**VORTEX**

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**EDITORIAL**

**WELL... HASN’T** 2017 been an exciting year with Big Finish! We’ve had more War Doctor, the conclusion to **Doom Coalition**, the Eighth Doctor in the Time War, the Sixth Doctor with two companions, the return of the Tenth Doctor and Rose, **Torchwood** series five, the HG Wells and Shakespeare adaptations – and so much more amazing drama from across the Big Finish ranges that it’s impossible to list it all here.

And now we’re in December, and once again there are even more treats to be savoured – just in time for the festive period.

Long before we knew he would be appearing on TV as the Doctor, David Bradley had agreed to reprise the role as the First Doctor for a series of audio adventures for Big Finish, but his busy schedule meant that these plays were recorded after he recorded the BBC *Twice Upon A Time* episode with Peter Capaldi for broadcast this Christmas. Time... funny old thing, isn’t it?

And then there’s the **War Master** – Derek Jacobi absolutely shone in his short time as the restored Master on TV (the acting he does with his eyes alone in *Utopia* as the watch returns his dominant personality is outstanding), so here’s a chance to enjoy lots more of him, being utterly (a) evil, and (b) brilliant.

Also, the **War Master** theme has to be heard. I love it to bits, and it’s currently being used as my mobile ring tone. I also have it set as my alarm for 6.30am every morning to ensure I get up for work! It’s just so dark, twisted and evil – it really is like a malevolent version of the **Doctor Who** theme!

**SNEAK PREVIEW**

**DARK SHADOWS – MAGGIE & QUENTIN: THE LOVERS**

**BIG FINISH** is always willing to take onboard the suggestions of its actors, and some of these are being brought to life in 2018 in **Dark Shadows** with the release of *Maggie & Quentin: The Lovers’ Refrain, s*tarring Kathryn Leigh Scott as Maggie Evans and David Selby as Quentin Collins.

Co-producer David Darlington explains: “A couple of years ago, Kathryn Leigh Scott came over to London and we met up with her for a drink and a chat. One of the ideas she suggested was a series of stories featuring Maggie alongside David Selby’s character Quentin Collins.”

His co-producer Joseph Lidster continues: “Maggie and Quentin are such iconic characters in **Dark Shadows** and this box set allows us to explore who they are far more than we’ve ever had the chance before. While the stories still have the thrills and scares you’d expect from **Dark Shadows***,* *Maggie & Quentin: The Lovers’ Refrain* is all about the love between the two main characters. It’s really something very beautiful.”

The stories in the collection are comprised of: *The Girl Beneath the Water* by Lila Whelan, *The Sand That Speaks His Name* by Mark Thomas Passmore, *The Hollow Winds That Beckon* by Cody Schell and *The Paper to the Flame* by Alan Flanagan.

**David Bradley is back at the controls of the TARDIS, and his adventures are simply…**

**FIRST CLASS**

***“YOU may be a Doctor, but I am the Doctor. The original, you might say…”***

**AND WITH** those words at the end of *The Doctor Falls*, David Bradley officially joined the actors who have played our favourite Time Lord. As we all know, that wasn’t his first brush with the TARDIS having played the part of William Hartnell, and of course the First Doctor, in the 2013 50th Anniversary drama *An Adventure in Space and Time*. Alongside Jamie Glover as William Russell/Ian Chesterton, Jemma Powell as Jacqueline Hill/Barbara Wright and Claudia Grant as Carole Ann Ford/Susan, he made a big impact on viewing fans.

So this month just after *Twice Upon A Time* – the BBC 2017 **Doctor Who** Christmas special – has aired, Big Finish is releasing **The First Doctor Adventures** Volume One: will you be ready for *The Destination Wars* and *The Great White Hurricane*?

Producer David Richardson says: “The idea of using the team from *An Adventure in Space and Time* for some audio dramas had been batting around for some time, and we started talking about it seriously last year.

“I was confident we’d get Jemma, Jamie and Claudia back, because they’d all worked for us before and had been lovely and seemed to enjoy themselves immensely, but I suspected David Bradley may never have heard of us and I was aware that he’s always very busy. But a call to his agent proved that he was interested, and we hoped to record early in 2017 when he was back from filming in Canada.

“The scripts were ready but the schedule didn’t work out – David’s filming job over-ran, and then he was booked straight onto another long-running production. So **The First Doctor Adventures** went on ice for a while as we waited for another window in his schedule. And then we heard from our friends at the BBC that David was to return as the First Doctor in the Christmas Special. It felt like everything was aligning – not only was it wonderful that he’d be back playing the First Doctor on TV, but we could hopefully have him record with us after *Twice Upon A Time* had been shot and release the first box set around that time. So that’s how it all worked out.”

When the actors went into studio, a total of four adventures were recorded with the first two, *The Destination Wars* by Matt Fitton and *The Great White Hurricane* by Guy Adams, aimed at those wanting more adventures from David Bradley as the Doctor.

David Richardson explains: “I knew I wanted our scripts to be very authentic to season one of **Doctor Who**, and that meant having two stories that were sci-fi, and two that were historical. Guy Adams and Andrew Smith pitched ideas that were irresistible – a story about the samurai, and a tale set during the 19th century blizzard in New York: I proposed we introduce the First Master too.”

**THIS IS** the first appearance of the Master, in a pre-Roger Delgado incarnation.  Writer Matt says: “Of course, like the Doctor, the Master has certain core qualities which means that all the different regenerations are still recognisably the same person.

“This one definitely has the suave, measured charm of the Delgado incarnation, and being relatively early in his life he has that Gallifreyan sense of arrogance and superiority, even in dealing with the challenging situation in which he finds himself. It’s only when he meets the Doctor that he starts to get more and more agitated!”

