**VORTEX**

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**EDITORIAL**

**IT'S HARD** to believe it's 2017 already. It only seems like it was a couple of months ago that we were entering 2016 – and what a year it was.

We had several box sets with the **War Doctor**, the Tenth Doctor's debut, **Classic Doctors, New Monsters**, **The Churchill Years,** **The Diary of River Song**, outstanding **Short Trips**, **The Early Adventures**, the **Companion Chronicles** box set, fantastic novel adaptations… and that's just a few titles in addition to the monthly **Doctor Who** range.

And what a start this year is getting off to with the second volume of River's Diaries. Last time around, we had the fun of the Eighth Doctor and his future wife crossing timelines, and really, the only way to better that is to have her cross paths with the Doctor, twice over, in two more of his earlier incarnations!

Something I'm particularly looking forward to, which you'll no doubt have seen revealed during the Christmas holidays, is the new **HG Wells** series. I've not read any Wells since I was in my teens so I can't wait to revisit these. And what fantastic casts we're being treated to…

Also, this month's Listen Again release is *Burnt Offerings*, from the **Pathfinders Legends** series. I hadn't heard any of the range prior to preparing for Listen Again, and was pleasantly surprised. The four regular cast members are engaging from the word go, it sets up an interesting storyline and I know I'll be back for more to find out how the journey continues…

**KENNY**

**SNEAK PREVIEWS AND WHISPERS**

COMPANION CHRONICLES

Celebrating an era!

"In last year's **The Companion Chronicles – The First Doctor Volume 2**, we set out to really celebrate a Doctor and a whole era just as it hit 50,” says producer Ian Atkins. "With this year's First Doctor **The Companion Chronicles**, we're back to the more traditional format, with two actors, and tales – largely – focused on the companion's side of things. *Fields of Terror* by John Pritchard returns the First Doctor to the French Revolution, but how much of it is a matter of history this time?

"We ended the year in studio with *Across The Darkened City* by David Bartlett which is a superb Steven story – it's been a real challenge to do something as strong with the character and Peter Purves as writer Simon Guerrier's excellent previous work in the range (check it out!).

"There's also something in the background running through the stories (I like a reason why stories are all collected together into a set) which really kicks in with Una McCormack's *Bonfires of the Vanities* for Ben and Polly, and is brought to a head in Guy Adams's *The Plague of Dreams*. I've never seen a story quite like this one and, in its way, it's as celebratory as our Second Doctor set!”

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Special thanks toStephanie Briggs

Kenny Smith secretly reads the latest diary entries of Professor River Song and finds she's…

**AT SIXES AND SEVENS**

**TO DATE**, River Song has met the Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Doctors on television. On audio, she's had a couple of encounters with the Eighth Doctor (even though he doesn't know her yet), and River needs to keep her wits about her as she crosses her husband's timeline.

But it's double trouble for the professor this month, in the second series of **The Diary of River Song**, as she interacts with two of his past incarnations at once.

Script editor Matt Fitton says: "I would be happy for River to do her own thing, but with this series, it works nicely that she can meet the earlier Doctors. It was something Steven Moffat had suggested, so she's working her way back down his timeline. We've tried to do something different with her every time as well, so we're not repeating ourselves. When the Eighth Doctor encountered River in her first series, it was very different from the way they met in **Doom Coalition**.

"I particularly wanted to do a story where the Seventh Doctor meets River, as I had an inkling he might realise there's something going on.

"So in this set, we have River meeting Sylvester's Doctor, there's a solo story which is quite dark and emotional, then she meets Colin, and then we have the Sixth and Seventh Doctors coming together with River."

The series begins with *The Unknown* by Guy Adams, in which Sylvester McCoy has his first meeting with Alex Kingston.

Guy says: "As with most of the box sets that have an arc, certain marks have to be hit in each individual story. Naturally, I refuse to tell you what they are. I also knew that I'd have the Seventh Doctor to play with. That's okay though – in fact it's part of the fun of this kind of story. It's like having those scamps, David Richardson and Matt Fitton come to you in the night with four bricks, a small bag of cement and half a horse, saying 'Quick, build us a stable'."

Guy is no stranger to writing for the archaeologist.

He explains: "I'd just written a short story for BBC Books with her, so I already had my River Song trousers on (I presume she must have been wearing mine, I certainly haven't seen them since!). She's a great character played by a great actor, so utterly painless to write. The challenge I set myself for this one was to avoid my usual fall-back position of getting carried away with quipping dialogue, it's actually quite a straight, dark story."

With *The Unknown*, Guy has been able to do something that should put a smile on the face of a little girl.

Guy reveals he was… "able to do a slightly nice thing for a young **Doctor Who** fan I've never met. I bumped into her aunt over here in Spain (I'm always bumping into aunts, they're quite the most clumsy of relations) and decided on a whim to name a character after her.

"It just seemed like the sort of thing that would have pleased me awfully at her age. So, Maddy Bower, I hope you still love **Doctor Who** because now your name's in one."

**ALTHOUGH River** is joined by the Doctor in three of the four tales in this set, she does get a solo outing.

Matt says: "I do want to do stories with River on her own and explore how she operates without the Doctor around.

"She covers a lot of ground and does get a complete stand alone story to herself again."

*Five Twenty Nine* by John Dorney is that story, and features a special guest star – Salome Haertel as Rachel. Salome, for those who don't know, is the leading lady's daughter.

John says: "I was given the brief of a quiet apocalypse, and to have a specific character for Alex Kingston's daughter. We had a strong idea of what we wanted that part to be, but I was left to come up with what I wanted.

"I watched and read a few things to get the mood, with *When The Wind Blows*, and *During Barty's Party*, an episode of Nigel Kneale's **Beasts**, where you do the apocalypse without actually showing it.

"It's all rooted in a creepy notion I had about the year 2000 with the millennium bug, and that all fed in here.

