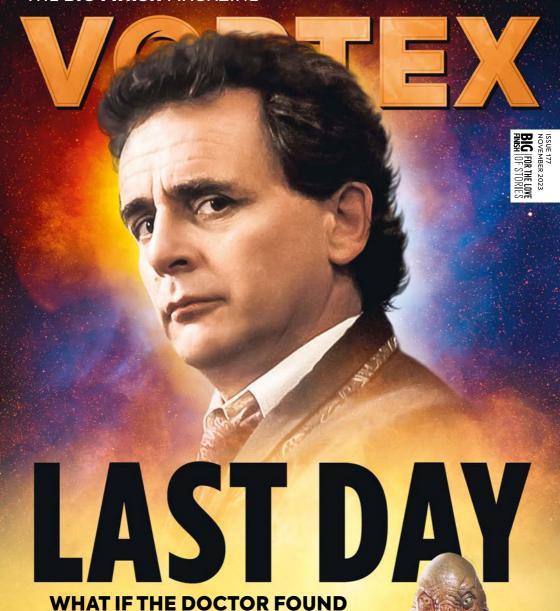
THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE



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STAR COPS BLOOD MOON

IN SPACE, no one can hear you scream – even if you're eagerly awaiting the arrival of the next series of adventures featuring the Star Cops! Star Cops was originally broadcast in weekly instalments, and now, in an arresting development (see what I did there?), Big Finish is replicating that feel with a brand-new six-part mini-series, Blood Moon, being released monthly between January and June 2024.

Expect murder, kidnappings and exciting cliffhangers as original cast members David Calder (Commander Nathan Spring), Trevor Cooper (Inspector Colin Devis) and Linda Newton (Acting Chief Superintendent Pal Kenzy) return to investigate alongside Philip Olivier (Inspector Paul Bailey) and Lynsey Murrell (Inspector Alice Okoro).

A Star Cops investigation into a murder on Earth leads to an amazing revelation. The team's resilience is tested as the fallout affects their next cases.

The titles and writers of the six gripping adventures in the **Star Cops** Blood Moon mini-series are: I Was Killed Yesterday by Andrew Smith; Daughters of Death by Nicola Baldwin; Troubled Waters by Una McCormack; A Cage of Sky by James Swallow; London Zone by Andrew Smith; and Devis by Roland Moore. VORTEX

STAR COPS: RIOOD MOON

- RELEASED: JANUARY-JUNE 2024
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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EDITORIAL

ACCORDING TO the old saying, all good things must come to an end. And in this issue of *Vortex*, we preview two stories with cracking finales...

It's already been revealed that Enemy Mine, the sixth **The War**

Doctor Begins box set, is going to be the last one in this series. I've quickly grown to love these adventures. Through my job here on Vortex, I've been lucky enough to get to know our War Doctor, Jonathon Carley, rather well and you honestly couldn't meet a more humble, warm and friendly man. His talent is phenomenal and if you haven't heard his interpretation of the character, I strongly recommend you do.

The other ending starting in December is *The Last Day* which chronicles the final hours of the Seventh Doctor in the run up to the *TV Movie*. I've got such a soft spot for Sylvester McCoy and his Doctor (not just because he's the first Time Lord from my country!). The idea of knowing the events which led him to having to collect the Master's remains for Skaro is actually quite scary. Writers Matt Fitton and Guy Adams have certainly given me *The Fear* when previewing it this month!

Oh, and in case anyone is wondering where the preview is for the next Eighth Doctor box set, *In the Bleak Midwinter*, containing three stories set around the festive season, we'll be featuring it in the next *Vortex*. After all, Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without the Eighth Doctor!

Kem



SINCE THE summer of 2021, Big Finish has been bringing us the earliest adventures of the War Doctor, the reluctant warrior who was forged in fire. Jonathon Carley's vocal performance has won deserved acclaim for its uncanny similarity to the late, great Sir John Hurt.

And now, these early skirmishes are coming to their finale. *Enemy Mine* concludes the story of Case (Ajjaz Awad), the Berserker class cyborg Dalek/human hybrid fighting the Time War. But will salvation come with a familiar face?

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 discover the consequences in three adventures, The Hybrid's Choice by Ajjaz Awad-Ibrahim – Case actor herself, Fear Nothing by Mark Wright and Exit Strategy by Matt Fitton.

Producer David Richardson says:
"And so the beginning ends... it's
the final box set of **The War Doctor Begins** as we reach the conclusion of
the story of the War Doctor and Case.
"It's a turbulent and emotional
final chapter with a very special

appearance as Paul McGann vworps in as the Eighth Doctor. How can he appear alongside his later and forgotten incarnation? All will be revealed...

"It's perfect to have Ajjaz – in her first writing credit for Big Finish – taking charge of the first episode of the set. She brings wonderful new dimensions to the story and has created one of my favourite ever Dalek characters too!"

Matt, who is also the script editor on this set, adds: "It's volume six of **The War Doctor Begins** and in *Enemy Mine* he confronts Case. He's



effectively up against an enemy of his own making. In this set, we're bringing these journeys through the War Doctor's early days to an end by pitting him against his former friend."

THE HYBRID'S Choice opens the set. David says: "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."

Matt adds: "The character of Case has been one of those moments of alchemy when you have a fantastic character who has been perfectly cast. We first met Case in the second **The War Doctor Begins** set, *Warbringer*, and Case just leapt off the page after Timothy X Atack originated the character.

"But then, when you get someone like Ajjaz playing her so vividly, it was sad to say goodbye to Case at the end of that release.