David Richardson adds: “There’s actually a plan behind this incarnation of the Master. Let’s just say that James Dreyfus has recorded the role for us before – twice! But you’ll have to wait and see in what and when those other two productions pop up! I was so keen to get James for this because I think he’s probably someone that people might underestimate. He’s played some very memorable comedy roles, most notably in **The Thin Blue Line**, **Gimme Gimme Gimme** and *Notting Hill*, but there is so much more to him than that. This version of the Master is one of the most terrifying ever – there’s absolutely no comedy in the performance at all. It is sheer power and gravitas. His voice is gorgeous.”

In the story, it appears that the TARDIS has drawn everyone to the future, to a utopia in the space year 2003 – but it’s not quite a perfect society.

Matt really enjoyed the chance to write a full-cast play for this TARDIS team.

He explains: “It was great because it always made sense that we would bring together the *An Adventure in Space and Time* crew, and I think Nick had mentioned it a couple of times in the context of doing [Doctor Who novel] *In an Exciting Adventure with the Daleks*.

“To have a new set of stories, with the four crewmembers of the original TARDIS but portrayed by these new actors, was a whole novel way of looking at that era.

“The characters are written as close as we can to how the originals are on the page, but allowing for the new cast to interpret them in their own way.

“I’ve written for the First Doctor in the **Lost Stories.** With the narration, it evokes the atmosphere of the BBC soundtracks of the missing episodes. I also wrote him in a **Companion Chronicle** where we went inside Steven’s head to see the Doctor from his viewpoint. They’re just different forms of storytelling. And now, with the full-cast plays, you can have the immediate interaction between characters.”

**IT’S A** journey back in time for the second tale in the set, *The Great White Hurricane* byGuy Adams. When he crafted the tale, did Guy have the original team in mind when he wrote their lines?

He pauses before replying: “Actually the process is incredibly difficult to describe. I could say that I wrote for the characters rather than the actors that originally played them – and to a degree that’s true. Of course, the characters are so heavily laden with the performances of the original, wonderful, cast that separating them isn’t entirely possible. It was an ongoing, instinctive process.

“We wanted to channel the spirit of the original as closely as possible: this should really feel like we’ve rolled the clocks back to 1963 with one fascinating difference.”

Summing up the tale, Guy says: “The Doctor, Susan, Ian and Barbara take a trip into history and immediately somewhat regret it. That’s the classic historical all over isn’t it?

“If planning a trip, always check the weather forecast before you leave the house. March 1888 was not the best time to take in the sights of New York! As a viewer I love historicals so I may have begged. At the time it was the appeal of a challenge – having never written a pure historical – so it could have gone terribly wrong. Thankfully, by the time I got stuck in amongst the snowdrifts I was having the time of my life.”

 ringing Susan to life once again is the bubbly Claudia Grant. She said: “I suppose I was a bit surprised as it was a job that I did a few years ago, and had a good time doing it, working with so many lovely people.

“That’s the thing that I’ve heard with **Doctor Who**, people always want you to come back as the years go by. It was great in studio, especially when all four of us were there together again.

“Everyone was so lovely, and it was brilliant to see David Bradley especially, as he’s such a kind man, and a terrific actor.

“I had watched some of the original episodes a few years ago before doing **An Adventure in Space and Time**, but when it came to recording the audios, I felt I remembered enough about the character and how I wanted to play her. The words are there in the script for you to interpret, and it was good fun to do.”

Matt adds: “David was absolutely lovely – a very nice guy. The regulars were all really friendly and were delighted to be reunited for the first time since making **An Adventure in Space and Time**.

“It was quite strange to hear the episodes being recorded because we’re all used to how the Doctor, Susan, Ian and Barbara sound, so here we had those characters but played by different actors. They sound different, but they definitely evoke the spirit of them.  When you listen to it, you know exactly who they are: they are the Doctor, Ian, Barbara and Susan, but just not the ones we’re used to.”

David Richardson adds: “Working on these box sets has been one of my favourite times ever. David, Jemma, Claudia and Jamie are just lovely, and between the hard work there were so many laughs. Whenever I think of David now, I think of him smiling. He is often cast as harsh characters, but he’s one of the warmest gentlemen you could ever hope to meet. I was really sad when we wrapped.”

Executive producer Jason Haigh-Ellery adds: “I’ve always been a great admirer of David Bradley’s work and thought that he was an excellent choice to play William Hartnell in **An Adventure in Space and Time**. After his brilliant performance, we immediately thought about bringing David in to play the First Doctor for Big Finish – it took us a while – but we got there in the end! I’m so looking forward to seeing David in the Christmas special and then listening to his further adventures with us.”

Fellow executive producer Nicholas Briggs points out: “Having worked with David twice now on TV, it’s great to be working with him again. Matt and his team of writers have come up with such a beautifully authentic set of scripts. We forget how different **Doctor Who** was, back in those early days – and here it all is, painstakingly recreated. I find that rather thrilling.”

**The First Doctor Adventures** Volume Two containing *The Invention of Death* by John Dorney, and *The Barbarians and the Samurai* by Andrew Smith, will follow in July 2018.

Claudia concludes: “I really enjoyed doing them all, especially the one we did that was set in Japan.

“It’s great to know that the fans are looking forward to hearing them. We had a great time doing them, so hopefully the fans will enjoy them and we’ll have the opportunity to come back again and do some more.”

**WAR GAMES**

**Kenny Smith discovers there’s a Master plan afoot…**

**FOR YEARS**, the Last Great Time War was something that existed only in our minds. In 2017, that’s changed significantly as we’ve had the War Doctor’s adventures during it, and more recently seen how the Eighth Doctor tried to avoid the temporal conflict.

And now, in **The War Master**,we’ll see another side of the battle and how the Master played his part in events, before he returns next month in the first series of **Gallifrey: Time War**. Producer Scott Handcock reveals: “It’s been something that’s been lurking at the back of my mind for ages. A good few years ago, I pitched a Master box set featuring the Geoffrey Beevers Master incarnation, but it landed around the same time Big Finish were planning a lot of different bits with Alex Macqueen, and so it got parked for a while.