"Because of the timing of the recording, we had to work around Alex's availability, as she's a busy international actress. She was only available to record this one two days before Christmas last year, so we had Christmas pudding and cold cuts in the studio. It was a lovely day.

"But there was a slightly bizarre feeling two days later when I was watching her on TV in *The Husbands of River Song*, thinking, 'I was with her two days ago'!"

Director Ken Bentley adds: "It was great to work with Alex's daughter. Salome is clearly an intelligent young woman. She knew exactly what to do with the character and she brought the character to life with great truth and integrity. Actors spend their lives training and practising their craft to achieve this, so it was genuinely exciting to see Salome do this so effortlessly at such a young age.

"It could be that having an actor as a parent has given Salome a unique insight into the craft. But I tend to believe that the most important thing for any actor to have, of any age and experience, is a great instinct for storytelling. Salome has that in spades."

John adds: "Alex is such a genuinely lovely person and you want to write something she will enjoy, because she's such a good actress.

"What I found interesting was we tend to see a different side of River when she's with the Doctor, being more flirty, but here, in this series, she can be slightly more serious, although the flirting side of her does turn up occasionally. In this case, there weren't many chances for her to be as upbeat as normal, and it's interesting to see how the character reacts in quite a serious situation.”

**THE DOCTOR** is back in *World Enough and Time* by James Goss, as Colin Baker's Time Lord meets his future wife. Matt grins: "James had some very definite ideas with the Sixth Doctor meeting River, where she takes a shine to him and him to her – she knocks him for six. Six knocked for six!"

James continues: "There's something so much fun about River, just for once, just taking a breath in her adoration of the Doctor. This is a Doctor she loves, but also has a bit of a raised eyebrow about. Meanwhile, and quite surprisingly, the Sixth Doctor falls head over heels for her.

"It's basically turning the River Song Meets The Doctor love story on its head. The Sixth Doctor finds this mysterious woman captivating. Meanwhile, she has reservations – because of what he's been up to, she can't quite trust him."

How would James sum up this encounter? "THE SIXTH DOCTOR IN LOVE!!!! Actually, it's way more complicated, and we don't, trust me, get to find out how colourful the Sixth Doctor's underwear is. But it's a story about a very different Sixth Doctor.

"He's faced with an evil corporation, and he's trying a new method of tackling it – he gets a job there as managing director. Which brings him up against River Song – imagine it from her point of view – she finds the Doctor running Evil Corp. How's she going to react?"

Having written for River in the first series, did James find it any easier to write for her a second time around? Not really," he concedes. "Everyone was so nice about the first one, I was a bit, 'Oh, cripes.' Anyway, there's some poetry and a picnic in Rekyavik. Best thing about it in studio? Colin turning up and clearly, intelligently, being a bit restrained about the script – how were we going to get away with the Sixth Doctor acting so out of character?

"'I've been married forever,' he said. 'I've forgotten how to flirt.'

"At which point Alex Kingston laughed that amazing laugh. And then they went into studio and, it turned out, Colin Baker hadn't forgotten how to flirt after all."

**THREE HUGE** personalities come together in the fourth and final story of the box set in *The Eye of the Storm* by Matt Fitton.

Matt says: "I got to do a multi-Doctor story, which is also a River story and a pseudo-historical too with Daniel Defoe in there.

"I actually think it might be my favourite thing that I've ever written, with James Goss prodding and pushing me in his role as script editor.

"James absolutely has the new series sensibilities and he's shown that with the **Torchwood** range which he produces – he knows what the people want. It connects with the emotions.

"It's brilliant bringing them all together, because we've got so much happening in multi-Doctor stories – we've got the relationship between River and each of the two Doctors and the relationship the Doctors have with each other, so when you put them all in a room together, something exciting is going to happen."

Ken adds: "I'd worked with both Colin and Sylvester individually and enjoy spending time with them both. People often wonder what it must be like to have two or more Doctors in the same room, and it's a lot of fun. They all know each other well, since their paths cross often on the convention circuit. But of course we were all there to record a play about River Song, so I think they were both as excited as I was to be recording with Alex!"

Colin adds: "I loved working with Alex – she's great and very good. I was chuffed that I was the one who got to kiss River – though on audio of course we were in separate booths in the studio so it was the back of my own hand, as I recall…"

**SPACEBOY**

There's a new arrival in the **Doctor Who** monthly range as the Fifth Doctor, Tegan and Nyssa are joined by Adric…

**“I'M VERY** lucky to have played a character with such a great deal of potential," explains Adric actor Matthew Waterhouse, "so it is possible to write for him in very different ways which all feel authentically a part of the established character rather than 'glued on'."

Matthew made a triumphant return to the part of Adric in 2014 in *Psychodrome* and *Iterations of I*, part of **The Fifth Doctor Box Set**, which saw him reunited with Peter Davison, Janet Fielding and Sarah Sutton. This month, the character arrives in the monthly **Doctor Who** range, with Matthew having initially stayed away from Big Finish. However, after appearing in the **Dark Shadows** range, he has graduated to **Doctor Who**.

He says: "They're all great fun to do. I like the way the **Dark Shadows** and **Doctor Who** characters complement each other. **Dark Shadows** uses me in quite different ways and I appreciate that, but I love 'Classic **Who**' and it's exciting to do more stories about Adric.

"Even a piece as strange and unexpected as Joseph Lidster's brilliant one-man play *A Full Life* (from the **Short Trips** range) is totally in keeping with Adric as he was on TV. All the varied notes and tones of the new trilogy are already present in the TV episodes. There are very dark scenes in these stories and very light, airy ones and they all feel right."

How much fun does Matthew have going back to play Adric again?

He laughs: "It is quite weird. At first I didn't want to do **Doctor Who** again because I didn't really want to play a bright teenage boy. Now I find it fun and challenging – less an act of creation than of recreation. It is important to me that, with allowances, the character feels as near as poss the way he did on TV! Not many actors in their fifties get to play children! I suppose it is a bit like being one of those old-fashioned rep actors who might be cast as an old bloke in one play and a lad in the next!"

