movement captured the attention of the world with its drama including at times its internal conflict, to which I have had the pleasure of adding another layer of otherworldly vested interest and long-simmering rivalries."

THE SET concludes with *The Siege of Shackleton* by Una McCormack. She recalls: "The brief was completely open-ended. I sent a handful of short pitches to Scott, and this was the one he liked best so we worked it up into a story.

"The adventure is set in Antarctica where the last humans are struggling to survive in a world radically altered by climate change. A new threat appears which threatens to make Homo sapiens completely extinct.

Jacob is one of my favourite audiobook readers at Big Finish. He's got such a wonderful range...

ALFIE SHAW

"I'd read extensively in the past about Antarctic exploration, and some of that made it into the story in the names of the settlements where the humans live: they're mostly named after explorers. I had a kind of backstory where the settler groups were loosely connected to the various nation states that currently have Antarctic bases, but not much of that made it into the final draft – mostly it added texture in my own mind."

Una adds: "Sadly we all missed out on meeting up for the recording which was done during lockdown. So the biggest highlight of this will be finally getting to hear the finished story."

Alfie concludes with a word for his leading man: "Jacob is one of my favourite audiobook readers at Big Finish. He's got such a wonderful range, is so easy to work with and has absolutely smashed it out the park again." **VORTEX**

THE TENTH DOCTOR CHRONICLES: DEFENDER OF THE EARTH



■ RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2023
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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VORTEX MAIL



TERRIFIC TORCHWOOD

I saved up the **Torchwood: Among Us** box sets so I could binge them after the third was released – and that really enhanced my listening experience. What a triumph. Surely Big Finish's best **Torchwood** material so far (and the bar had been set pretty high...!), and certainly its most adult and thought-provoking. No aspect of modern technology and (most importantly) its impact on society goes unexplored. **Torchwood** seems to have morphed into a 21st century **Doomwatch** with aliens – which is no bad thing! The current team members are all a delight, but I particularly enjoyed the performances of Tracy-Ann Oberman as Yvonne and Paul Clayton as Mr Colchester. Congratulations to everyone involved with these box sets – and I will certainly be an eager buyer for more.

STEVE MAGINN

Nick: Thank you, Steve, we are extremely proud of the **Torchwood** range. Producer and script editor James Goss is doing a tremendous job, and we're very lucky to have him on board.

RIVER ON THE ROAD?

I finished listening to **The Diary of River Song: The Orphan Quartet** recently, and I can't stop thinking about *Harvest of the Krotons* by James Goss. Absolutely hilarious. Several times I had to run the disc back because I was laughing so hard and I was missing the story. Alex Kingston and Camille Coduri are totally perfect for each other. I'm begging you to get these two back together and give us the Jackie and River road trip box set. Please, please, please!

RICK RUSSELL

Nick: THAT is a lovely idea, Rick.

EMPEROR DAVROS

I'm a long-time fan and Dalek maniac. I was wondering if we are getting, or if there's going to be, a story highlighting or explaining what happened to Davros after the end of the 2005 audio story *Terror Firma* when the Dalek Emperor side of his personality overtook him as he and his Daleks left Earth. It would be interesting to hear what happened

to the 'prime' Davros in regard to the Restoration Empire (after the Imperial-Renegade Civil War), his early involvement in the Time War (whether his Davros personality was restored or not) or even a possible interaction with the other Davros from *Palindrome* and *Restoration of the Daleks* (and hopefully answer some big questions in regards to Davros's appearance in *The Stolen Earth* and *Journey's End*).

MARK KINVIG

Nick: This is a lovely can of worms we must put on our agenda to open one day. Exciting! No plans at the moment, Mark, but as I say, one day...

SUPER SIXIE

I just wanted to drop you a quick note to congratulate everyone involved in the latest Sixth Doctor box sets with Mel and Hebe. I've absolutely adored the change from the monthly range to box sets, giving us various voices and storytelling styles from different production teams. What we've had from Jacqueline Rayner and her team has been first class – I'm really looking forward to seeing Ruth Madeley in **Doctor Who** on television this autumn with David Tennant, and Bonnie Langford next year with Ncuti Gatwa. Big Finish had them long before Bad Wolf!

KIRK ALLEN

Nick: Jac has done so much great work for us, and I'm really glad the new Doctor ranges are working for you, Kirk. **The Monthly Adventures** had become a big, unwieldy thing which, although we loved it, we knew had to change. And the strength of different production teams working on each Doctor's range is really working well, if you don't mind me saying so myself! **VORTEX**

BIG FINISH'S DOCTOR WHO
60TH ANNIVERSARY STORY
IS MOVING TOWARDS
ITS CONCLUSION...