"I wanted to find a way to bring her back and explore the dynamic between Case and the Doctor



further. We had her as a kind of friend in Comrades-in-Arms, and now we're going to meet her as an enemy. We'll be looking at the War Doctor through Case's eyes, and it's a chance for him to see the consequences of his actions up close.

"We wanted to explore what distinguishes this incarnation from the Doctor's other selves. He's been specifically created for this purpose, to be part of the Time War, and it's a situation he can't get out of. He has to stick around and see things through, and as he goes

along he's trying to formulate a way to end it and find good solutions. However, that's not always possible.

"When I found out that Ajjaz was a writer as well as an actor, I was quite keen to get her to do a script for us because she is so engaged with the character. You sometimes get a sense of connection between character and actor and you think, 'They've got an idea of their inner life and they might want to explore other things about them too.'

"That sparked the idea, so I suggested to David that we might ask Ajjaz to write a script for us. We then had a few Zoom calls and shaped the story. The Hybrid's Choice is very much about what Case's life might be like. She has the temptation to fight offered to her by the Daleks, or she can escape and try to find a way to live her life the way she wants to. But, as usual with the Daleks and the Time Strategist in particular, nothing is quite what it seems."

AJJAZ TELLS Vortex: "I thought Case was a great character when I first played her but I wasn't expecting her to be as popular as she has been. I really didn't think Case would



become a fan favourite having call backs again and again.

"It's been amazing for me as it means that I've had the chance to not only come back to Big Finish and to act again, but also to develop the character. That's allowed me to get comfortable with the voice and understand Case more.

"You don't always get that opportunity, especially with audio, as you tend to go in with a script, which you've read through and have got familiar with what you're going to say, but you haven't met the other actors. And as it's audio, you don't know your lines off by heart so you're still reading off the script and don't have as much time to think about your character. As a returning character, it makes your job a lot easier as you already know something about who you're playing."

Writing her first Big Finish script was a challenge for Ajjaz. She reveals: "When Matt asked me if I'd like to write a script it was a bit daunting. You know that feeling when you're really excited about something but it also makes you feel sick? That's exactly how I felt!

MYSELF. CAN I DO THIS? CAN I REALLY DO IT? CAN I WRITE SOMETHING THIS CHALLENGING?

AJJAZ AWAD-IBRAHIM

"And I began to question myself.
Can I do this? Can I really do it? Can
I write something this challenging?
I've written plays and a couple of
short films and things like that
for myself before, but this was my
first ever proper commission.

"I was asked to come up with an idea, a story that fitted into the realm of an established concept using well-known characters that already existed. And on top of that, it was science fiction! I'd never written sci-fi before.

"Mark, Matt and I were given the commission to write the final three episodes of the Case and the War Doctor series. We hadn't decided whose would go in what order until we came up the idea of what would happen after the end of the last series where Case had been left behind after the Doctor departed."

AJJAZ FOUND her inspiration from a decade previously. She explains: "The basic idea for this story came from a dream I had in around 2012. When I woke up, I thought that it would make a really good film so I wrote it down.

"The dream was basically about a person who discovers they can travel through time and they are really enjoying it, going to different periods and exploring, meeting different people.

"This person still lives at home with a parent and when they get back from one of their time travelling expeditions, they tell the parent, 'Oh, you'll never guess what... I can time travel now.' But then the parent is very upset and warns them, 'You shouldn't do this. It's really dangerous, please stop.'

"But they carry on time travelling and end up hurting someone or something happens and then the parent reveals, 'It happened because I'm you from the past. I came from the future to make sure that you didn't do what I ended up doing.'

"I think that sort of makes sense!



"Itook that concept and put it into the script with the idea that Case would time travel back to meet herself before she became half Dalek and try to change the course of her life. At the same time she's also looking after the child Case and then having to reveal to the child at some point that they are actually them. Other bits of the story grew from there."

FEAR NOTHING has been written by Big Finish veteran Mark. David says: "Fear Nothing sees the War Doctor's search for Case diverted by Commodore Tamasan, summoning him against his will to a remote TARDIS dry dock facility at the very edge of the war. Case has been unleashed by the Daleks to eliminate a key Time Lord asset, an asset who could change the course of the Time War." Matt says: "I love Mark's writing.

particularly what he's done with the new series Doctors. He really has an ear for their voices, and the run of Twelfth Doctor comic strips he wrote were spot on.

"Mark just felt a good fit for the Time War and for the War Doctor. We also have quite a big role for Commodore Tamasan as well.

"It's a really claustrophobic, tense cat and mouse story that he's put together. We're on a dreadnought ship, with the hunter and the hunted. I'm really looking forward to hearing it as it has such a great atmosphere."

How did Mark find writing for this different incarnation of the Doctor? He explains: "John Hurt's characterisation of the War Doctor was really bold and Jonathon has blended his own interpretation into that, the voice of this Doctor is so distinct.

"I heard that voice in my head while

writing which was really enjoyable – especially in how far I could push that growly grumpiness. I'm not used to writing a Doctor who'll happily strip down a staser rifle, so that element took me by surprise!

"I've got to know Jonathon a little bit in the last couple of years, we bump into each other at Manchester events every now and then, so we've been able to talk through his thoughts on the character and what I was planning to do with Fear Nothing. That was incredibly helpful. His performance continues to develop and dazzle in a myriad of ways. It's such a joy to be part of that."

Mark was given a pretty open brief: "It was just about having a bridging story in this trio that pushed Case's journey forward, how she would function as a true Dalek weapon? That was probably the most challenging element, to do justice to Case and Ajjaz's performance. The setting of the dreadnought TARDIS came quite quickly and everything built from there."

Summing up the adventure, Mark says that Fear Nothing is: "Die Hard in an enormous Battle TARDISI I've always been fascinated by Battle TARDISes, something created for exploration being turned into an engine of war, and how far you can take that during something like the Time War.