***THE STAR*** *Men* kicks off the latest trilogy, written by Andrew Smith – the man who wrote Adric's TV debut in *Full Circle* in 1980.

To help Adric with his studies, the Doctor sets course for Gallius Ultima – but they encounter a race from another reality, the Star Men. Andrew says: "Despite speculation I've seen on social media, It's nothing to do with David Bowie! The day I sat down to start the script was actually the day his death was announced – which was a bit spooky, as I found myself writing the title page while listening to news reports. There's no link at all – it's just a coincidence of sorts."

He continues: "Adric has a love interest this time, as he gets someone to spend time with. They have their own little journey, and all of the regulars have their own part to play before we get to the resolution, so it's not just the Doctor who resolves it all at the end. I had some specific useful things for them all to do."

Matthew adds: "Dramatically, Andrew Smith wrote some scenes which were emotionally intense, which I enjoyed doing."

Andrew reveals the origin of his aliens: "The germ of the idea for *The Star Men* came a couple of years ago while I was walking through a forest in the Trossachs in Scotland. I came across these mirror figures, an art installation among the trees. Outlines of men and women reflecting their surroundings. They work incredibly well, when you see these strange shapes and are a very striking image.

"From that, I got the idea of an alien that manifests as an outline, and in that gap, they appear as stars. In the story, they are colloquially known as the Star Men, and it's a name they adopt for themselves. It's a name they play on."

**THE TARDIS** lands inside the most exclusive gentlemen's club in all of Victorian London in *The Contingency Club,* written by Phil Mulryne. He says: "The genesis of this story actually came about ages ago, in discussion with David Richardson. There wasn't a specific brief beyond a Fifth Doctor story with Adric in the team – and the idea that it should be a period adventure. On TV that particular TARDIS crew only really had *Black Orchid* and *The Visitation* as period stories. So I pitched a few different ideas, and something set round a mysterious Gentlemen's Club in Victorian London was deemed to have the most potential…!"

What is it about the Victorian era that makes **Doctor Who** stories fit there so perfectly?

"There's one of those mysterious synergies between **Doctor Who** and the Victoria era, isn't there?, " agreed Phil. "The two often click brilliantly. I guess the Victorian age was one of restless progress, constant change and plenty of adventure – all of which chimes with the Doctor! All the industrial and technological advances going on fit especially well with this particular story…

"It was brilliant fun writing for this team! I loved trying to juggle all the different dynamics and relationships. They're all such strong characters, often clamouring to express different reactions to what's going on. There's a real challenge in making sure that they all get enough to do. But when that's working at its best, it can provide so much impetus to create a really dynamic story."

**CONCLUDING THE** trilogy in March is *Zaltys*, where a mysterious force snatches Adric and Tegan from inside the TARDIS.

It's written by Matthew J Elliot who says: "Story-wise, I had a lot of freedom: a Fifth Doctor, Adric, Nyssa and Tegan adventure. In terms of tone, Alan Barnes had a notion that several of Davison's TV stories – *Kinda* in particular – might have been visually influenced by the pop videos of the day (back when they really were shot on video) and wanted a story in which, had it been made for TV, certain videos would again have served as a cue for the director. I won't tell you which videos I viewed for this assignment, I'll let the listeners decide for themselves.

"I hope I've managed to make the restriction of a limited cast into a benefit with *Zaltys*. Like the Magratheans in **The Hitchhikers' Guide to the Galaxy**, the majority of the population have placed themselves in suspended animation in anticipation of a catastrophe, leaving only a few hardy souls to maintain the equipment and probably give their lives in the disaster. It's impossible for external factors not to play a part in the writing of a story, so I'm sure the xenophobia of the people of *Zaltys* is in some way influenced by recent incidents in the UK."

**DIRECTING THIS** trilogy of plays is Barnaby Edwards. Having directed a variety of Doctors and companions over the years, how did he find working with this TARDIS team?

Barney says: "It felt as if they'd never been apart. There's a chemistry between those four that no amount of directing on my part could have created. They're completely at ease with each other, playful and sparky both on and off mic. There were many moments when one of them would say 'That feels more like a line for Adric' or 'Tegan would never say that!' – and that's immensely helpful in giving the dialogue a truthfulness. Underneath all the jokes and horseplay, there's a genuine affection there too.

"Matthew has a very emotional scene in *The Star Men* and Sarah and Janet were phenomenally supportive. It's one of my favourite moments in the whole trilogy. So, in summary, it was a pleasure and a privilege to watch four old friends rekindle the magical fire they had first lit a third of a century ago."

Barney has recruited some great guest stars. How does his casting process work?

He reveals: "All casting comes from the scripts. As I'm reading them, my brain starts fleshing out the characters aurally. Some come immediately (I instantly 'heard' Peter Guinness's velvet tones for Rovus in *The Star Men*, and the same goes for Philip Jackson's Peabody in *The Contingency Club*) and some coalesce gradually (it was only after I'd cast most of the other characters in *Zaltys* that I realized Niamh Cusack's silky voice was precisely what was needed for Clarimonde).

"There's always a temptation to cast from people you've used before. This is entirely understandable – you know they can play the role and you know they're lovely to work with."

**THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME**

Kenny Smith looks into the future as Big Finish adapts the works of HG Wells…

**THERE'S NO** denying that the works of Herbert George Wells are some of the most important and influential pieces of science fiction ever written. The influence of Wells's writing continues to be felt today, over 70 years after his death. This year, Big Finish will celebrate his work with a series of full-cast adaptations of his novels, told over two discs.

Every two months, there will be a new play released, starting this month with *The Invisible Man*. Producer David Richardson says: "We've been chatting for some time about adapting some HG Wells plays – *War of the Worlds* has been at the forefront of our minds, and Nick Briggs was thrilled by the prospect of bringing that to the Big Finish catalogue.