Worlds in Union

ONCE AND Future has been an epic adventure for us all, a real rollercoaster ride for the Doctor, his companions, friends and enemies as he's lurched from one body to another after being struck by a degeneration gun during the Time War.

But which Doctor was shot with it? Was it the War Doctor? The Eighth Doctor? And who was responsible for this diabolical device resulting in our favourite Time Lord shifting through his different incarnations at pace?

The Union, by Matt Fitton, is the final adventure in **Once and Future**, which will see all of our questions answered as events come to a head.

Producer David Richardson admits that the story was a challenge, bringing together so many elements from stories which were recorded not

just months, but years apart. He says: "**Once and Future** was about as much fun as you could possibly hope for as a producer. To work with so many Doctors and so many key characters within the bounds of one ongoing storyline was hugely rewarding, and those of us who worked on this actually got to celebrate the 60th anniversary over several years as it was always in our heads!

"The significance of it has gradually sunk in over the long period of time that we have worked on **Once and Future**. When we first started planning, long before the terrible days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 60th anniversary seemed like a vague and faraway thing – we didn't know if the BBC would have any major plans for it. And here we are in 2023 and the BBC's plans are massive and so hugely

exciting. How brilliant to be a part of this very special year for **Doctor Who**.

"I think what excites me the most is that, yes, it's an anniversary that looks back with rosy nostalgia, but that is matched with a massive anticipation of what the future holds. 2024 and beyond is just going to be incredible."

RECALLING THE recording of *The Union*, David says it was: "The fourth story to be recorded (after *The Martian Invasion of Planetoid 50*, *Past Lives* and *Two's Company* – in that order).

"The COVID-19 pandemic, lockdowns – we were all so far apart but brought together online in a shared experience of making exciting, heroic stories during those dark days. That's my overriding memory, the



Above: Carole Ann Ford

connection forged when we were all so hungry for human contact."

Matt has been responsible for script editing this series so has kept on top of the arc with the other writers, and now he's able to put all of that knowledge into practice as he dons his writer's hat with this tale.

He says: "The challenge of the puzzle box, of putting everything together and making everything make sense, is something I've done a couple of times before in other series.

"But this one was particularly satisfying because the listeners will get an answer to all of their questions around the degeneration. We're going to find out who, what, how and why – while also leaving things open for our coda episode which will follow next year.

"With this being the 60th anniversary, from the start I really

wanted to have Susan in it. I wanted to go back to the beginning and pay homage to that first TARDIS team by having the Doctor's first companion – his granddaughter – and then bring her together with River Song. I think it's appropriate to have his first companion and his biggest fan joining forces, to try and help him through this.

"We'll hear a lot of familiar voices in this one, which is wonderful."

LOOKING BACK at the overall story, Matt says: "Working on *Once and Future* we've been pulling together lots of strands from all of *Doctor Who*'s first 60

years, and we've a few little Easter eggs along the way, harking back to all of the show's history.

"As well as having the Eighth Doctor, part of this is a Fourth

Doctor story so I got to write a mini adventure for Tom Baker as well. It's the Eighth Doctor who leads most of this adventure as he gets to finally work out exactly what's been going on with this degeneration.

"There are certain scenes which I wrote before we even had the full storyline finished due to actor availability, so it was good fun working those into the final script.

FROM THE START I REALLY WANTED TO HAVE SUSAN IN IT. I WANTED TO GO BACK TO THE BEGINNING...

MATT FITTON

"This is probably the script that's taken me the longest to write, from start to finish. I'm really looking forward to hearing the final production – there are certain encounters I just can't wait to hear!"

As Matt mentioned, there is another part to *Once and Future* which will follow in 2024.

Without giving anything away, David concludes: "*The Final Act* is a coda. The first seven stories in *Once and Future* cover the story arc from beginning to end, but in 2024 we have the epilogue. And what a lovely thing it is too." **VORTEX**

ONCE AND FUTURE: THE UNION



- RELEASED: OCTOBER 2023
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/sixty 



LIVING IN A BOX

THE THIRD AND FOURTH DOCTORS FINALLY MEET AS PART OF THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS...

DOCTORS encountering one another has become something of a tradition for anniversary stories both on television and at Big Finish. And this November we're getting a special 60th anniversary adventure which brings together the Doctors of the 1970s in *The Box of Terrors*.