“Then, when Big Finish got the licence to do stories featuring the War Doctor, I casually asked what the War Master might have been up to, and thankfully everyone agreed it was an exciting avenue to pursue!

“I love the Master, so it was always very much geared towards exploring that character, and how he operates in scenarios away from the Doctor.

“It’s very easy to dismiss him as a bumbling villain simply because, whenever we see him, he’s always up against our hero and therefore bound to get defeated. This was an opportunity to redress the balance.

“The Time War backdrop makes it all the more interesting because the Master isn’t a fighter, but he’d absolutely exploit people’s suffering to his own end, and I was very keen these stories didn’t just rely on lots of explosions in space. It’s far more character-led.”

Three experienced Big Finish writers are joined by a newcomer for this **War Master** set, and Scott says: “Each of the four stories is very, very different. When we knew we were doing stories about the Master in the Time War, we couldn’t resist pitting him against the Daleks – it’s sort of what people will expect and it’s a fun thing to do – so *Beneath the Viscoid* finds him trapped on a Dalek-occupied world, forced to help the natives.

“*The Good Master* sees him working as a surgeon on a hospital planet, using it as a cover to track down a mysterious power source. *The Sky Man* then shows the Master’s more manipulative side, as he allows his new companion to try saving a world from the ravages of the Time War. And finally, *The Heavenly Paradigm* brings everything to its natural conclusion in a surprisingly intimate but still wholly devastating story.”

**THE ADVENTURES** begin in *Beneath the Viscoid* by Nicholas Briggs. On the ocean planet Gardezza, deep beneath the Viscoid, a mysterious capsule is recovered from the Time War, and an equally mysterious stranger found within. The Doctor’s reputation precedes him, but can he be trusted?

Nick explains: “The Master is pretending to be the Doctor, but really all he’s after is the Doctor’s TARDIS. But he finds himself on a world at the crucial point of rebelling against Dalek rule.

“Scott was very kind to me in that he let me come up with my own story. He said that it would be the first one and I could set the tone myself and that he’d worry about the other three linking up with each other. My first thought was to find a situation in which the Daleks wouldn’t easily win. And then put the Master in a position where he’d be forced to work for the Daleks. But with a twist, obviously.”

Nick has written for the Geoffrey Beevers and Alex Macqueen Masters, and has now added the Jacobi incarnation to his collection.

He grins: “I think all the Masters have the same characteristics. They’re severely damaged and fundamentally selfish. They don’t really have a philosophy, they’re opportunists. They will do whatever gives them the best advantage. They’re sort of to be pitied. But there’s always something very superficially compelling about shallow, selfish people.

“They often have a lot of charisma, and the Master is no exception. A lack of real concern for anything except yourself can often make you appear attractive, because you are untroubled by the stresses of compassion and conscience. Things are simple for you, because you only think of yourself. This is very liberating to write. I find myself quite hypnotised by that. It’s horrible, of course.”

**THE TIME** War rages around Arcking in *The Good Master* by Janine H Jones, but it is protected by a mysterious, powerful force: a force the Master will stop at nothing to harness.

Janine tells *Vortex*: “The brief was the perfect mix for a writer. We were able to explore a lesser known area of the War Master’s history, with Russell [T Davies] making sure we preserved what was known and essential to the Master’s character, but we also had a specific brief for each episode, which was vague enough to give us room to play in.

“It was such a privilege to write the Master at this stage of the story. Writers love creating flawed and complex characters, so you don’t know where you stand with them. Having the chance to write such a canonical character, but being allowed to show another side of him, the side who cares, the caring that turns to insidious manipulation – it was chilling and so much fun.”

Having collected his own companion at the end of *The Good Master*, new sidekick Cole Jarnish wants to change the world in *The Sky Man*, by James Goss. The Master indulges this most futile of requests. Materialising on a primitive, agrarian world, both the strangers quickly find their place in it – until fallout from the War invades their happy paradise.

James says: “Scott asked if there could be a story where the Master featured only in a few scenes and gave us a chance to explore Jonny Green’s character.

“I grew up in a farming family and have always loved Thomas Hardy so came up with something which is about a man wanting to save a countryside paradise – a world that doesn’t need saving.... and then the horrible realisation that it does.

“It’s sort of a romance, it’s sort of a small family tragedy, it’s sort of a story about killer cyborgs. It’s also the Big Finish story that’s the most about sheep farming.”

It’s a story with the Master not always present, but his presence is always there?

James agrees: “Yes. While the story unfolds, the Master’s sitting on the porch of the vineyard in the next valley, carefully cultivating grapes.  I’ve given most of his lines a nice sinister double meaning, as he’s at least a hundred moves ahead of everyone else, and what’s the Master unless he’s Mr Sinister?”

***he Heavenly*** *Paradigm* by Guy Adams concludes the set. With his plans approaching fruition, the Master travels to Stamford Bridge in the 1970s: a location he believes might hold the key to his success. But what terrible secret lurks under the stairs of No. 24 Marigold Lane? And what sacrifices will the Master make in the name of ultimate victory? Guy teases:   
“It’s the end, but the moment has been prepared for.

“When given the task of finishing off a themed set the job can go one of two ways. Either the necessary shopping list of things to deal with is frustrating and restrictive or it’s actually a useful spine to the story that saves you some heavy mental lifting.

“In the case of this set, Scott was actually pretty open. He, James Goss and I chatted over email, poking at ideas and getting a sense of what shape the whole set would take, where the characters needed to go, what our end point would be.

“Sometimes it’s also fun to play against convention and expectation, which is why my roaring climax, a tale of the Time War and a universe shattered, takes place in a quiet suburban house owned by Nerys Hughes. That is not to suggest the story is small, it really isn’t, but sometimes the terrifying sound of a scream carries more weight when it happens in a quiet place.”