"The whole script was a delight – tough to write in places – but I'm so pleased with how it came together. Writing for Adèle Anderson as Tamasan was a rare pleasure. I'm a huge fan of Fascinating Aida so getting to write for somebody I've seen on stage many times was great – and writing dialogue for the Doctor and Tamasan was huge fun.

"Also, Becky Wright's performance as Jodall is incredible. I've never met or worked with Becky but as an Archers fan I'm a great admirer of her work. I actually had her voice in mind when I was writing Jodall so I was really pleased she was available. I hope we'll work together at some point."

THE SERIES concludes with Exit Strategy, written by the script editor. David tells Vortex: "In Exit Strategy, Case is with the Daleks but the Emperor is yet to be convinced of her effectiveness as a weapon. The Dalek Time Strategist will not give up and takes Case to a secret facility for readjustment. And here, the Eighth Doctor and the War Doctor appear in the same adventure."

Matt continues: "This is something I've wanted to explore from the beginning and it's great to be able to bookend this series, having written the first episode of Forged in Fire – the first volume of this series set immediately post-regeneration for the Doctor. In Exit Strategy we get a chance to actually hear from his immediate predecessor, as the Eighth Doctor pops up along the way.

"As part of his very essence, the Doctor wants to save people, he wants to do the best he can for his companions and everyone around him. In this story, there's an interesting twist in that he meets somebody, a very similar character called the Nurse, who is a battlefield medic that reminds him of his younger self.

"As he's trying to find a way to help save Case, he may just come to realise that he's not the Doctor who's able to save her.

"There's that sense of tension between who the Eighth Doctor was and who the War Doctor is. I wanted to bring some of that to the fore and explore it in a dynamic way – how the War Doctor now looks at the world as well as what he thinks he's lost."

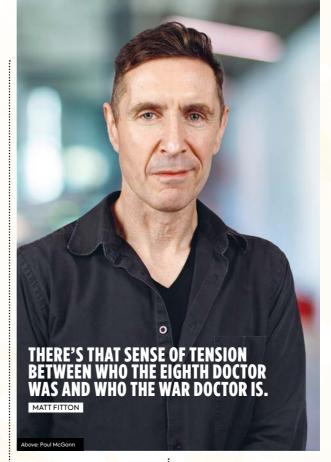
AJJAZ ENJOYED the

recording as well as the writing, particularly as it meant she got to work with Jonathon again.

She says: "He's fantastic. When you see him, you really wouldn't think that voice would come out of his mouth! It's just uncanny what he can do vocally. Totally brilliant.

"When you've got a good dynamic with someone, it gives you more to inform your performance. You know the character having played them before, and you've got used to the voice you're working with."

Jonathon adds: "It's the end of an era. When Ajjaz first appeared as Case way back in Warbringer I always felt there was more to her story and thought it would be great if we could revisit that. Clearly everyone else felt the same and that's really what these last two box sets have been, Case's story, finding her



identity in parallel with the Doctor.

"Of course back then we were recording remotely so to be in the same room with Ajjaz where we can build a relationship on mic and off has been really rewarding. Aside from just having a familiar face in the room, Ajjaz brings such an infectious buzz of energy into the sessions and of course she is so talented. She utterly transforms and switches on an attitude to play Case.

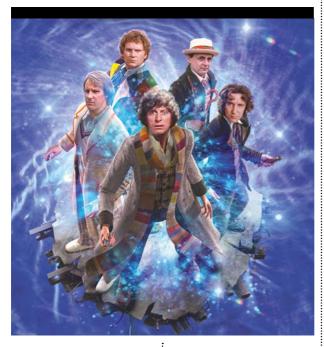
"And she has written an episode too, which really reflects her understanding of both our characters and their relationship. It's a very intimate piece that Ajjaz has written for Case, and on top of that she's given me some of my favourite beats to play as well.

"Being able to connect with her and the character has really helped give these stories real colour and made our jobs infinitely easier when exploring different facets of our characters. I have to say I did have a lump in my throat at the end of the last scene we recorded. But who knows, Case may come back. It has happened before!" VORTEX



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DOCTOR WHO LIGHT AT THE END



IT'S HARD to believe but it's now been a decade since the release of The Light at the End, Big Finish's story to mark the 50th anniversary of Doctor Who. Written by Nicholas

Briggs, it brought together the Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Doctors (with cameos from the first three incarnations) in one epic big adventure.

Getting the production off the ground was an adventure in itself. Producer David Richardson recalls: "I wanted us to do a multi-Doctor story for the 50th anniversary but Nick was a bit more hesitant as he felt that multi-Doctor stories were really hard to get right.

"So we had something else in mind which was very different, but what changed it was that the Doctors themselves actually started suggesting that we should be doing something with them together.

"I went back to Nick who said. 'OK, let's look at this more'." Nick explains: "I'd been thinking, how on earth is it going to work? And then David and John Dorney came to me with an idea...

"David suggested something happens which affects all the Doctors differently. It's something destructive and they have to work together to put it right. That's essentially the story. And then I had to start pulling it all together."

The adventure pairs up the Fourth Doctor with Leela, the Fifth with Nyssa, the Sixth with Peri, the Seventh with Ace and the Eighth with Charley - the first companions to appear with each Doctor in Big Finish stories.

Brief appearances are also made by William Russell playing the First Doctor, Frazer Hines as the second Doctor, and the Big Finish debut of Tim Treloar as the Third Doctor, A host of other companions also feature including Susan, Sara Kingdom, Polly, Jo, Tegan and Turlough in short sequences written by David.

The story was initially conceived as a four-parter but was ultimately released as two feature-length episodes accompanied by a variety of bonus features.