Written by Lizzie Hopley, this new audiobook features the Third and Fourth Doctors as well as Sarah Jane Smith (twice!) plus Omega, and is performed by Jon Culshaw who originated the whole idea.

Producer David Richardson says: "I really have to credit Jon for starting this one off. We were chatting and he pitched this great idea of making an audiobook for the

Third and Fourth Doctors, with two exciting villains for them to face.

"Jon's enthusiasm is infectious and very soon we were on Zoom with Lizzie and script editor Roland Moore, all firing off ideas and suggestions for the route this one could take. It was great to have so much input from everyone at the start of the process, and that then fired up Lizzie as she began chipping away at what is a 60,000 word epic!"

Lizzie was delighted to be asked to write the story, and says: "I was truly honoured. To feel so valued by Big Finish and be asked to write such a big thing for the 60th anniversary and for the legend that is Jon was a big deal for me.

"I was actually first approached

by the wondrous Roland. David and Jon already had some initial ideas such as the meeting of the two Doctors and the villains they wanted. And then in the Zoom meeting we let our imaginations go wild!

"I write prose anyway so felt quite comfortable working on this, but making prose suitable for an audio performance is very different. It needs a certain buoyant quality and pace. I really just imagined Jon reading the whole thing – that brought it to life. And then watching Jon actually acting as both the Third and Fourth Doctors on screen in my study was epic!"

VORTEX ASKS Lizzie how she would sum up the adventure? She explains: "Such a hard question! We start off with the Third Doctor being framed for the destruction of an entire civilisation before following a strange



Above: Jon Culshaw

comet to Earth. There, he encounters the Fourth Doctor trying to stop the mysterious 'Sand Box' being opened and whatever's inside from getting out. The problem is, neither Doctor knows what the Sand Box is and what they're facing. The other slight problem is they're both accompanied by their respective Sarah!"

Lizzie had no trouble capturing the voices of the two Doctors. She says: "I have them both firmly in my head from writing for them and watching them so often. Don't forget these are the heroes of my youth. Having them fight together was fun though I exhausted all my descriptions of both to differentiate them for Jon!"

"I found writing for both Sarahs tougher. I had my pick of companions before I came up with this crazy idea and persuaded everyone to go with it. I felt the slightly younger Sarah was a little more rebellious and the older slightly more knowledgeable about the risks and dangers – and of course she'd seen the Third Doctor 'die' and regenerate which gave her a

WHAT IF WE HAD A STORY FEATURING THE THIRD AND FOURTH DOCTORS WHO NEVER ENCOUNTERED ONE ANOTHER ON SCREEN?

JON CULSHAW

whole different dimension. This horror and big adjustment was still to come for the first Sarah. I called one Sarah Jane and the other Sarah which helped differentiate them, the rest was Jon's problem!"

ACTOR AND impressionist Jon is delighted his idea has been brought to life: "I remember mentioning this to David a while back. What if we had a story featuring the Third and Fourth Doctors who never encountered one another on screen? I was fascinated to think what sort of dynamic they would have. And then, why don't we

have them up against a mega villain like Omega?

"A little while later, David got in touch and said, 'Yes, we'd like to do that. We'll get Lizzie on board, as she's up for writing it.' And the subsequent Zoom call gave rise to so many wonderful things, as well as the character elements.

"I was always so fascinated by how these Doctors would interact: how they might cooperate, how they might clash, where it all might land. And Lizzie wrote that just beautifully.

"They had an interesting relationship in real life, Jon Pertwee and Tom Baker. They are such wonderful raconteurs, incredible storytellers, and they both have bohemian elegances in different ways. The chance to have them together was irresistible. I couldn't stop reading Lizzie's script once it came through, I kept looking at it! I hope it's something that listeners will cherish.

"It was a wonderful world in which to immerse oneself, and there's the added fact that we had the two Sarah Janes from two different eras meeting each other. The way Lizzie wrote them was really moving, and they almost became like an elder and younger sister, or like a daughter and mother."

David concludes: "Jon brought his army of voices with him so *The Box of Terrors* sounds like a full-cast production despite being a single voice reading. And of course, this one needed to be released for the 60th anniversary – how could we not?" **VORTEX**

THE AUDIO NOVELS: THE BOX OF TERRORS



- RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2023
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/terrors





Big Finish's **Doctor Who** cover artwork is celebrated with a very special coffee table book...