**SOMETHING THAT** will be a surefire hit with the listeners is the theme tune to the series. It’s very much like an evil-sounding version of the **Doctor Who** theme. Composer Ioan Morris explains: “It has very niche **Doctor Who**-related origins. Looking for some inspiration as a ‘way in’ to writing the theme, I asked some fellow fans if they could recall the Master listening to any classical music. My friend, Michael Williams, remembered a moment from *The Mind of Evil* and checked this with Gary Russell.

“As it turned out, it was The Devil’s Triangle by King Crimson – not a classical piece itself, but an adapted arrangement of Gustav Holst’s Mars: Bringer of War, which is what I then used as a starting point. Listening to Holst’s piece, I noticed a five-note phrase in the opening moments that neatly reflected the **Doctor Who** theme, and since Holst’s work is now public domain I was free to quote it.

“The low staccato strings also mirrored the Master’s drum rhythm as established in the 2007 TV series of **Doctor Who** which Scott was keen to include, so it was just a matter of altering it to a 4/4 time signature. I then brought over some elements I’d used in the series trailer (snares, woodblock and piano clunks) to reinforce that rhythm.

“The counter melody in the second half also comes from the trailer. It’s a piano motif I’d happened upon while messing around in a music shop and something I’ve threaded through the series during some of the Master’s more sinister moments. The whole thing came about in a fairly convoluted way, but ended up fitting together in one of those pleasing moments of musical serendipity.”

**SIR DEREK** has appeared in many huge productions over the years, but he thoroughly enjoyed his return to Big Finish, having previously appeared in 2003’s *Deadline*.

Scott says: “The studio sessions were a dream. I love working on box sets like this, because it really allows you an opportunity to develop characters and themes, however subtle. It made for a really friendly, fun, sometimes cheeky atmosphere, and Sir Derek was obviously a joy to work with. He was absolutely keen to get things right, had no hint of ego about him, and effortlessly slipped into the Big Finish family. By the time it came for us all to say goodbye, he was asking if I’d keep him in mind for anything else, he’d had such a good time!”

**THE NEVER-ENDING STORY**

**IF YOU** know your Big Finish, then the name of Paul Spragg is one that you’ll immediately recognise.

For five years Paul was a hugely important figure at Big Finish. He worked on, amongst many things, contracts, script distribution, proofreading, cover layout, studio management, CD extra interviews and the website, as well as being editor of *Vortex,* producer’s assistant and a producer in his own right. He was also podcast comedy gold. Tragically, Paul died suddenly in May 2014.

To honour his memory, Big Finish set up the Paul Spragg Memorial **Short Trips** Opportunity last year in order to find and encourage new writing talent.

The 2017 selected winning entry, *Landbound*, has been performed by Paul’s good friend Nicholas Briggs, and was written by Selim Ulug.

**Short Trips** producer Ian Atkins says: “There’s rarely a day goes by when I don’t wish Paul was with us to share a laugh or positive word – he was a huge fan of Big Finish and I think would be loving just how much things have grown even since 2014. We’ve never forgotten him, and it’s important to keep on remembering.

“The **Short Trips** opportunity came about largely because of how encouraging he was to all those people who had ideas, who wanted to write and be creative, and it seemed an obvious way to keep his name in mind. This year we had just short of a thousand submissions, slightly fewer than last year but of an even higher quality.”

2017 winner Selim says: “When I decided to enter the competition again this year, I re-listened to last year’s winner, *Forever Fallen*. I felt that Big Finish was perhaps looking for a contained, character-based story about the Doctor’s impact on a small number of people, or maybe even just one.

“Although I’d seen a couple of William Hartnell episodes during a visit to England, I didn’t have an opportunity to watch the show regularly until the Jon Pertwee era when it became available in Canada. So, I have a particular fondness for the Third Doctor and wanted to explore the impact of his being stranded on one planet after having the whole of space and time to explore. To do this, he needed to have someone to commiserate with, and so I developed a character who had suffered an analogous loss.”

Ian says: “Selim’s work resonated with one of my favourite periods and dynamics of classic **Doctor Who**, that of the traveller forced into exile, and Selim’s story explores the frustrations, the sadness, the loss – and the hope – of that situation.”

*Landbound* will be available as a free download on 29 December, Paul’s birthday.

**INTELLIGENCE TEST**

**The New Counter-Measures team return for a second series, as Kenny Smith discovers they face an…**

**TWO ERAS** of **Doctor Who** come together this month in **The New Counter-Measures** Series Two, as characters created in the 1960s and 1980s meet. Pamela Williams returns as Rachel Jenson and Simon Williams is back as Ian Gilmore, with Karen Gledhill as Dr Allison Williams and Hugh Ross as their boss, Sir Toby Kinsella.

Producer David Richardson says: “Each series of **Counter-Measures** is like a family coming back together. Pamela flies in from Miami, bearing gifts and hugs. Simon is naughty and funny, Hugh is warm and kind and Karen is so patient being the one everyone teases. I don’t know how, but she ended up in the little sister role – but it’s a sign of how close everyone is on this series that they fit into those family roles. This second box set is a mixture of the scientific and the mysterious, the enigmatic and the terrifying… and the Yeti!

“Earlier in the year Nick [Nicholas Briggs] and Jason [Haigh-Ellery] had a meeting with the Haisman Estate, and there was talk of making a Yeti episode to celebrate their first appearance on TV 50 years ago. All of our **Doctor Who** scripts had already been commissioned, but we were able to find a slot in this **Counter-Measure**s box set – and actually it seemed so right.”

The executor of the Haisman Literary Estate, Mervyn Haisman’s granddaughter Hannah Haisman, worked with Andy Frankham-Allan, its creative director, in liaising with Big Finish to make the story happen. She said: “I’m very pleased that Andy was able to navigate the muddy waters of licensing so that the Haisman Estate could work out a deal with Big Finish. I think my grandfather would love this new sequel to his **Doctor Who** story, which is kind of the third in the Yeti trilogy really. My grandfather’s legacy is in safe hands with Andy and Big Finish.”