David concludes: "Getting those five Doctors and all those companions together made it a very important thing. The fact that it was so major was one of the scary elements, initially, but it all came together in a fantastic script. Nick did us proud.

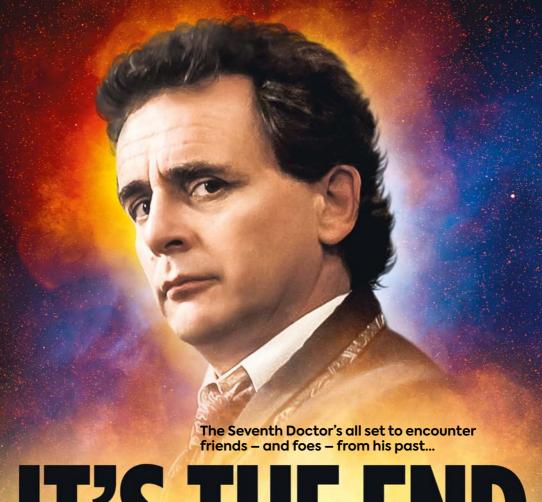
"The impact of what we were doing didn't really sink in until we saw articles in the LA Times and the Chicago Sun Times; across the internet there were all these news stories about the fact we were doing this, it was just crazy!" VORTEX

LIGHT AT THE END

- RELEASED: OCTOBER 2013 FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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IT'S THE END

AT THE start of the Doctor Who TV Movie in 1996, the Seventh Doctor collected the Master's mortal remains after he was executed by the Daleks on Skaro. But what was the situation that led up to those events? Who sent the Doctor, of all people, on that mission? Now, it's time to find out in a 12-part epic tale, The Seventh Doctor – The Last Day, which will be told over two box sets. Sylvester

McCov is joined by a host of familiar

faces in a story that leads into the events of his regeneration.

The story begins with the first six episodes released in January 2024, in an epic adventure written by Matt Fitton and Guy Adams. Listeners to the **Doctor Who** story *Dark Universe*, also written by Guy Adams, may recall the Doctor being warned that his last day was approaching.

Joining the Doctor in *The Last Day* are Sophie Aldred as Ace, Bonnie Langford as Melanie Bush, Lisa

Bowerman as Professor Bernice Summerfield, Philip Olivier as Thomas Hector Schofield (aka Hex), Amy Pemberton as Sally Morgan, Maggie O'Neill as Lysandra Aristedes, Travis Oliver as Chris Cwej, Yasmin Bannerman as Roz Forrester and Chase Masterson as Vienna Salvatori. But there are also some familiar enemies lurking in the shadows, with Geoffrey Beevers portraying the Master, Dan Starkey as the Sontarans, Stuart Milligan returning as Garundel



and Edward Peel is back as Kane, a part he last played in *Dragonfire* on television in 1987 when viewers saw him melt away into nothing...

For this Doctor, there is always injustice to fight. There is always a new danger for the universe. But what if the Doctor found a way to put things right, once and for all? Would it really be so terrible to take a stand? Would the end justify the means? And would his friends agree?

PRODUCER EMMA Haigh tells Vortex: "Guy and Matt have created an epic story for the Seventh Doctor – they've brought many of his companions together along with several of his nemeses, which leads to a great melting pot of action and adventure. Recording these was logistically complicated, getting everyone into the studio when they were needed,

TO BE QUITE A RIDE!

but we did it! And what a fabulous time we had, seeing all these long-standing characters sparring off each other and working together was just so exciting.

"We are taken on quite a journey through the worlds of the Seventh Doctor, hearing our companions challenged to their limits with some making the ultimate sacrifice. Buckle up, it's going to be quite a ride!"

Vortex brought together the story's writers for a lengthy chat earlier this year. Guy says: "When we started

talking about *Dark Universe*, we wanted to feature the Eleven and lead into the Seventh Doctor's final adventure, so we knew that we were always going to make *The Last Day*.

"I actually think the idea for The Last Day was something that existed before Dark Universe. I remember us having a meeting, in the old Big Finish office in London, when we sat and discussed it all."

Matt confirms: "Dark Universe was storylined and written round about the second half of 2018 and the beginning of 2019. I think the earliest storylines I've got for The Last Day are dated 2019. It took a long time to get to that point as we'd been talking about it for months and months beforehand."

"I remember Matt had the notion that Dark Universe should feel like one of the biggest Seventh Doctor stories that had ever been attempted," adds Guy, "and yet at the same time we knew it was basically a prequel to a much bigger story, which felt like a fun thing to do.

"How big can you make a story while at the same time knowing that we were actually hinting at something far larger? The scope of that was very pleasing."

WITH THE Seventh Doctor having had so many companions and friends across various media such as television, the New Adventures books, Doctor Who Magazine and Big Finish – to name but four – there were a plethora of potential characters to feature.

Guy explains: "Once we had decided this was going to be the big send off for the Seventh Doctor, the obvious thing to do was look at the cross-section if you cut through the trunk of the Seventh Doctor stories. We worked our way through all the best bits and tried to find what and who might be achievable, and who would add something to it as a character, because that's always a consideration.

"It was quite easy to include a shopping list across two whole box sets, as this is, but I hope we were quite fastidious in our conversations to try and make sure that everyone has their space."

Matt continues: "The setting of it all, without giving anything away, gave us the premise of *The Last Day* and allowed us to play with other versions of reality and universes. So, we've got

DOCTOR WHO THE LAST DAY

a version of Ace who can interact with characters in a different way to how we'd normally expect her to. It brings alternative dynamics to them all.

"Each of the companions brings their own strengths, and there are varied reasons as to why the Doctor chose to travel with them. That all comes to the fore here when they become part of the team that's assembled during the course of the story.