WE'VE GOT IT COVERED

ONE OF the delights for fans of Big Finish is the cover artwork which accompanies each release. Over the years, we've seen a number of artists of note working on the **Doctor Who** range, using their wits and ingenuity as well as a host of stock images to embellish the shots to create something different, new and outstanding. (Think Clayton Hickman colouring laundry liquid pods red to represent packets of blood for *Project: Twilight*, for example!)

Artists all have their own style. Some try to capture moments of drama from an individual release whilst others go

for something more broad-ranging and moody which encapsulates the overall tone and feel of the box set.

Big Finish has been releasing original **Doctor Who** audio dramas since 1999, and now 100 of the cover artworks have been brought together in hard cover physical form in *The Art of the Audio Adventures*.

The book has been written by Mark Wright, editor of volume one of *The Big Finish Companion*, as well as a script writer and producer on various Big Finish ranges over the years.

Mark says: "I was brought in after the concept for the book had already been discussed. Senior producer John

Ainsworth, who I've worked with a lot on book projects over the years, thought I'd be a good fit for this.

"I love having an overview of how something develops over a long period of time and that's served me well on other books of concept art that I've worked on such as *Battlestar Galactica: Designing Spaceships*. So I was very excited to be asked to do this.

"*The Art of the Audio Adventures* is 100 covers curated from the entire run of **Doctor Who** at Big Finish, starting from the early days up to a couple of productions due for release after publication of the book.

"I hope what we demonstrate here is



how the cover art from Big Finish has evolved as digital artwork has become ever more sophisticated – alongside some detailed commentary from cover artists, writers, actors and producers.

“Each cover artwork is presented with and without text, all beautifully packaged by Big Finish’s in-house brilliant graphic designer Mark Plastow. It’s very much a high-end, coffee table art book.”

Mark was given a very specific focus for the content of the book. He explains: “We decided this had to be purely **Doctor Who**. No spin-offs, no **Worlds of Doctor Who**, just ranges led by a Doctor (which also includes the **Companion Chronicles**). It was a necessary limitation as just considering **Doctor Who** covers left us with an embarrassment of riches. It’s meant some covers that are worthy of inclusion have not made the cut this time round – we had to be quite brutal.”

A number of artists have been interviewed by Mark for the book, as well as Big Finish’s first co-producer Gary Russell. Mark explains he spoke to: “As many people as I could who have contributed to the covers, although sadly there are a couple of people we didn’t manage to pin down.

“**GARY WAS** very generous with his time in talking about Clayton and Lee Binding’s early covers. Mark Plastow has provided additional commentary and other artists include Simon Holub, Ryan Aplin, Caroline Tankersley, Claudia Gironi, Sean

IT’S VERY MUCH A HIGH-END, COFFEE TABLE ART BOOK.

MARK WRIGHT

Longmore, Rafe Wallbank and Anthony Dry. We also have some of the Doctors giving insight into their favourite covers.”

“It’s been a real joy, and a trip down memory lane. I’ve been involved with Big Finish since the early days and this took me back to those pioneering moments. Back in the day I shared a flat with Clayton and got to see first-hand the work he put into those covers. Very happy days. Also speaking to the cover artists has been a pleasure and I’d like to thank them for being so giving with their time.”

It would be remiss of *Vortex* not to ask Mark if he has a personal favourite? He tells *Vortex*: “That’s a really difficult one but I would have to pull out *The Church and the Crown*. Aside from it being a favourite from mine and Cavan Scott’s days writing together, the cover is a beautiful piece of work from Clayton. It’s so elegant and exciting. The Fifth Doctor in a musketeer’s hat – what’s not to like?!” **VORTEX**

THE ART OF THE AUDIO ADVENTURES



- RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2023
- FORMAT: HARDBACK

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/artbook





The War Master is back for four very different adventures...

GOING ROGUE

THE TENTH War Master box set, *Rogue Encounters*, sees our favourite Time Lord anti-hero in a quartet of new tales, with some familiar faces popping up along the way. It features four adventures: *Runtime* by Tim Foley, *Manhunt* by Rochana Patel, *The Sublime Porte* by James Goss and *Alone* by Scott Handcock.

Runtime opens the set and producer (and writer) Scott says: "The idea for this script came about after I'd been to see the film *1917* directed by Sam Mendes. It's a brilliant film set during the First World War and told in one continuous take. There's a mission with a ticking clock, and the journey and drama is just incredible.

"I'm not normally a fan of war movies but it really blew me away so, as you do when you see things

which get under your skin like that, you think, Is there an equivalent we could do on audio? Could we make something similar in a war setting?' And then you think, Actually, we've got the War Master set in the Time War... could we do something like *1917* with the War Master and the Daleks?