"The more we thought about it, the more the idea of doing a whole run of full-cast adaptations appealed. *War of the Worlds* is perhaps the most well known of Wells's science fiction novels, but there are many others that have made an indelible impression on the genre. *The Time Machine* is almost a fore-runner to the behemoth that is **Doctor Who**!

"And so one audio adaptation became six, and this became a very high profile project for us."

*The Invisible Man* stars John Hurt and Blake Ritson, with the adaptation by Jonathan Barnes. This will be followed in March with *The First Men in the Moon* starring Nigel Planer and Gethin Anthony, also adapted by Jonathan Barnes. May sees *The Shape of Things to Come* starring Nicola Walker and Sam Troughton, adapted by Guy Adams, while Ken Bentley will adapt July's release, *The Island of Dr Moreau*. The range continues in September with *The Time Machine*, adapted by Marc Platt, and the series concludes in November in *The War of the Worlds*, adapted by Nicholas Briggs.

David continues: "We knew we wanted great leading names – actors who would turn people's heads, and make them want to immerse themselves in these new but faithful takes on classic stories.

"It wasn't hard to persuade John Hurt to join us for *The Invisible Man* – he'd talked openly about how much he'd enjoyed making **The War Doctor** audios, and how he liked the way we work at Big Finish. Nigel Planer makes for a wonderful eccentric lead in *The First Men in the Moon,* paired with former **Game of Thrones** star Gethin Anthony (who we were able to book just as he landed back from LA, where he'd been filming his regular role opposite David Duchovny in **Aquarius**).

"And Nicola Walker was my first choice for *The Shape of Things to Come* because she's one of the best actresses in this country, but also because she's one of my favourite people to have in the green room. To have names of this profile was just thrilling.

"Authenticity has been a watch word with these productions, but we've strayed a little from that where strictly necessary. It'd be hard to do a straight audio adaptation of *The Shape of Things to Come*, for example, because of the nature of Wells's original work – it needed an overarching narrative injected into it, which Guy Adams has done brilliantly. I found the script absolutely compelling."

**JONATHAN BARNES** has previously adapted *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* for Big Finish's classics range, and now he adds two more notches to his list with *The Invisible Man* and *The First Men in the Moon,*

He says: "I first encountered H G Wells as a child – as I was given copies of *The War of the Worlds* and *The Time Machine* as presents. There was then as there is now such a terrific freshness about them, for all the familiarity of the stories and their key tropes. Because Wells was inventing so much of this stuff – almost from whole cloth – the best of his work retains a sense of startling newness.

"I never forget how lucky I am to be invited to do the sort of work I do for Big Finish and these were particularly exciting projects to work on. I've adapted several novels now, all by favourite authors in my absolute favourite era of literary history.

"The audio medium allowed for the inclusion of much narrative taken directly from the original novels. I was very pleased, for example, to be able to use that remarkable opening paragraph of *The Invisible Man* almost in its entirety. The challenge of *The First Men in the Moon* was largely coming up against the recent television version by Mark Gatiss which struck me at the time as being pretty much definitive. Hopefully, I've come up with a new angle. "

**HANDED ONE** of the toughest tasks of all is Guy Adams, with *The Shape of Things To Come*. He recalls: "'We're adapting some HG Wells novels!', announces producer David Richardson, 'and we'd like you to do one of them!'

"'Hooray!', I think, 'which will it be? Might I be able to trek through the lethal fauna of Dr Moreau's island? Peel back a bandage from Mr Griffin's invisible face? Descend into the lightless world of the Morlocks?'

"'We'd like you to adapt *The Shape of Things to Come*!'

"(LONG PAUSE) 'Oh.'

"Because nothing offers more scope for two hours of thrilling audio drama than a massive faux text book purporting to outline just shy of two hundred years of human development. HG Wells himself couldn't do it – his script for the Korda movie, while based on elements of the book, is certainly not an adaptation. I was half-convinced that it was impossible. Which is all I really needed to make me say yes.

"Obviously I'm rather relieved to have proven myself wrong."

Following this is *The Island of Dr Moreau*, brought to audio life by Ken Bentley. He reveals: "I was familiar with the story of *The Island of Doctor Moreau* but hadn't read the book since I was in my teens. What's most striking about the story is its themes. They resonate as darkly now as they must have done in 1896.

"The process of adapting the novel was more straightforward than I thought it might be. Storytelling has changed a lot since the invention of cinema, but the structure of Wells's story was faultless. And the nature of the story is such that there wasn't any need to update it. This is a faithful adapation, albeit a little more streamlined in the telling. I hope fans of the book will like it." He adds: "*The Island of Dr Moreau* isn't light reading. Its themes pack a punch, but they're themes that resonate with me. And in light of recent world events they're themes that seem more relevant than ever. I found it quite profoundly inspiring to work on this adaptation. There's been much talk over the last few months about what artists can do to help open the minds of people and change the minds of politicians. Having worked on this adapation it's clear that the first thing we can do is learn from artists of the past."

**ARGUABLY, WELLS'** two best-known and most influential works are the final two releases. *The Time Machine* is being brought to life by Marc Platt.

He says: "I must have first read *The Time Machine* about 50 years ago. I loved it then, but of course at different ages you find different things to appreciate. What is really striking is how tightly structured the book is. The future world that Wells creates is remarkably detailed and solid. He builds steadily from a familiar base until his imagination is on fire, encompassing a view of Earth's destiny that is quite breath-taking in its scope. The story is a great adventure, but it also has deep resonances touching on both evolution and even, dare I say it, current politics. It should be a starting point in how to write science fiction."

Did Marc find it tricky to adapt such a well-known novel?