"And once you start looking at the Doctor's friends, you then start thinking about his enemies and how they could become involved

EACH OF THE COMPANIONS BRINGS THEIR OWN STRENGTHS, AND THERE ARE VARIED REASONS AS TO WHY THE DOCTOR CHOSE TO TRAVEL WITH THEM.

MATT FITTON



and contribute to the storyline \ldots "

Above (I-r): Bonnie Langford and Svivester McCov

With the story running to 12 parts, how was the division of the writing decided? Guy says: "Very painlessly, actually. Obviously, as script editor on this range, Matt has had a huge effect on the adventures of the Seventh Doctor on audio. So it was only right that Matt should handle the last days of some of the people he had brought into existence. It would be deeply wrong if anybody else handled those stories – it was essential, for example, that Matt picked up the story of 'The Family Hex' and continued that.

Matt continues: "I really love Hex and Sally! In practical terms when it came to writing the scripts, I did a third of the episode writing, and Guy did the other two-thirds. Then, we were passing the storylines and eventually scripts back and forth between us, in various states of completeness.

"So yes, my focus was on the Morgan-Schofields, which is a story on a dystopian Earth where they're trying to hold things together. We meet the President, who is working for a higher power, in trying to keep Earth off the table during cataclysmic events. That was effectively my remit.

"There were a couple of episodes that were fairly heavily leaning towards that story, but then as the story goes on and we progress through events, everybody starts to mix in. At that point the division of labour became a little bit more complicated, but we managed it between us."

Guy agrees: "The initial story that we bounced backwards and forwards



was pretty much there in the core of the document. Something I dislike is the storyline part of the process. I love actually writing a script, but I don't like the storylining – it's not the plot that I'm in this for, it's the people and their emotions."

VORTEX ASKS what the writers can say about the storylines for the other companions who are featured. Guy cautions: "We really can't say too much about the plot because it's so difficult to mention anything about it without giving away things. There's a real sense of danger to the Seventh Doctor era, and as we looked at it, we realised that it featured the greatest villain that the Doctor Who universe has ever had and we liked the idea that it was a villain that needed facing. This was exactly the story in which to do it.

IS THE MOST
DIFFICULT ONE
TO BEAT. IT'S THE
MOST COMPLEX,
THE MOST
UNNERVING...

GUY ADAMS

"The foe here is the most difficult one to beat. It's the most complex, the most unnerving – and we're really proud we've brought that to Big Finish's soon to be terrified and quivering listeners ears!

"The scope of the story is huge. We have multiple universes, and some might think that kind of storytelling is verging on the old hat – DC Comics were doing it in the 1950s. The trick is to make these stories have weight." Matt agrees: "The characters are

full of life – and full of fear, and also full of reality. They are capable of making mistakes as much as they would in any universe. Everything they're going through is real for their particular life. It's real to them."

Guy continues: "These are the characters that you've always known. This is not a sort of 'unbound' event. This is not an else-world, not a peripheral tale. It's the Doctor and Ace, and pretty much everyone else that passed through those big white doors in the TARDIS, having to deal with this situation.

"As Matt says, the stakes are huge and I think people are going to love it. I also think people are going to be cross when they get to the end of the first box set because they will have to wait for the second one! **Doctor Who** loves a cliffhanger, and we've given them quite a good one."

Matt concludes: "The whole story of *The Last Day* is the natural progression of the Seventh Doctor's journey. As he gets older, he just sees there's so much to fix – there's a lot to do, danger to fight.

"He has begun to wonder, 'Is there a way to just get everything right, once and for all, so I can sit back and rest? A way to be certain I've done my job?'

"The Last Day is about him trying to reach that position. He feels older and knows that his time is limited. He's only got so many days left as a Time Lord, and wants to find a way to actually make a difference so he can leave this universe with a clear conscience.

"That sets things in motion.
And at the same time, we join Ace again. It's a journey that started on TV and the logical end of her education and time with the Doctor – and everything she's learned afterwards. So, as they've gone about their lives, and this is a long time after they first met, they realise they've learned lots about the universe and each other." I VORTEX

THE LAST DAY: PART ONE

- RELEASED: DECEMBER 2023
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD





The Eleventh Doctor continues his adventures with Valarie Lockwood in a new box set...

WHEN YOU'VE had all of time and space put before you, the next place to go is evidently everywhere and anywhere. And having been to All of Time and Space in the previous The

Eleventh Doctor Chronicles box set, it makes perfect sense for the Doctor and his companion Valarie to explore *Everywhere and Anywhere* next!

This latest box set in the range takes the Doctor and his partly-cybernetic friend Valarie on a trio of new adventures.

Producer Alfie Shaw is thrilled by the reaction to All of Time and Space. He tells Vortex: "I am delighted and relieved! Every time one of these Eleventh Doctor releases comes out, it's a very stressful time for me. I've done everything I can to try and make sure fellow Eleventh Doctor fans have a great series to enjoy at Big Finish.

"Happily the reaction has been very positive. I've heard people who aren't massive fans of the Eleventh Doctor's television era say they're enjoying our audio run. So that's incredibly rewarding and all down to the brilliant work of our cast and crew.

"Everywhere and Anywhere is about finding hope in bleak situations, and I would say it's the darkest set of stories in the series. If people have heard the first two sets, they'll be aware this TARDIS team hasn't had the easiest of times so far, and it's about to get a lot tougher for them.

"For everyone who said they teared up a bit at *Geronimol* you might want to get a box of tissues. This one could easily break you even more than that opening set!"