"I took the brief to Tim, as he loves a challenge. Tim's brilliant for stuff like this as he puts his own unique spin on it. I particularly love working with him because you can provide a brief as simple as, 'I want to tell a war mission in real time and make it all one continuous scene', and Tim will just come up with stuff to surprise you."

Scott adds: "It's always good to have the Master fighting the Daleks – we've not had that much of it in **The War Master**, and this is very much kicking off our series of one-off adventures."

MANHUNT FEATURES the Master on Earth in a story which will appeal to fans of **The X-Files**. Scott explains: "I'd been working with Rochana on a couple of other series, and had this idea at the back of my mind of doing an alien abduction story and examining the impact it has on the people who are left behind. Roch was the person who said, 'We could do a road trip in America with some English holidaymakers where one of them goes missing and the other is left to deal with the consequences.'

"One of the reasons I wanted to make an alien abduction story is, genuinely, the idea of it terrifies me. I don't know if I believe in aliens or not, but when I was growing up in the 1990s, **The X-Files** had a profound effect on me. The music and the idea



Above (l-r): Scott Haran, Shai Matheson, Agnes Nyama and Loreece Harrison

of alien abductions was one of the most terrifying things that I could conceive, and I've never really shaken it. There's a real dread to that idea of losing time, or not knowing where you are, or that inexplicable thing that we're never going to understand – and I wanted to tap into that fear.

"I don't think **Doctor Who** has made that many alien abduction stories in the traditional sense, so it was nice to tackle it here."

THE SUBLIME *Porte* is the set's third tale which brings together the Master and the nemesis of Torchwood, Bilis Manger, played by the late Murray Melvin.

Scott explains: "Back in 2017, it seemed like such a mad idea to bring back Bilis Manger. He'd only really appeared in two episodes of **Torchwood**, over a decade previously, and yet Murray had absolutely owned the character.

When he arrived in studio, he was so full of life and enthusiasm for the project, it wasn't long before he became a staple of the **Torchwood** range. He made Bilis such an inscrutable, charming, dangerous character."

"I was chatting to Russell T Davies about it one day, explaining what I hoped to do with it, and I just happened to mention that it might be fun to unite Derek Jacobi and Murray Melvin together playing the



Above: Murray Melvin

Master and Bilis Manger. Russell instantly came back and said, 'I love that idea. Wouldn't it be great if Bilis terrified the Master?'

"Pitting him against the Master – and Murray against Sir Derek – was an absolute joy. You could not wish for classier or more powerful performances, and it's been heartbreaking listening to edits knowing how much Murray still had to offer."

ALONE CONCLUDES this set with the return of an old favourite – the gentle Professor Yana from television episode *Utopia*. Scott tells *Vortex*: "The idea for this script came about partly because, having worked on **The**

War Master for such a long time, I've seen *Utopia* quite a few times. And you can't not fall in love with Derek's performance as Professor Yana.

I just happened to mention that it might be fun to unite Derek Jacobi and Murray Melvin... Russell instantly came back and said, 'I love that idea. Wouldn't it be great if Bilis terrified the Master?'

SCOTT HANDCOCK

"He expressed an interest in playing someone a little more vulnerable, and we've had a few stories where the Master is on the backfoot. Because the Master is the Master, however he's responding, it's not quite the same thing so the idea of bringing back Professor Yana was borne out of Derek's desire to do something a little more human."

Sir Derek adds: "I love the character of Yana. He's sweet, gentle and nice. I've got a mental picture of me as Yana so in that sense it was helpful. I never watch myself acting, I've never seen it – but I do know what I looked like as I still get a lot of fan mail of photographs to sign." **VORTEX**

THE WAR MASTER: ROGUE ENCOUNTERS



- RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2023
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/porte 



VORTEX HAS A CHAT WITH BIG FINISH'S SENIOR PRODUCER JOHN AINSWORTH, IN ONE OF OUR MEET THE MAKERS FEATURES...

had a cassette of the **Doctor Who** sounds effects LP, so we used noises from that, and more or less made up our adventures as we went along. Some were sensible and others were quite ridiculous, but we were playing around and were open to the possibility of telling stories on audio.

"Years later, when I discovered Bill Baggs, Gary Russell and Nick Briggs were doing Audio Visuals, and telling new **Doctor Who** stories in audio, I was quite excited by that. They had huge potential and I was very interested, so I became involved.