He reveals: "I tried to be as faithful as possible to the original, because that's where everyone's expectations start. Inevitably some sequences don't translate so well to a dramatised version. The book is told mainly as a first person narrative with very little dialogue. In this version, the Time Traveller tells the story to a friend, who I have cast as Wells himself, which allows them to comment on and discuss the narrative. Some of the lengthier contemplations on science and Communism had to be boiled down as well."

Executive producer Nick Briggs adds: "I'm directing and script editing *The Time Machine*, and Marc Platt has done the most beautiful adaptation. Its evocation of the original was so poignant to me, I wept when I read it. It was like a much loved, long forgotten friend coming back into my life and bringing back all those lovely feelings anew."

**BIG FINISH'S** season finishes with *The War of the Worlds*, adapted by Nicholas Briggs

He reveals: "I'm not sure when I first encountered it, but it was certainly when I was at school. I'm thinking 12 or 13. That's when they were forcing us to read Thomas Hardy and Charles Dickens, so I was used to reading that kind of, for want of a cleverer way of referring to it, 'old fashioned' book. Except, this time, it was about something I really found exciting. It was about a Martian invasion of Earth, not about some wretched shepherd fancying the lady of the manor or a funny little boy being menaced by a convict.

"I still have that copy of *War of the Worlds*, indeed it just happens to be sitting next to me on the table as I answer these questions. Let me see… This edition was published in 1975… So I was 13! I was right. All the pages are brownish yellow around the edges now. And later, when I was 16, I wrote my national insurance number inside the front cover. For those outside the UK, your national insurance number is the number that makes you exist, financially, for the Government. With that number, they know everything about you, can tax you and can provide you with 'free at the point of access' NHS healthcare. It's a moment of growing up when they give you that. And they told us to put it somewhere important where we'll never forget or lose it. And I knew *The War of the Worlds* would always be with me.

"For me, this book and *The Time Machine* are the beginning of everything that I love in science fiction. There would be no **Doctor Who** and no Daleks without *The Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds*. That's why, when David Richardson and I discovered we both wanted Big Finish to do HG Wells dramatisations, I immediately nabbed *The War of the Worlds*. I simply had to do it. In so many ways, it's the most important book in my life

Kenny Smith previews the new series of adventures for Tom Baker and Lalla Ward…

**SIX TIMES FOUR**

**THE 2017** run of Fourth Doctor stories is, logically, a follow on from last year's series. However, it's like heading back to 1979/80, as the fun of season 17 moves into a slightly harder scientific edge with season 18 – and that's where this sixth series of stories for Tom Baker's Doctor and Lalla Ward's Romana is set.

Producer David Richardson says: "On the **Fourth Doctor Adventures**, we never work on any one season at once. At the minute, I'm working across seasons seven, eight, nine, ten and Philip Hinchcliffe Presents at the same time!

"That's why we've got the same, brilliant lead cast in season six as we had in five. That, and the fact that we were so thrilled to have the Fourth Doctor, Romana and K9 together again that it's been great to do two years' worth of stories. This set takes us into the JNT era, with radiophonic music, and some bold high concept stories (as well as a few traditional ones too, of course)."

The series kicks off in January with *The Beast of Kravenos*, by Justin Richards. The Doctor and Romana return to Victorian London for a reunion with their old friends Jago and Litefoot, and investigate thefts by an individual known only as 'The Knave'.

What is it about the Victorian era that suits **Doctor Who**, especially the Fourth Doctor? Justin says: "It's a great era in which to set any stories, I think – the cusp between the 'old' world and the modern world, with technology just beginning to emerge. Plus there's the atmosphere – the London smog and the colourful local characters. It certainly lends itself to the type of stories that **Doctor Who** does best!

"The Doctor's been there before, of course – in this incarnation and in others. But it was a fun challenge to get K9 involved. Romana seems to fit pretty much anywhere and anywhen – rather like the Doctor himself!"

Some old enemies return in February, as the Sontarans attack in *The Eternal Battle*, by Cavan Scott and Mark Wright, writing for the Fourth Doctor for the first time. Cav enjoyed writing for the Sontarans: "They're such good fun. One thing we did decide early on was that we didn't want to play them for comedy. There is comedy there, coming out of the situation, but the Sontarans are played straight. They're in a desperate situation when the Doctor, Romana and K9 come upon them, backed into a corner, and therefore more dangerous than ever."

Mark adds: "I think we tried to bring out that sense of humour that exists between the Doctor and Romana at this stage of their adventures. Despite season 18 being a more sombre and serious affair, there is still much humour, and that is driven by the Doctor and Romana. It's perhaps not as heightened as it was in the previous season, it's a quieter humour, much more dialogue based, but still has a silliness to it; that affectionate shorthand that develops between two people who know each other very well."

**THE TARDIS** returns to Earth in March for *The Silent Scream* by James Goss. The travellers are enjoying Hollywood in the 1920s, only to discover that a deadly force is taking the voices of movie stars – and monstrous silhouettes are on the prowl…

James says: "It's not set in a silent movie – it's set in that period in Hollywood when sound had just come in and hundreds of the most famous people on the planet found themselves overnight ghosts – the studios didn't need them because their voices just weren't right. It's the story of famous people fading away in the light of new technology.

"There's hopefully a lot of fun in there. The Doctor meets a plucky female studio owner, who is totally based on Lucille Ball. Wrong period, but she ran Desilu almost-single handed – when **Star Trek** finished shooting at night it was Lucille who came on set with a broom to sweep up.

"Meanwhile, Romana encounters a quack doctor – one of those terrible figures who emerged to haunt Hollywood's Golden Age – a dubious medic who promises eternal youth and beauty. Obviously Romana's incredibly disdainful of the whole thing."

April's adventure is *Dethras*, which takes the TARDIS to a sunken World War 2 submarine, with a mystery to solve before the outside pressures rip it apart… It's been written by Big Finish newcomer Adrian Poynton, a friend of Toby Hadoke and Tom Price (**Torchwood**'s PC Andy), who reveals: "I got an email from producer David Richardson simply saying, 'I have a Tom Baker episode available. You in?' And who was I to turn that down?!