Doctor Who following the tradition of the New-**Who** era. Something to really ground Valarie and the Doctor in the arcs of the TV series. The Doctor and Valarie attend a very strange Christmas party..."

How did Georgia find writing such a personal story, and fitting Christmas into it too? She explains: "I love the concept of a ghost story at Christmas, there's such a mixture of warmth and darkness to it, making it the perfect backdrop to explore the contrasting shades of human experience. Midwinter catharsis and hope."

Georgia was delighted by the way Jacob Dudman, playing the Doctor with Safiyya Ingar as Valarie, brought the adventure to life, along with the guest stars. Georgia tells Vortex that her highlights were: "The wonderful performances of the cast, as always, who elevate the events of the script to such brilliant heights. And the collaborative process behind the scenes with Alfie. The group effort behind each box set is a highlight every time."

I LOVE THE CONCEPT OF A GHOST STORY AT CHRISTMAS, THERE'S SUCH A MIXTURE OF WARMTH AND DARKNESS TO IT...

GEORGIA COOK

SPIRIT OF the Season by
Georgia Cook is the first
adventure, appropriately named
as it will be released in
December. Alfie explains:
"When I commissioned Georgia
to write for Geronimo! I knew she had
a history writing horror, and when it
came to creating our Christmas
episode, I wanted it to have more of a
horror leaning.

"I asked Georgia to pitch a few ideas and Spirit of the Season immediately stood out. We've got a wonderful villain in the form of Clara which Becky Wright took and ran with. She's delightfully creepy."

Georgia says: "We wanted a ghostly Christmas episode of



ALL'S FAIR by Max Kashevsky sees Valarie reunited with her almost girlfriend from Geronimo!, Roanna. Alfie says: "All's Fair is Max and I trying to work out the worst ways that a first date could go wrong. We came up with two different ideas and used both. Max's suggestion might upset a few people. Mine is definitely going to upset everyone. I love it!"

Max explains his involvement: "I would have given three kidneys to write for this series but fortunately it didn't come to that! Actually, I got on board in a roundabout way. We'd already worked together when Alfie kindly agreed to let me shadow his script-editing work for the

second half of **The Eleventh Doctor Chronicles** – learning the ropes, giving notes, making sure nobody falls down any plot holes. So when he needed someone to write Valarie and Roanna's first date, it helped that I already knew where these characters had been and what they're headed for.

"Setting a cyberpunk companion loose in a steampunk world was so much fun. The World's Fair is the moment where inventions leaping out of science fiction collide with Gilded Age realities to produce the future we live in today. It's such a Valarie idea for a date spot, and it's the perfect place to explore the cocktail of emotions she goes through."

Giving Valarie and Roanna their first romantic date was always at the heart of the adventure. Max tells Vortex: "Having a date episode was always the plan. The hard part was deciding how exactly to put their budding romance through the wringer. What could push Valarie and Roanna to their limit, and hopefully closer together?

"After a lot of Zoom calls and mutual amateur therapy, there was a moment where I said, 'Obviously, we can't do [SPOILER], but we need something like [SPOILER].' And Alfie perked up and went, 'No, we can absolutely do [SPOILER]. We're doing [SPOILER]!' Constant collaboration helped All's Fair grow and grow, until suddenly we realized it had become the emotional turning point for the series.

"That's why, although there's no overarching name for this mini-era, Ilike to call it Series 7V (for Valarie)! Everything people love about The Eleventh Doctor Chronicles comes down to the spirit of collaboration you get from a series. Writing can be a lonely job. But when you have previous episodes to look back on and a fantastic group of writers pushing the story forward, it reminds you why Doctor Who makes us all feel a little less lonely."

SINS OF the Flesh, the final adventure in this set, has been written by Alfie himself and puts the Doctor and Valarie in real peril when they encounter the Cybermen – who aren't acting as they normally do.

Alfie reveals: "My introduction to **Doctor Who** was a VHS double





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SAFIYYA INGAR

pack of The Tenth Planet and Attack of the Cybermen, so the Cybermen have always been very special to me. I've always wanted to make a Cyber story and getting to do it for this team has been one of the highlights of working for Big Finish.

"I wanted to find something new to do with the Cybermen that played into the core concept of what they are. Given the subject matter, this one went through a lot of readers and we've got it to a place that everyone is really happy with. I hope all the listeners enjoy it."

Two people who are definitely enjoying the series are its stars. Saffyya agrees: "It's always a pleasure coming back. I tell these guys, just drag me in! I'll live in the studio! I don't care – I'm just happy to be there! I love having the chance





to play Valarie, and it's fantastic knowing there are people out there who want more. I want to do more – I want to give that to y'all!

"With Jake, I remember when we first met and we were recording. 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 a rapport from the off.

"There are moments where Jake feels like I can give it a little bit more, and he tells me I should just go for it in studio, and he will too – we bounce off of each other like that. It ends up being the most authentic thing, with real and raw emotion. And then we always give each other a little hug afterwards. Job well done! "In the first box set my highlight

was the moment I walked into the TARDIS, and I will never forget that. I was picturing it so vividly, I could see myself being there.

"There was also the feeling of saying the word 'Doctor' and it not being in the confines of my own room or yelling across the house to tell my family to watch **Doctor Who** with me!"

Jake adds: "My favourite part of doing **Doctor Who** is always the emotional beats, rather than just running around trying to save the day and all of that other stuff that we love about the show.

"But to me as an actor, I find the most interesting thing is playing the humanity, for want of a better word, of the relationships, particularly between the Doctor and their companion. The Doctor and Valarie go really well together."

OUR TARDIS TEAM COMPRISES A TIME-TRAVELLING DEMI-GOD AND A CYBERNETIC POWERHOUSE.