"We created our own **Doctor Who** audio dramas on a fan basis – we weren't making any money from it and we sold the tapes at conventions in the same way that people at the time sold fanzines."

GARY AND Nick would go on to become producer and executive producer respectively with Big Finish. John recalls: "I wasn't involved in the audio production side initially, but in 2000, just as *The Apocalypse Element* was being released, Shaun Lyon, who'd been running the Big Finish website up to that point, decided step down. Because I'd been working on websites for other companies, Gary asked me if I'd be interested in doing that for Big Finish. It was a

PRODUCING THE GOODS

FROM THE outside, it's clear to see that Big Finish is a slick operation, regularly releasing a host of exciting audio dramas each month, featuring our favourite Time Lord, and many other characters we've grown up with on our TV screens or in print.

Working away quietly in the background to ensure that everything arrives when it should, is John Ainsworth. Having taken on the role of senior producer in autumn last year, John is no stranger

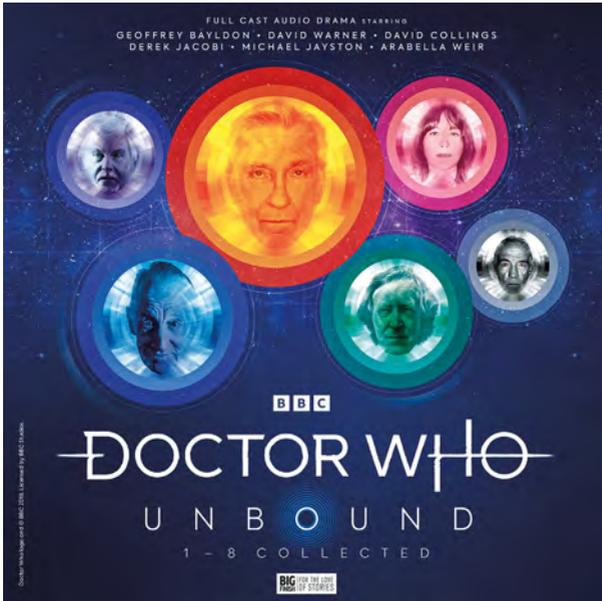
to Big Finish, having been involved since the early days of the company.

He's someone with a lifelong interest in audio drama, having been involved with Audio Visuals in the 1980s, the fan audio series which was produced by Bill Baggs and later Gary Russell, starring Nicholas Briggs as the Doctor.

John says: "When I was growing up and still at school, my friend Andrew and I were very much into **Doctor Who** and did our own audio adventures, just the two of us. We

new way to be involved, so I ran the website, and dealt with the media side of things for a while.

"I hadn't been involved on the creative side of Big Finish at that point, but I directed a stage play called *Deceptions*, which was a two-hander, starring Jacqueline Pearce, who was a friend of mine. We did that for a three-week run in Brighton, and Jason, Gary and Nick came to see it, which was very nice of them! Jason came up to me after the performance

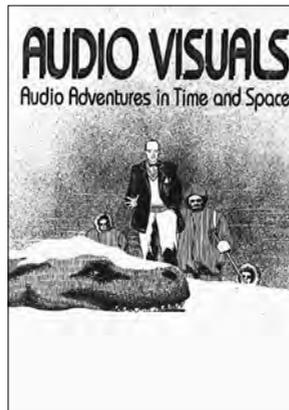


and complemented me on the production and said, 'You should be working for us.' Almost immediately, Gary offered me *The Plague Herds of Excelsis* to direct, the Bernice Summerfield entry in the **Excelsis** series. And that was my introduction to directing at Big Finish."

AS TIME progressed, John was given the chance to work as producer of the **2000AD** audio series, with Toby Longworth as Judge Dredd and Simon Pegg leading the Strontium Dog series. He then became co-producer on the **Doctor Who** 'What if...?' series, **Doctor Who Unbound**.

John admits: "I don't necessarily think that I appreciated the fact of the time, but producing and directing **2000AD** was an extremely interesting learning process. Nick was involved in the early titles, but he became less and less involved, so I eventually took over running the whole show on my own.

"It was a great learning experience – as well as directing in studio, I was working with budgets, commissioning and approving packaging and the covers, as well seeing the CD's being mastered for pressing. **2000AD** was a great



series which sadly came to an end.

"And working on **Doctor Who Unbound** was a real joy, especially as we were creating and casting new Doctors, as part of the 40th anniversary celebrations."

John briefly ran his own production company, Noise Monster, producing **Space: 1899**, a steampunk series with Victorians in space, based on the role-playing game of the same name. However, some years later, Big Finish came calling once again, and, amongst other titles, John took on the job of producing the Sixth Doctor audios for a few years, towards the end of the **Doctor Who Monthly Range**.