"The season I was writing for already had a fair amount of history and Earth based episodes, so David just said to me, 'Can you come up with something big and outer spacey'. So that's what I did.

"Now, obviously if you've read the episode description you'll know that it begins on a sunken WW2 submarine. How I made it all big and spacey… you'll just have to listen and see. But I I had a lot of fun with the idea."

**FOLLOWING IN** May is *The Haunting of Malkin Place*, which sees the Doctor and Romana meet the spiritualist Talbot, who has been called to investigate ghostly apparitions in a 1920's mansion. Writer Phil Mulryne says: "When David Richardson initially mentioned it he talked about the idea of doing a ghost story – which was immediately something that excited me! I think we talked about the fiction of MR James as inspiration. But he was nice enough to leave most of the details of when and where and who was being haunted up to me. I can't believe Simon Jones is in it! I can't wait to hear the final version, which has to put the real 'haunting' into *The Haunting of Malkin Place*. Please listen at night with the lights off!"

Jonathan Morris is the writer of June's play, *Subterranea*, which sees the Doctor and Romana taken deep underground by a steam-driven alien drill ship, where the terrifying Silex await. Jonny says: "David Richardson suggested thinking along the lines of a *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* story, which gave me an idea for telling a steampunk story about great underground drilling machines, part of a whole underground ecosystem. The steampunk aspect also informed the characters, which are Victorian/Dickensian in nature, and the theme of a survival of the fittest."

**HAVING PREVIOUSLY** written for the Voord, Andrew Smith gets the chance to revisit another of Terry Nation's creations in *The Movellan Grave*. It's the first time Andrew has written a full-cast adventure for Tom Baker and Lalla Ward since *Full Circle* on TV in 1980.

He says: "I started off by watching *Destiny of the Daleks*, armed with a pen and paper, so I was writing down the facts we learned about the Movellans. As I noted things, I worked out reasons for everything in my head.

"Watching it again, when you know they're in a war with the Daleks, they have some key vulnerabilities, such as going all dizzy when someone blows a whistle; they also have their power pack attached by a clip to their belt, and they switch off if someone grabs it. You can then fiddle with it and have them obey your instructions.

"With *The Movellan Grave*, these are Movellans who have upgraded their power packs – and there's a new type of Movellan as well, which is key to the plot."

**THIS SEASON** comes to an end with a two-part story by Marc Platt, *The Skin of the Sleek*/*The Thief Who Stole Time,* where the travellers meet Romana's best friend, the Time Lady Sartia, on the planet Funderell.

Marc says: "It's a four-parter that introduces an old friend for Romana from her days at Prydon Academy on Gallifrey – and inevitably the friendship doesn't quite go the way Romana expects. Otherwise, I had carte blanche to do whatever I liked. I'd had an idea for years about a planet called Funderell, which has a gelatinous sea that you could walk on. But if you stop moving, you start to sink.

Marc reveals a little about the new Time Lady in the mix: "Sartiacaradinora, known to her academic friends as Sartia, is to Romana what the Rani is to the Doctor. That's their particular balance. She's very clever, but not to be trusted. And how did she manage to escape Gallifrey as well? Sartia is also a great chance to find out a bit more about Romana. What was she like at the academy? The star pupil, glamorous and intelligent, and adored by everyone? What was the reaction at home when Romana got whisked away to the top job? And how much longer will she be allowed to stay away?"

Kenny Smith joins four legendary figures as they begin their Big Finish journey…

**LISTEN AGAIN**

**PATHFINDER LEGENDS: BURNT OFFERINGS**

**EVERY LEGEND** has a beginning. For Big Finish, the **Pathfinder Legends** began in March 2014.

The series is based on Paizo Publishing's best selling Pathfinder Roleplaying Game, the most popular and best-selling monthly product in the tabletop RPG industry.

**Pathfinder Legends** is produced by John Ainsworth, who explains: "**Pathfinder** is a series of full-cast audio dramas based on the fantasy roleplaying game **Pathfinder**. Each series of audios is a dramatisation of a **Pathfinder** 'adventure path'. Each series consists of six linked adventures all set in roughly the same location and evolving towards a grand climax in the final chapter. It's not dissimilar to *The Lord of the Rings* and features a variety of creatures and monsters, including dragons and ogres, and every adventure has a good helping of sword fights and spell-casting.

"There are four main characters: Ezren a wizard, Merisiel an Elven thief, Harsk a dwarf ranger, and Valeros a warrior. The four adventurers travel together and work as a team, often helping those in need and combating the various evils that they encounter. They are all very different from each other and even though they work together, there's plenty of banter and a lively exchange of opinions."

*Burnt Offerings* was the first release in the series, joining the iconic characters as they venture through Pathfinder's most famous campaign, *The Rise of the Runelords*.

Trevor Littledale plays Ezren, Ian Brooker is Harsk, Stewart Alexander features as Valeros, while Kerry Skinner brings Merisiel to life.

Ian reveals there is there a real camaraderie between the regulars: "There was from the very beginning. We met for the first time at a test recording for **Pathfinder** at Big Finish on the afternoon of April 19, 2013. We immediately hit it off. Since then we have become firm friends.

"John has a knack of casting really good actors with whom he has worked over the years and who are also really nice people. There's no ego – just a lot of mutual respect, kindness, humour, laughter, support and love. We have become a little family."

*Burnt Offerings* features the events that follow the arrival of the adventurers in Sandpoint, an ordinary town on the Lost Coast of Varisia. They arrive during the town's annual Swallowtail Festival in search of a rest – until goblins attack during a ceremony to consecrate the town's rebuilt church, and the adventurers discover a sinister plot to return an ancient evil to Varisia. They have to investigate the link between the goblin attack and the removal of mortal remains from a crypt in the town's graveyard.