**THE SET** opens with *The Splintered Man* by Roland Moore. Following the death of a Spanish scientist at a secret test facility, Counter-Measures are called in to salvage anything they can from the wreckage. But someone else is stalking the scene – and they’re determined that whatever is lost will stay lost.

Christopher Hatherall has written *The Ship of the Sleepwalkers*, as the team wake onboard a luxury cruise, with no knowledge of how and when they got onboard.

There’s the return of a familiar face (or is it voice?) from series one, in *My Enemy’s Enemy* by Tom Salinksy and Robert Khan. Glamorous international arms dealer, Lady Suzanne Clare, has come to town and is offering herself into the hands of Counter-Measures. But can their former nemesis ever really be trusted?

The fourth and final story in this series is *Time of the Intelligence* by Andy Frankham-Allen, in which a strange voice is interrupting TV broadcasts across the capital, and bear-like creatures are raiding factories, stealing equipment and killing guards. An old enemy of London has returned.

David continues: “After UNIT battled the Yeti in *The Web of Fear*, it’s now the turn of **Counter-Measure**s in *Time of the Intelligence.* Andy Frankham-Allan’s script is a sequel, and features the return of Professor Travers. I instantly thought of Tim Bentinck for the role – he is such a rich and versatile actor – and I wasn’t concerned at all that he’d previously played Allison’s father. No one will listen to the two performances and think it’s even the same actor!”

Andy says: “After Hannah and I worked out the licensing deal with Jason Haigh-Ellery, Nick Briggs and I had a few talks about what stories we wanted to tell and I believe it was Nick who suggested we do the Great Intelligence in the next series of **The** **New Counter-Measures**. David Richardson contacted me, and explained the tight schedule and how he needed a basic idea by the following Monday (it was a Friday) to send on to the BBC. So I had a weekend to come up with the idea, which I promptly did. Essentially it was the one we ended up with but it was linked more directly with the Lethbridge-Stewart books continuity. David advised against that, rightly so, since it would be daft to assume fans of **The New Counter-Measures** will have read the books, and I drafted up the first outline. At which point John Dorney came on board with some notes, and we finalised the outline in a matter of days.”

How enjoyable was it bringing together the **Counter-Measures** team with Professor Travers, to face the Yeti and the Intelligence?

Andy grins: “That was a lot of fun. I just love the **Counter-Measures** team. *Remembrance of the Daleks* I have watched way more times than I can count, and I can pretty much quote it verbatim, so writing for Gilmore, Rachel and Allison was sheer joy. And to know that Simon, Pamela and Karen will be giving life to my words... It doesn’t get much better, in all honesty. Sir Toby was a little trickier, as a character original to the series, but fortunately Hugh’s performance is so strong in the series that finding his vocal rhythm was much easier than expected. And as such a huge fan of *Remembrance*, and loving the moment the Doctor called Gilmore ‘Brigadier!’, I knew I was absolutely going to have Travers confuse the two men too! I also realised early on that Travers and Sir Toby are of a similar age and would most likely have known each other, so I played with this, that they worked together under mysterious circumstances during World War II and so this connection was the way to have the **Counter-Measures** team collide with Travers.”

Speaking of the story, Andy adds: “It begins on the anniversary of Allison’s father’s death, and so that carries a bit of weight throughout. And it introduces another new member of Travers’ family. So not only is it a bit of an adventure through London, from Hyde Park to a factory in South Kensington, and reveals a few secrets about the Great Intelligence, it’s also about loss, and how we fill the void that loss leaves in us. Heady stuff for an adventure series!”

**FORWARD THINKING**

**Kenny Smith looks ahead to some eagerly anticipated releases…**

**2018 IS** going to be a big year as BIG Finish is celebrating some of the great characters from fiction in the months ahead, from both literature and television science fiction.

In January, Big Finish is marking 40 years since the first television broadcast of **Blake’s 7** with a special audio release.

Mark Wright has written *The Way Ahead,* with the action taking place in three different time periods all linked by the popular character of Avalon who first appeared in the TV episode *Project Avalon.*

Joining Paul Darrow, Michael Keating, Jan Chappell, Steven Pacey, Yasmin Bannerman, Alistair Lock and Jacqueline Pearce are Stephen Greif – who returns as Travis, and Sally Knyvette who once again plays Jenna.

And for the first time since the TV series ended, Glynis Barber returns to **Blake’s 7**. However, due to the complexities surrounding the licensing of the fourth series, she is playing a new character rather than Soolin.

Producer and director John Ainsworth said: “We’ve done our best to include all of the regular characters from the TV series, and I think Mark Wright has written a brilliant script which manages to encapsulate the essence of **Blake’s 7**, as well as being very dramatic and exciting.”

A full preview of *The Way Ahead* will appear in January’s *Vortex.*

The ongoing **Blake’s 7** box set releases also continue during the year, with *Crossfire Part Two* being released in January.

John says: “This continues the narrative begun in *Crossfire Part One* whichsaw the old President of the Federation preparing to make a comeback and take back the top job from Servalan. As *Crossfire Part Two* begins, open warfare is already underway.

“The first story in the box set is *Funeral on Kalion* by Trevor Baxendale and sees both the presidents and the *Liberator* crew eager to take advantage of a power vacuum on the planet Kalion.

“Cavan Scott’s *Shock Troops* follows and is very much a Dayna story, allowing us a closer than usual look at the life of a Federation trooper.

“*Erebus* is written by Paul Darrow, who of course plays Avon, and sees an old acquaintance of Avon’s determined to get the better of him.

“Finally, *The Scapegoat* by Steve Lyons sees the *Liberator* crew become the pawns in a plan to discredit Servalan.”