And then, last year, John received a call he wasn't expecting.

He explains: "The senior producer job came out of the blue – I was taken completely by surprise, to be honest. David Richardson had been working as senior producer of all the Big Finish ranges for a long time. He'd been doing it for something like 15 years.

WORKING ON DOCTOR WHO UNBOUND WAS A REAL JOY, ESPECIALLY AS WE WERE CREATING AND CASTING NEW DOCTORS...

JOHN AINSWORTH

"I was actually instrumental in getting David in to do the job. At the time, back around 2007, Big Finish were looking for someone to be the line producer. I'd done some work with the publishing company Visual Imagination, who used to produce *Starburst*, *Cult Times* and other sci-fi and film titles, and had worked with David there. I knew that he was very organised, very efficient and very good with deadlines – that's exactly the sort of person needed for this job!

"I think the only reason I didn't put myself forward for the job at the time was that I wasn't based in London! I was living up north and of course, this was in the days before remote



sailing, as there's lots of things that can make life difficult! Sometimes, it could be actor availability, that sort of thing, so I've got to keep an overview of all of that and try to keep things on track. I map out the release schedules for the months and years to come.

"In terms of what's being released each month, I need to keep an eye out for potential conflicts, to make sure, for example, that we don't have two Sixth Doctor box set titles in the same month. I'm keeping it all moving and on time, really!"

IN ADDITION to his role as senior producer, John also enjoys the chance to roll his sleeves up and get hands-on with a particular release. He oversaw the recent **Doom's Day** box set, for example.

He adds: "The senior producer's job is a desk job really, since I don't have to be in studio or listening in on recordings.

"But I do like directing and working with actors and writers, so I didn't want to give up on that completely, so I do still keep my hand in.

"Recently, I did **Doom's Day**, which

I SUPPOSE IT'S FAIR TO SAY I'M THE MAIN FOCAL POINT FOR GETTING ALL OF OUR PRODUCTIONS RELEASED...

JOHN AINSWORTH

working was a thing, so David got the job and did it brilliantly for 15 years.

"Eventually he wanted to step down, and I got a phone call from Nick Briggs, asking if I would be interested in being considered as David's replacement. It actually came at the perfect time for me really because I had left the publisher Eaglemoss, just before it closed. I was freelance and available to take on a new challenge, so I was very pleased."

THE ROLE of senior producer sounds intriguing, and *Vortex* asks John what his duties now entail. He explains: "I suppose it's fair to say I'm the main focal point for getting all of our

productions released, but there are always questions which will come up. I'm often emailed by producers who are flagging certain things, which they feel I should be aware of.

"I keep an eye on the schedules all the time to ensure we're hitting our deadlines. The actual development process for a box set of audios is nearly a year from the point of starting to think about it and talking to writers, right through to delivering the masters to the pressing plant and having them ready to be sold on the website. It's a long process and there's various milestones you want to hit along the way, to keep everything on schedule.

"But, of course, it's not always plain

was something different. And I have some other things coming up in the not too distant future as well."

John's particularly delighted to be working with Big Finish in **Doctor Who's** diamond anniversary year.

He laughs: "Yes! it's very exciting, and funnily enough, I remember doing the 40th anniversary when I was working on **Doctor Who Unbound**, then for the 50th anniversary I had the **Destiny of the Doctor** series, which was produced by Big Finish with AudioGo, and here I am again. But will I be here for the 70th? I hope so!" **VORTEX**



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RELEASE SCHEDULE

Please note that Big Finish is currently operating a digital-first release schedule. The mail-out of collector's edition CDs and vinyls will be delayed, but all physical purchases of new releases will unlock a digital copy that can be immediately downloaded – or played on the Big Finish app – from the release date.