When John worked on *Burnt Offerings*, what was the feeling in studio? He adds: "We were all very excited to be working on a new series, and probably a little bit nervous. The regular cast were getting to know each other and were exploring the dynamics between the characters, and we were feeling our way with the tone and style of the story telling. It was all new ground!"

A full preview of series three of **Pathfinder Legends**: *Curse of the Crimson Stone w*ill appear in next month's issue of *Vortex*.

**VORTEX MAIL**

I would like to express my shock and sadness at a letter from Rob Cope in the November 2016 issue of *Vortex*. In it, Rob makes the admirable suggestion of a **Fourth Doctor Adventure** with Davros. However, in the letter he refers to Davros as the 'crippled one'. I'm sure you must realise that such an expression is both unkind and hurtful. I am sure Big Finish would not allow their publication to use pejorative terms around gay, black or female characters, so why do it around disability? Surely, what makes Davros such a great villain is his evilness, not his disability. All I would kindly ask is that you think about the language you use in your magazine. Apart from that, thanks for the fantastic job that you do.

**Stephen Brown**

***Nick****: Hi Stephen, you're absolutely right. As you know, I wrote to you personally to apologise, but I also wanted to make it public. I have to confess that my first priority is to give a good, as positive as possible reply and get the letters done as quickly and efficiently as possible. Stupidly, I missed this. I think we should all take care about what we say and be considerate to the feelings of others. Heartfelt apologies.*

I was thinking lately and started to wonder how Benny Summerfield would deal with a Weeping Angel if she encountered one during an archaeological dig site. Maybe that could be a starting off point for a **New Adventures of Bernice Summerfield 4**? Also I loved how both Worlds collections ended and wondered if there's a chance for a third Worlds to ever materialise?

**Douglas Freer**

***Nick****: You mean* ***The Worlds of Big Finish*** *and* ***The Worlds of Doctor Who****? No plans for any more of those. No plans for Bernice and the Weeping Angels, but it's a cracking idea!*

I want to thank you for making some subscriber **Short Trips** available to everyone, especially the amazing *Lepidoptery For Beginners* which I've been telling all my friends to go buy. Many of us started out with a handful of cherry-picked releases before moving on to subscriptions and missed out on some of the best subscriber **Short Trips** as a result. I hope you'll consider releasing more of them in the future, especially the truly excellent *Twilight's End* which is a major part of the Forge arc and should not stay locked away forever. Also, thank you for **The Torchwood Archive** — I loved every moment of it!

**Niki Haringsma**

***Nick****: Thanks, Niki. There's an ongoing assessment of which subscriber-only productions should 'mature' into a wider release in the fullness of time. Glad you've enjoyed what we've done so far, though.*

As a long term subscriber I am continually amazed at the quality and ingenuity of your productions. I have a couple of suggestions to add to your fantastic output. It would be great if Big Finish did *The Phoenix Rises*, the infamous *DWM* April Fool from the early 80s. Release it on April 1st? My other suggestion is bridging a couple of gaps in the Sixth Doctor range. Did he take Herbert George Wells directly home after the adventure on Karfel? An opportunity for the Doctor to have been more involved with Wells' fiction? Keep up the good work!

**Alan Christison**

***Nick:*** *Alan, since you said a couple of gaps, I was waiting for your other suggestion. Have you be listening to Peter Ware of* Doctor Who Magazine*? He's suggested that 'gap' as well. No plans as yet, but it's another great idea. I'm not too keen in filling gaps and locking everything down, though. I prefer to leave possibilities open. That said, I'm sure we could do some Sixth Doctor/HG Wells adventures that might still leave things open for future possibilities.*

The **War Doctor** series from Big Finish is consistently wowing me with it's great ideas and cinematic scope. *Agents Of Chaos* has only built upon this success with Nicholas Briggs proving why he is the king of the Daleks. But there doesn't seem to be any more box sets planned after the amazing sounding *Casualties Of War*, please don't let this series end there. We need to have more John Hurt! Much more! I know he is a busy and successful score but can you rope him in for a few more releases.

**Mackenzie**

***Nick****: I'm not sure what you mean by him being a 'busy and successful score', but he certainly is busy and successful. No announcements to make at the moment, but we would love to do more.*

**COMING SOON**

Forthcoming audio releases

**JANUARY 2017**

DOCTOR WHO: THE STAR MEN (221, FIFTH DOCTOR, ADRIC, TEGAN AND NYSSA)

DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE BEAST OF KRAVENOS (6.1 FOURTH DOCTOR, ROMANA II, K9, JAGO & LITEFOOT)

DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS: THE WORLD BEYOND THE TREES (7.01, EIGHTH DOCTOR AND LIV CHENKA, DOWNLOAD ONLY)

DOCTOR WHO – THE DIARY OF RIVER SONG: SERIES 02 (BOX SET, RIVER SONG, SIXTH DOCTOR, SEVENTH DOCTOR)

TORCHWOOD ONE: BEFORE THE FALL (BOX SET, IANTO, YVONNE)

GRACELESS: SERIES 4 (BOX SET)

THE AVENGERS – THE LOST EPISODES: VOLUME 07 (BOX SET)

PATHFINDER LEGENDS: EDGE OF ANARCHY – CURSE OF THE CRIMSON THRONE (3.1)

HG WELLS: THE INVISIBLE MAN (1)

**FEBRUARY 2017**

DOCTOR WHO: THE CONTINGENCY CLUB (222, FIFTH DOCTOR, ADRIC, TEGAN AND NYSSA)

DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE ETERNAL BATTLE (6.2 FOURTH DOCTOR, ROMANA II AND K9)

DOCTOR WHO – NEW SERIES: THE WAR DOCTOR VOLUME 4 (4. WAR DOCTOR, LEELA)

DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS: GARDENERS' WORLDS (7.02, THE THIRD DOCTOR AND JO GRANT, DOWNLOAD ONLY)