The adventure ends with *Crossfire Part Three* which will be released in April.

John continues: “*Crossfire Part Three* concludes the current season of stories and the war between Servalan and the old President in a suitably dramatic fashion.

“*Ministry of Truth* written by Una McCormack, is the first story in the box set and it very much focuses on the part propaganda plays in a conflict – it is something of a repost to *The Scapegoat* which concluded *Crossfire Part Two*. Trevor Baxendale’s *Refuge* is next which gives us a first-hand look at the casualties of the war.

“I was very keen to have occasional episodes that really focus on one of the *Liberator* crew, and the next tale, *Kith and Kin* by Chris Cooper is very much a Tarrant story. It also features the return of a character that previously appeared in the original TV series.

“Finally the season concludes with the ominously entitled *Death of Empire* by Steve Lyons.

“But, of course, this isn’t the end! A new trilogy of box sets with the overall title of *Restoration* is going to follow, with the first being released later in 2018.”

**ALSO COMING** out in 2018 is a new **Sherlock Holmes** box set. Written by Jonathan Barnes and directed by Ken Bentley it stars Nicholas Briggs as Holmes and Richard Earl as Dr John Watson – a team who have become the core of the Big Finish **Holmes** releases. Nick says: “Yes, we’re back. We love what Jonathan does and Ken and I have a fine old time working on these productions. We’re great friends and we value this time working together.”

Ken adds: “Jonathan is the kind of writer I adore working with. He loves the subject he writes about, knows it inside out, does his research and delivers finely crafted scripts. **Holmes** is a tricky range to get right. It’s all very well telling new stories but one doesn’t want to upset hardcore fans of the great detective. Jonathan knows his Holmes and cleverly weaves his new stories into the fabric of the canon. For that reason – and because Jonathan knows how to write appropriately for the period – these stories feel very authentic.

“Working with Nick and Richard on **Holmes** is one of the highlights of my Big Finish year. Recording a **Holmes** play is the same as recording any other Big Finish play, but with the added challenge of speaking a type of English that’s no longer familiar to us.

“The three of us are constantly discussing the text to make sure we’re getting it absolutely right. It isn’t just about how to speak but also about getting one’s head around the diction. We just don’t express thoughts in the same protracted way anymore. Nick and Richard are very good at spotting when they’ve got the through line of the thought. For them it’s vocal athletics and they make the whole process a lot of fun to explore and to record.”

Nick continues: “This box set contains all-new stories: one hour-long episode, and a three-part story of three hour-long episodes. The first story, which will be released as a Christmas download, is called *The Adventure of the Fleet Street Transparency* and has a real Christmas special feel about it. The second story, being released in March 2018, is called *The Master of Blackstone Grange* – very much in the classic Holmes mould.”

**Kenny Smith gets ready for some…**

**NIGHT TERRORS**

***SHADOWS OF*** *the Night* is something new for Dark Shadows bringing together four tales of horror, romance and intrigue.

Performed by Nancy Barrett, Christopher Pennock, Stephanie Ellyne and James Storm, the stories are *Trio* by Nick Myles, *Honeymoon From Hell* by Antoni Pearce, *Retreat* by Daniel Hinchliffe, and *1:53 AM* by Lila Whelan.

Co-producer Joe Lidster said: “We decided we wanted to shake things up a bit. So instead of our six smaller cast plays each year, we’d produce a number of short story collections and a box set (**The Tony & Cassandra Mysteries**) while we continued to work on our next 13-episode serial – **Bloodline**. The short stories allow us to use many more writers and they give the actors something a bit different to do.”

Joe’s fellow producer David Darlington says of the short story format: “It’s enormous fun. I really like short stories as a form and always have done. Executed properly, they have one point to make and they make it quickly and stop! You don’t have quite the same time to establish the mood, especially since you don’t have the time/space you would with a full-cast drama – a reading doesn’t take place in ‘real time’, so everything’s quite impressionistic, up to a point.”

Joe continues: “I’m really proud that this collection features stories by writers all new to Big Finish. And, as with our other collections, there’s a real variety in both the content and in how they’re told. *Trio* by Nick Myles, is a lovely character piece that sees a young woman at university looking back on how a mysterious man – possibly a supernatural creature – came between her and her best friend. *Honeymoon From Hell* is a big old action movie by Antoni Pearce and tells the story of a man who was born with the Devil in his head discovering that his werewolf-cursed wife has been kidnapped. *Retreat* by Daniel Hinchliffe is set in Paris and features a young woman on a journey to save her kidnapped friend – and possibly his kidnapper. And the final story, *1:53 AM* by Lila Whelan is very much an **X-Files** style story about a modern-day demonic possession.”

Can we can expect more of this new format for Dark Shadows in the future?

Joe grins: “I really hope so. I think the short story format works so well for **Dark Shadows**. As well as allowing us to tell stories about characters we couldn’t otherwise use (because the actors are sadly no longer with us), they’ve allowed us to tell stories in different ways. We’ve been able to expand the mythology of **Dark Shadows** (Who are Victoria Winters’ parents? Why did Harry Johnson leave Collinsport? What happened to Josette duPres’ mother?) but, more importantly, they’ve allowed us to tell some truly terrifying, beautiful, intimate horror stories. I’m really very proud of what we’ve done with these.”

**LISTEN AGAIN**

**THE First Doctor returns this month with David Bradley in the role both on TV and on audio – but Big Finish has been regularly releasing stories from this era since 2007.**

Having launched **The** **Companion Chronicles** range with a First Doctor story from Marc Platt, the popular writer was asked to craft the opener for season two. Many of the ingredients were the same, with a new story for the First Doctor set in Earth’s past but with an alien twist, although this time it was Peter Purves recreating his role as Steven Taylor to tell the story.