FOR FULL DETAILS AND UPDATES VISIT:
bgfn.sh/whatsnew

OCTOBER 2023

- DW | **ONCE AND FUTURE**
Time Lord Immemorial (SPECIAL EDITION)

- DW | **ONCE AND FUTURE**
Time Lord Immemorial (STANDARD EDITION)

- DW | **ONCE AND FUTURE**
The Union (SPECIAL EDITION)

- DW | **ONCE AND FUTURE**
The Union (STANDARD EDITION)

- DW | **THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES**
Intelligence for War (BOX SET)

- DW | **THE PATERNOSTER GANG**
Trespassers: Rogues Gallery (BOX SET)

- THE OMEGA FACTOR**
The House That Wasn't Haunted (2 DISC)

- TORCHWOOD** *Odyssey* (76)

NOVEMBER 2023

- DW | **THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES**
Audacity (BOX SET)

- DW | **THE DOCTOR CHRONICLES**
THE TENTH DOCTOR
Defender of the Earth (BOX SET)

- DW | **THE DOCTOR CHRONICLES**
THE ELEVENTH DOCTOR
Broken Hearts **DLO**

- DW | **THE WAR MASTER**
Rogue Encounters (BOX SET)

- DW | **THE AUDIO NOVELS**
The Box of Terrors **DLO**

DOCTOR WHO
The Art of the Audio Adventures
 (HARDBACK BOOK)

TORCHWOOD *Oodunnit* (77)

DECEMBER 2023

- DW | **THE SEVENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES**
The Last Day (BOX SET)

- DW | **THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES**
In the Bleak Midwinter (BOX SET)

- DW | **THE DOCTOR CHRONICLES**
THE ELEVENTH DOCTOR
Everywhere and Anywhere (BOX SET)

- DW | **THE WAR DOCTOR BEGINS**
Enemy Mine (BOX SET)

- TORCHWOOD** *Oracle* (78)

JANUARY 2024

- DW | **THE FIRST DOCTOR ADVENTURES**
TBA (BOX SET)

- DW | **RANI TAKES ON THE WORLD**
The Revenge of Wormwood (BOX SET)

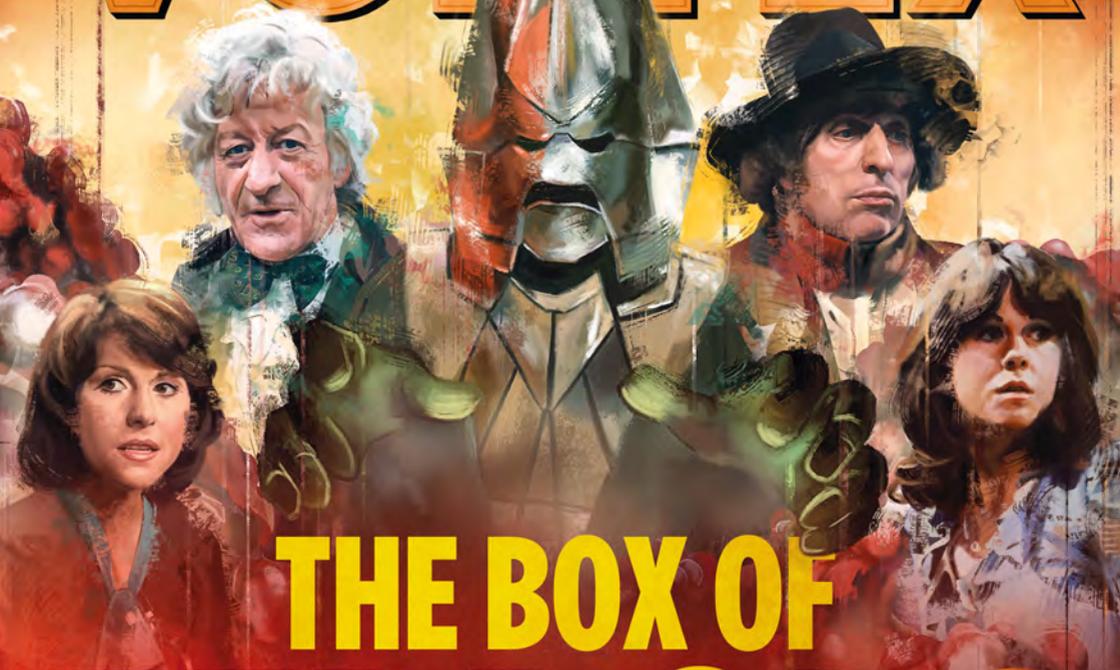
- DW | **THE AUDIO NOVELS**
The Chaos Crusade **DLO**

- TORCHWOOD** *TBA* (79)

DLO = DOWNLOAD ONLY • **DW** = DOCTOR WHO
 DATES CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS.

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX



THE BOX OF TERRORS

THE THIRD AND FOURTH DOCTORS
FINALLY MEET AS PART OF THE 60TH
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS!

ALSO INSIDE

AUDACITY

THE EIGHTH DOCTOR MEETS A NEW
FRIEND... AND SOME OLD ENEMIES.



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OF FINISH OF STORIES