ALFIE SHAW

HOW INVESTED does Alfie get when writing moments of high emotion for Valarie? He explains: "I get completely immersed when putting together all the personal beats, both for Valarie and the Doctor. Our TARDIS team comprises a time-travelling demi-god and a cybernetic powerhouse. In terms of

obstacles, there's not much they can't physically or intellectually overcome

between them.

"That's why we put them through so much emotional drama, as not only does it help ground them but they can't just immediately sort it. Valarie can't punch her way out of her mum's death, the

"Those moments are what I find easiest to write. That and the Doctor in full threatening hero-mode. That's always fun."

Doctor can't outwit his own guilt.

And how pleased is he with this set as a whole? Alfie concludes: "50, so pleased! This whole run is incredibly special to me and these three stories have turned out really well. If you've been on board with the series so far, I know you're going to adore this one." VORTEX.

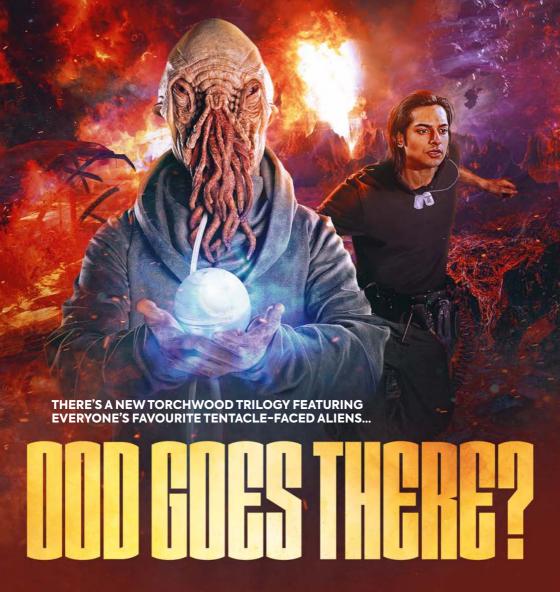




■ RELEASED: DECEMBER 2023 ■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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EVER SINCE they first appeared in the Doctor Who television episodes The Impossible Planet/The Satan Pit, the Ood have caught our imagination. We discovered more about this apparently subservient species in the TV episode Planet of the Ood, and have encountered them several times at Big Finish.

And now, they're coming to **Torchwood** for a trio of tales.

Producer James Goss says: "For the Ood trilogy, script editor Tim Foley suggested we follow the game of Rock-Paper-Scissors, so each part of the trilogy looks at a different aspect of humanity's future.

"We start with Odyssey on a world where the seas are rock. In Oodunnit we visit the empire's recycling planet and to conclude in Oracle we find out if truth is the sharpest knife of all. Who will be the winner?"

A trio of familiar names return to the parts they first played in *The Impossible Planet* on TV – members of the team from the Torchwood Institute who are investigating the titular world.

James continues: "The trilogy sees the return of Ida Scott (played by Claire Rushbrook), Zachary Cross Flane (Shaun Parkes) and Danny Bartok (Ronny Jhutti) from *The Impossible Planet*, plus Silas Carson as the Ood.

WE'VE MANAGED TO INVESTIGATE THE OOD DIFFERENTLY ACROSS THE TRILOGY, PLUS WE ALSO GET TO SEE HOW THE SURVIVORS ARE DEALING WITH THE EVENTS OF THAT STORY.

IAMES GOSS

bitter man – he's losing his speech and is haunted by the irony that years ago he sold his voice. It was a thrill to hear actors Claire and Silas go at it hammer and tongs."

NOVEMBER'S RELEASE is Oodunnit and James explains: "How do you investigate the murder of an Ood? Especially when it seems that the murderer was another Ood? Zachary reluctantly investigates and comes up against a labour relations dispute that might actually be a vast conspiracy spanning the human empire. Or it

could all be in his head!"



TORCHWOOD: ODYSSEY

■ RELEASED: OCTOBER 2013 ■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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"It was an absolute delight to get all of them in studio. We've managed to investigate the Ood differently across the trilogy, plus we also get to see how the survivors are dealing with the events of that story."

Odyssey by Patrick O'Connor was released in October and James says: "It was very sad hearing Ida back in a story that could be about the rebirth of a species but is really about how grief sometimes arrives before the death itself. She reunites with the father she's been running away from all these years. He's on his deathbed and he's a

Oracle, to be released in December, completes the trilogy. James adds: "When the empire receives a distress signal sent by a spaceship from a thousand years in the future, humanity needs to tread carefully. Ethicist Danny Bartok (Ronny Jhutti) is sent to stop the expedition making a terrible mistake.

"We never got to explore this side of Danny's character in *The Impossible Planet* (he did spend much of it crawling for his life) but here he's trying to devise a whole new field of ethics on a ship that's sinking into lava."



TORCHWOOD: OODUNNIT

■ RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2013 ■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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TORCHWOOD: ORACLE

■ RELEASED: DECEMBER 2013 ■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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IN THE LATEST OF OUR SERIES ON THE PEOPLE BEHIND-THE-SCENES, WE MEET THE PRODUCER OF THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES, UNIT AND GALLIFREY...

studying English literature and creative writing at the time so it was useful to hear about things from his point of view, and we kept in touch via social media.

"I later put out a Tweet saying I was looking for an opportunity to gain some work experience, whether on radio, TV, film or theatre, and Nick got in touch and asked if I'd like to have a couple of days in studio at a Big Finish recording.

"It turned into a more formal thing in around December 2020. Ihad a day shadowing on The Human Frontier. I read all the scripts beforehand and then went in for the final day of recording. I was still at uni at the time and had lectures for the rest of the week. I did some other work shadowing on the special release, Susan's War, then a day with the Fifth Doctor and another with the Fourth Doctor."