Marc said: “After the first run of **The** **Companion Chronicles** stories, Sharon Gosling had taken over as producer and she got in touch asking me to come up with a story for Steven Taylor. I think Sharon did ask for another historical story, which was fine because I’d had a lot of fun with *Frostfire –* and the First Doctor fits so comfortably into that bracket.”

Doing research for the story was a pleasure for Marc, who explained: “19th century Russia is one of my pet periods and I’d been playing round with it as a setting for a **Who** story for years. It’s not just the historical events, although the French Invasion is an ideal subject for a story, but also feudal Russian society from the lowly serfs right up to the Tsar makes a fascinating setting. So there are bits of folk stories, Tolstoy, Turgenyev, Pushkin and the amazing Stravinsky ballet Les Noces thrown in. All that detail helps.

“I do like historical stories. As far as world building is concerned, you’re on to a winner because historical references have resonances that ground a story and setting in reality. We know where we are. That’s far easier than creating a whole new alien world, where things can be strange yet still be vaguely recognisable. Historical celebrities are a bit of a double-edged sword – you’re opening yourself up to all sorts of brickbats by being historically inaccurate, and in one way the chance of anyone running into a famous person isn’t very likely. But of course, this is **Doctor Who**, and the Doctor is a bit of a celeb hunter himself. The celebs are who he (or in this case, the villain) would want to meet, so there’s a sort of responsibility to put them in.”

Marc worked hard to capture the feel of the era. He says: “I did try very hard to get it to sound like an authentic Hartnell story. And I think that meant relaxing the narrative so that it does start quite slowly and allows the historical setting of the story to build and establish itself.

“Of course it helped hugely that Peter is such an accomplished actor and seemed to be enjoying reading the story enormously. His performance is terrific and takes us all right back to that era of the show. And as director, Nigel Fairs also understood where I was trying to come from and to set that mood with the production and performances.”

Nigel adds: “I’d so been looking forward to meeting Peter Purves.

“And listening to him reading Marc’s splendid script was just like hearing him narrate one of those **Blue Peter** film items, you know, the ones with the line drawings. I was taken right back!”

**VORTEX MAIL**

**DEDICATION... THAT’S WHAT YOU NEED**

I don’t gamble; I don’t smoke; I don’t have a drug habit; I’m not a regular frequenter of pubs. I’m not a sports fan so I don’t require a season ticket or pay-per-view. I drive a tiny car with low insurance; tax and fuel costs. I buy all of my clothes from charity shops and haven’t even a passing interest in expensive, new technologies or the acquisition of bright, shiny trinkets. I’m happy not to have a gym membership, as I get my exercise from tearing the cellophane off of CDs; putting said discs in and then taking them out of my CD player. Why am I telling you all this? I’m attempting to justify renewing my Big Finish subscriptions for another year and ordering everything else that you produce because I just... can’t... help myself. Keep ’em coming!

**Paul Eccentric**

***Nick:*** *We approve of your lifestyle and justification.*

**SUITE SHOP?**

I loved everything about the first Eighth Doctor Time War box set and I can’t wait for July 2018! I particularly enjoyed the extended music suites – is there any possibility that we might get a chance to buy some of Big Finish’s music that isn’t available as a suite? I’m thinking particularly of the fantastic Arnold, Carter and Briggs re-arrangements of the theme as well as the wonderful stuff ERS did for McGann back in the day.

**Stephen Bush**

***Nick****: There are no plans for this, Stephen. Many years ago, we did release music CDs, but the sales were very poor indeed. However, we will continue our policy of offering music as downloadable extras. All the music for both series of* ***The Prisoner*** *is available for example — not just a suite!*

**CARRYING A TORCH**

I’d just like to say I’m loving **Torchwood: Aliens Among Us.** It gives me the feel of series one and two, and in Rhys’s words – ‘2007 all over again’. Being the fan I am, I just wanted to know why the sound effect used for the Torchwood Hub entrance is not the same as the correct version used in **Torchwood: Outbreak** and also the TV series. I wonder if this will be changed for future **Torchwood** releases so that the correct sound is used to make the already amazing Big Finish **Torchwood** more **Torchwood**y!

**Jack Lees**

***Nick****: Big Finish’s* ***Torchwood*** *producer James Goss explains: “The Hub was blown up. The limited funds for the partial restoration stretched to a new door but then pretty much ran out.”*

**DON’T PASS ON CLASS**

I was wondering if there would ever be a possibility of a **Class** Big Finish audio series? I was so sad when **Class** was cancelled, and I know the cast was up for another season, so maybe you could wave your magic audio wand and bring them back, especially as it ended on such a cliffhanger! As you’re bringing back characters like Jenny, why not these plucky young teens? Would love to know if this would be possible.

**May Lewis**

***Nick****: It’s certainly something we would consider.*

**SCRIPT FOR ACTION**

I’ve been re-listening to some multi-Doctor stories (in preparation for *Twice Upon A Time* this Christmas) and I wanted to say how much I’ve enjoyed Big Finish’s multi-Doctor adventures. My favourites are *The Sirens of Time* (a sorely underappreciated story) and *The Light at the End*. I love how *Sirens* changes the usual format by giving the three Doctors their own mini-adventures before meeting up in the final episode, and *The Light at the End* really did fill in a gap in the 50th anniversary celebrations. Have you ever considered allowing the scripts for them to be available on the website like with the main range and the Tenth Doctor stories? I’d love to read them!

**Simon Hendy-Ibbs**

**Nick**: I’m not sure the script for Sirens exists in electronic form any more. I’ll look into that. The Light at the End should be around somewhere.