PATHFINDER LEGENDS: EDGE OF ANARCHY – SEVEN DAYS TO THE GRAVE (3.2)

ORIGINAL DRAMA: CICERO

**MARCH 2017**

DOCTOR WHO: ZALTYS (223, FIFTH DOCTOR, ADRIC, TEGAN AND NYSSA)

DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE SILENT SCREAM (6.3 FOURTH DOCTOR, ROMANA II AND K9)

DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS: HOW TO WIN PLANETS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE (7.03, THE FOURTH DOCTOR, SARAH, HARRY AND THE MONK, DOWNLOAD ONLY)

DOCTOR WHO: DOOM COALITION 4

CHARLOTTE POLLARD: SERIES 2 (BOX SET)

TORCHWOOD: VISITING HOURS (13, TBA)

THE OMEGA FACTOR: SERIES 2

PATHFINDER LEGENDS: EDGE OF ANARCHY – ESCAPE FROM OLD KORVOSA (3.3)

HG WELLS: THE FIRST MEN IN THE MOON (2)

**APRIL 2017**

DOCTOR WHO – SPECIAL RELEASES: SPARE PARTS (LIMITED VINYL EDITION) (FIFTH DOCTOR AND NYSSA)

DOCTOR WHO – PHILIP HINCHCLIFFE PRESENTS: THE HELM OF AWE

DOCTOR WHO – SHORT TRIPS: FLASHPOINT (7.04, THE EIGHTH DOCTOR, LUCIE MILLER, DOWNLOAD ONLY)

DOCTOR WHO – MAIN RANGE: ALIEN HEART/DALEK SOUL (224, FIFTH DOCTOR AND NYSSA)

DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:DETHRAS (6.4, FOURTH DOCTOR AND ROMANA II)

JAGO & LITEFOOT: SERIES 13 (BOX SET)

TORCHWOOD: THE DOLLHOUSE (14, TBA)

DAN DARE: THE AUDIO ADVENTURES:VOLUME TWO (BOX SET)

PATHFINDER LEGENDS: EDGE OF ANARCHY   
A HISTORY OF ASHES (3.4)

**MAY 2017**

DOCTOR WHO – SHORT TRIPS: FALLING (7.05, THE FIRST DOCTOR, POLLY, BEN, DOWNLOAD ONLY)

DOCTOR WHO – MAIN RANGE: VORTEX ICE/CORTEX FIRE (225, SIXTH DOCTOR AND FLIP)

DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE HAUNTING OF MALKIN PLACE (6.5, FOURTH DOCTOR AND ROMANA II)

UNIT – THE NEW SERIES: ASSEMBLED(BOX SET 4, KATE STEWART AND OSGOOD)

TORCHWOOD: CORPSE DAY (15, TBA)

PATHFINDER LEGENDS: EDGE OF ANARCHY – SKELETONS OF SCARWALL (3.5)

DARK SHADOWS: PHANTOM MEMORIES

HG WELLS: THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME (3)

**JUNE 2017**

DOCTOR WHO – SHORT TRIPS: TBA (7.06, TBA)

DOCTOR WHO – THE COMPANION CHRONICLES:THE FIRST DOCTOR VOLUME 2 (11.0, TBA)

DOCTOR WHO – MAIN RANGE: SHADOW PLANET/WORLD APART (226, SEVENTH DOCTOR AND ACE)

DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES:SUBTERRANEA (6.6, FOURTH DOCTOR AND ROMANA II)

SURVIVORS – SERIES 6: BOX SET

THE LIVES OF CAPTAIN JACK

TORCHWOOD: TBA (16, TBA)

PATHFINDER LEGENDS: EDGE OF ANARCHY CROWN OF FANGS (3.6)

**JULY 2017**

DOCTOR WHO – CLASSIC DOCTORS NEW MONSTERS: VOLUME TWO (BOX SET)  
DOCTOR WHO – SHORT TRIPS: TBA (7.07, TBA)  
DOCTOR WHO – MAIN RANGE: THE HIGH PRICE OF PARKING (227, SEVENTH DOCTOR)

DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE MOVELLAN GRAVE (6.7, FOURTH DOCTOR AND ROMANA II)

DOCTOR WHO – THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES: VOLUME 3 (TBA)

TORCHWOOD: TBA (17, TBA)

DARK SHADOWS: DREAMS OF LONG AGO

TERRAHAWKS: VOLUME 3

HG WELLS: THE ISLAND OF DR MOREAU (4)

**AUGUST 2017**

DOCTOR WHO – MAIN RANGE: TBA (228, TBA)

DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE SKIN OF THE SLEEK (6.8, FOURTH DOCTOR AND ROMANA II)

DOCTOR WHO – SHORT TRIPS: TBA (7.08, TBA)

TORCHWOOD: TBA (18, TBA)

THE PRISONER: VOLUME TWO (BOX SET)

BIG FINISH CLASSICS: HAMLET

**SEPTEMBER 2017**

DOCTOR WHO – MAIN RANGE: THE SILURIAN CANDIDATE (229, SEVENTH DOCTOR)

DOCTOR WHO – MAIN RANGE: TIME IN OFFICE (230, FIFTH DOCTOR AND TEGAN)

DOCTOR WHO – FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE THIEF WHO STOLE TIME (6.9, FOURTH DOCTOR AND ROMANA II)

DOCTOR WHO – SHORT TRIPS: TBA (7.09, TBA)

DOCTOR WHO – THE EARLY ADVENTURES: TBA (4.1, TBA)

HG WELLS: THE TIME MACHINE (5)

**OCTOBER 2017**

DOCTOR WHO – MAIN RANGE: TBA (231, TBA)

DOCTOR WHO – THE EARLY ADVENTURES: TBA (4.2, TBA)

DOCTOR WHO – SHORT TRIPS: TBA (7.10, TBA)

DARK SHADOWS: LOVE LIVES ON