HEATHER'S FIRST Big Finish producing credit came on a story in The Third Doctor Adventures volume eight. She says: "I'd been shadowing and specifically working with Nick, having sat in on some sessions with him talking through things. He then sent me an email suggesting I could help producer David Richardson out on UNIT:

HEATHER CHALLANDS

A DECADE ago, Big Finish came into the life of Heather Challands as a regular listener – and now she works on several different series.

Producing The Third

Doctor Adventures, UNIT and

Gallifrey, to name but three, is a
dream come true for Heather.

She recalls: "I'm not 100 per cent sure how I first heard about Big Finish. I feel it came to me through osmosis, probably around the 50th anniversary celebrations. The first release I heard was Big Finish's 40th anniversary special, Zagreus, which was a bit of a mad way to start. I listened to many more on Spotify before starting my collection with **UNIT**: Extinction."

Heather continued to listen to Big Finish as a fan, attending the Big Finish Day events in Derby. And it was there she met several of the people involved in making the audios.

Heather explains: "I first met Nicholas Briggs at a Big Finish Day and we had a chat. I was Nick knew it was one of the series I really liked. So I was offered a co-producer credit before producer. Then the first credit I received as producer was on *Conspiracy in Space* – I wasn't responsible for a whole box set straight away. I loved working on this with Tim Treloar and Katy Manning. I was working remotely and vividly remember running to my university library because the wifi failed in my flat!"

Vortex asks Heather to explain what her job as producer entails.



She says: "As a producer, you're there from the conception of a story or box set, to its release. You're pretty much the only person on the ground from when it gets commissioned to when it goes into people's headphones – there's no one else that does that unless there are unusual circumstances.

"I'm budgeting, I'm commissioning, I'm working with script editors. I'm working with writers, I'm working with actors and directors. Then we move on to post-production, sound design, music. I'm signing off every step along the way, listening, drafting, noting. I commission the artwork. I'll organise a trailer, help out with getting press quotes, all sorts. I'm answerable to my senior producer too. There's no typical day.

"Getting into studio is really the halfway point. Studio days are always magic because you're sharing things for the first time with people who haven't been involved in the first few months of the prep work. You're hearing responses to the scripts, and then you're hearing them being





performed. That's always really gratifying. You know you've done a good day's work when you've finished in studio because you've usually got an hour's worth of drama in the can."

MORE RECENTLY, Heather has taken on the Gallifrey: War Room range. She says: "It's a massive favourite of Big Finish listeners, with a very dedicated fan base. I remember pacing up and down in my little flat on the phone to Scott Handcock, the previous producer, who very kindly let me ask him questions about it all. I was also in very good hands with Matt Fitton as script editor, who had worked with Scott. I love working with Matt. For the next set, we've got

THERE ARE ALL SORTS OF MAD THINGS THAT KIND OF STICK IN YOUR MIND...

HEATHER CHALLANDS

three out of the four storylines signed off now and the fourth is with Nick, so that's proceeding at pace."

Heather has had several memorable moments to date: "There are all sorts of mad things that kind of stick in your mind, like running to get back on wifi or having to tell Katy and Tim off for answering questions on Twitter rather than when we were filming them as we'd intended! Recording remotely with Michelle Gomez. Or getting a note from Sophie Aldred to pass on to Jemma Redgrave and Ingrid Oliver. And then there's plotting with Matt where we just go, 'Ah, what should we do now?'

"Announcing Gallifrey: War Room with a massive trailer at the Gallifrey One convention in 2022 was a big highlight. That was really cool, and going to Big Finish Day as a guest was a full circle moment. But really, the best bits are working with all the lovely people. It sounds sappy, but it's true." WOMEN

VORTEX MAIL



WOOD WORK

I just wanted to drop you a note to say thank you for the fantastic monthly stories that you continue to produce in the **Torchwood** range. They can be funny, they can be horrific and they can be full of adventure – you never quite know what you're going to get, and full credit to producer James Goss and his team of writers for a consistently great run of stories.

JOHN STEVENSON

Nick: I couldn't agree more, John. It's a startlingly brilliant range, bursting with risk-taking and creativity.

RENEGADE MASTER

As it has been more than a year since The Fugitive Doctor Adventures and Call Me Master were announced, I was wondering if there were any



new updates about when they are going to be released? There hasn't been an update since 23 April 2022 when it was first announced. I am really excited to hear more from the Fugitive Doctor in particular – I just can't wait to know what adventures she has in store at Big Finish!

'BLUE JUDOON'

Nick: Good question, Blue. We have to coordinate all this very carefully with our friends at BBC Studios.

DAYS OF OUR LIVES

I loved your **Novel Adaptations** range and was disappointed when I read in *Vortex* that these never sold particularly well, which is a real shame. I did wonder, though, would you ever consider doing a one-off special release? *The Dying Days*, the final **New Adventure**, is just crying out to be adapted and its author Lance Parkin has written for Big Finish before. We could have Paul McGann, Lisa Bowerman, Jon Culshaw and Angela Bruce together in one studio – and my favourite monster too, the Ice Warriors.

SOPHIA

Nick: We'll never say never on any range, Sophia, but no imminent changes of policy here yet.

SPACED... OUT?

I absolutely adore what Big Finish has done with **Space: 1999**, taking the original series and making it more 'real' to the world we live in today. I loved what you did with **UFO** too. Nick, you recently said in *Vortex* that the future of Big Finish **UFO** stories was up in the air – is it the same for **Space: 1999?** I hope not – I love it! **ADAM P**

Nick: There are no firm plans for either range at the moment, Adam, but we're hoping that will change in the near future. Mysterious or what?



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