**COMING SOON**

**DECEMBER 2017**

**DW • MAIN RANGE:** STATIC (234, SIXTH DOCTOR, FLIP AND CONSTANCE)

**DW • SHORT TRIPS:** O TANNENBAUM (7.12, FIRST DOCTOR AND STEVEN)

**DW • SHORT TRIPS:** LANDBOUND (7.12, FIRST DOCTOR AND STEVEN)

**DW • THE EARLY ADVENTURES:** THE WRECK OF THE WORLD (4.4, SECOND DOCTOR, JAMIE AND ZOE)

**DW •** THE WAR MASTER (BOX SET)

**THE NEW COUNTER-MEASURES:** SERIES TWO (BOX SET)

**SHERLOCK HOLMES:** THE FLEET STREET TRANSPARENCY

**DARK SHADOWS:** SHADOWS OF THE NIGHT

**JANUARY 2018**

**DW • MAIN RANGE:** KINGDOM OF LIES (234, FIFTH DOCTOR, TEGAN, NYSSA AND ADRIC)

**DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:** SERIES 7A (7A, FOURTH DOCTOR, LEELA AND K9. BOX SET)

**DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:** THE SONS OF KALDOR (7.1, FOURTH DOCTOR, LEELA AND K9)

**DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:** THE CROWMARSH EXPERIMENT (7.2, FOURTH DOCTOR, LEELA AND K9)

**DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:** THE MIND-RUNNERS (7.3, FOURTH DOCTOR, LEELA AND K9)

**DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:** THE DEMON RISES (7.4, FOURTH DOCTOR, LEELA AND K9)

**DW • THE FIRST DOCTOR ADVENTURES:** VOLUME ONE (BOX SET)

**DW • THE DIARY OF RIVER SONG:** SERIES 3(BOX SET)

**DW • SHORT TRIPS:** THE AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE (8.1, SIXTH DOCTOR AND PERI)

**BLAKE’S 7:** CROSSFIRE (PART TWO)

**BLAKE’S 7:** THE WAY AHEAD(BOX SET)

**FEBRUARY 2018**

**DW • MAIN RANGE:** GHOST WALK (235, FIFTH DOCTOR, TEGAN, NYSSA AND ADRIC)

**DW • SHORT TRIPS:** MEL-EVOLENT (8.2, SIXTH DOCTOR AND MEL)

**DW • THE CHURCHILL YEARS** VOLUME TWO (BOX SET)

**GALLIFREY:** TIME WAR (BOX SET)

**TORCHWOOD:** ALIENS AMONG US (PART THREE)

**VIENNA:** RETRIBUTION (BOX SET)

**BIG FINISH CLASSICS:** THE MARTIAN INVASION OF EARTH

**MARCH 2018**

**DW • MAIN RANGE:** SERPENT IN THE SILVER MASK (236, FIFTH DOCTOR, TEGAN, NYSSA AND ADRIC)

**DW • SHORT TRIPS:** THE SIEGE OF BIG BEN (8.3, META-CRISIS DOCTOR, JACKIE TYLER)

**DW •** TALES FROM NEW EARTH (BOX SET)

**DW •** THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES VOLUME FOUR (BOX SET)

**TORCHWOOD:** THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN JACK (19)

**THE OMEGA FACTOR:** SERIES THREE (BOX SET)

**THE OMEGA FACTOR:** SPIDER’S WEB (NOVEL, AUDIOBOOK AND EBOOK)

**SHERLOCK HOLMES:** THE MASTER OF BLACKSTONE GRANGE/THE FLEET STREET TRANSPARENCY (BOX SET)

**APRIL 2018**

**DW • MAIN RANGE:** TBA (237, TBA)

**DW • THE TENTH DOCTOR CHRONICLES:** VOLUME ONE

**DW • SHORT TRIPS:** THE TURN OF THE SCREW (8.4, EIGHTH DOCTOR, CHARLIE SATO)

**BLAKE’S 7:** CROSSFIRE (PART THREE)

**TORCHWOOD:** THE LAST BEACON (20)

**MAY 2018**

**DW • MAIN RANGE:** TBA (238, TBA)

**DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:** SERIES 7B (7B, FOURTH DOCTOR AND LEELA. BOX SET)

**DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:** THE SHADOW OF LONDON (7.5, FOURTH DOCTOR AND LEELA)

**DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:** THE BAD PENNY (7.6, FOURTH DOCTOR AND LEELA)

**DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:** KILL THE DOCTOR!  (7.7, FOURTH DOCTOR AND LEELA)

**DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:** THE AGE OF SUTEKH (7.8, FOURTH DOCTOR AND LEELA)

**DW • JENNY - THE DOCTOR’S DAUGHTER:** VOLUME ONE (BOX SET)

**DW • SHORT TRIPS:** FLIGHT INTO HULL!  (8.5, META-CRISIS DOCTOR, JACKIE TYLER)

**UNIT – THE NEW SERIES:** CYBER REALITY (6)

**STAR COPS:** MOTHER EARTH PART 1 (BOX SET)

**TORCHWOOD:** WE ALWAYS GET OUT ALIVE (21)

**JUNE 2018**

**DW • MAIN RANGE:** TBA (239, TBA)

**DW • THE COMPANION CHRONICLES:** THE SECOND DOCTOR: VOLUME TWO (BOX SET)

**DW •** JENNY – THE DOCTOR’S DAUGHTER (BOX SET)

**DW • SHORT TRIPS:** ERASURE (8.6, FOURTH DOCTOR AND ADRIC)

**TORCHWOOD:** GOODBYE PICCADILLY (22)

**SURVIVORS:** SERIES 8 (BOX SET)

**DARK SHADOWS:** MAGGIE &QUENTIN - THE LOVERS’ REFRAIN

**JULY 2018**

**DW • MAIN RANGE:** TBA (240, TBA)

**DW • THE FIRST DOCTOR ADVENTURES:** VOLUME TWO (BOX SET)

**DW • THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:** SERIES TWO (BOX SET)

**DW • SHORT TRIPS:** TRAP FOR FOOLS (8.7, FIFTH DOCTOR AND TURLOUGH)

**TORCHWOOD:** TBA (22)

**TORCHWOOD ONE:** MACHINES (BOX SET)