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COMING SOON

LUCIE MILLER RETURNS!

HE CLOCK is ticking and there's not long until the muchanticipated return of Lucie Miller to the Doctor Who universe. Believe it or not, it's been more than 12 years since actor Sheridan Smith made her debut materialising inside Paul McGann's TARDIS on a Time Lord witness protection scheme (or so she thought). Although her travels came to an end in 2011, the character has remained much loved - and she's back for four new tales in a box set to be released in July.

Executive producer Nicholas Briggs says: "We've always had it in mind to bring back Lucie Miller. We only let her go in the first place because we could see Sheridan's stratospheric career path approaching.

"My plan was to revisit Lucie earlier on in her adventures with the Eighth Doctor. It's pretty much what we do with every classic companion-and-Doctor pairing, so why not do it with Lucie?"

Producer Scott Handcock says: "Paul and Sheridan slipped effortlessly back into the old dynamic, and it's a treat to hear these brand-new adventures with the Doctor and Lucie!"

The four new adventures are The Dalek Trap by Nicholas Briggs, The Revolution Game by Alice Cavender, The House on the Edge of Chaos by Eddie Robson (who wrote several of Lucie's original stories) and Island of the Fendahl by Alan Barnes (Lucie's creator), set between the first and second series of her adventures.

Look out for an exclusive interview with Sheridan Smith in *Vortex* later this year. **VORTEX**

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EDITORIAL



ID YOU know that this month is the 10th anniversary issue of Vortex? It's hard to believe I know! I remember when the first issue arrived with my monthly CD order, and I still have a copy of every edition. It was just what I wanted – a little magazine full of facts and figures, and details about what was happening in and out of the recording studio.

At the time I was doing my unofficial Big Finish fanzine *The Finished Product*, and this was some official competition!

Vortex has changed and grown in that time, with some features disappearing (I still miss *Team Twitter*), but it brought a more personal feel to what was being released, and the releases that were still to come.

A key part of *Vortex* was Paul Spragg, one of the most beloved people ever to work at Big Finish. Paul was a regular writer on this magazine in addition to his work as producer's assistant, and he always brought a sense of fun to the proceedings with his unique voice.

Newcomers to Big Finish over the past couple of years may not know of Paul Spragg, but if you look for him on a search engine you'll very quickly realise what an important person he was to so many of us.

Paul shaped Vortex into the magazine it is today, and I still feel that I'm just keeping the seat warm for him. So I raise my glass once again to our Paul – gone, but never, ever forgotten. VORTEX

Big Finish marks this year's **International Women's Day** with a **Doctor Who** release with a difference...

NTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S Day takes place on the 8th of March. And to celebrate all the strong female characters from the Doctor Who universe, an all female lead cast and a female-led production team have come together to create a box set with a difference. Senior producer David Richardson explains: "For a long time, we've been aware that there are not enough women in our ranks at Big Finish. I mean, we do very well in creating series led by female characters, and we have female directors and production staff, but finding female writers has mostly eluded us. When we hold our writers' opportunities the entrants are predominantly male. When writers contact me asking for work, they are always male. Clearly we needed to do something to send the message that Big Finish is an open and diverse company, and that everyone is welcome.

R

"I came up with the idea of **The Eighth of March**: four stories written by women, directed by a woman, produced by a woman and starring women – and all set on the same day as suggested by the title. And I took it to executive producers Nick and Jason and said, 'How about doing this for International Women's Day?' Their response was an immediate, 'Yes, this is a great idea'.

ER

"It's been a wonderful process because not only has it brought in new talent who are already working on many other projects, but it has inspired us to get



"I think this has been a wonderful platform to show off a whole host of **creativity** and **talent**"

DOCTOR WHO

THE EIGHTH OF MARCH

EMMA HAIGH

Vastra (Neve McIntosh) and her wife Jenny (Catrin Stewart).

ORLDS COLLIDE in the first adventure,

Emancipation by Lisa McMullin, with Professor River

on our feet and go looking for new people. I've been talking to literary agents; John Dorney and Matt Fitton have been doing some legwork and asking writers and their friends, and friends of friends; and actors have been suggesting people they know (thank you Tracy Wiles!). The result is we have many more women writers than we did a year ago, and you'll be seeing their names on brilliant scripts in the coming months and years."

Overseeing **The Eighth of March** is producer Emma Haigh, who reveals: "Following the success of the episode from the Big Finish Original ATA Girl that was released for International Women's Day 2018, we wanted to do another release to mark the event and what better way than to go back to the original Big Finish productions of **Doctor Who** and bring together all these marvellous female characters.

"I think this has been a wonderful platform to show off a whole host of creativity and talent and to that end it



is important, but it should also just be the norm."

So who is in the mix? We've got Ace (Sophie Aldred) and Professor Bernice Summerfield (Lisa Bowerman), Professor River Song (Alex Kingston) and Leela (Louise Jameson), UNIT's Kate Stewart (Jemma Redgrave) and Osgood (Ingrid Oliver) plus Madame Song and Leela meeting each other. Lisa reveals: "I was probably allocated River and Leela because they're two characters I've wanted to write for for ages, so I think I was given them because of my constant mithering!

"River and Leela team up, reluctantly, to foil a kidnapping and uncover a cruel theocratic

DOCTOR WHO THE EIGHTH OF MARCH

ruler, exploiting faith and belief in order to cling to power. They work together to try to rescue a stolen child and expose the theocracy for the despotic regime it is.

"It's a classic 'odd couple' set up. Initial distrust (on Leela's part) and frustration (from River) and you spend the story bringing them gradually to a point of understanding and cooperation. River knows who Leela is and so already has a grudging respect and admiration (tempered by jealousy) for Leela. Leela doesn't want to trust River but she's fascinated by her. Both women love a weapon (which the Doctor generally doesn't) and they've both been controlled and exploited and survived. They're both fighters - River led by her head, Leela by her heart – and they complement each other." Given that River is so erudite. and Leela is so instinctive,

"It's very hard for me not to go totally fan-girl when I talk about the **Paternoster Gang**."

GEMMA LANGFORD

how did you find creating a dynamic for them? "That is such a good question. It is exactly that which makes them such a great dramatic duo. It is a very similar dynamic to Doctor/ companion. In this story, River knows exactly who Leela is but Leela hasn't a clue who River is. Leela has to go with her instinct that this woman is not all bad."



he set continues with *The Big Blue Book* by Lizzie Hopley, featuring Ace and Bernice Summerfield.

Lizzie says: "I had the great pleasure of being able to write for two of the best female companions. I was approached to pitch some ideas, and I gave them about five.

"I worked with Sophie when I played Happy the Rabbit in a Sylvester McCoy story, *Night Thoughts*, and she was brilliant. And I've met the wondrous Lisa a few times – she used to take photographs for me as an actor and had done my headshots. Knowing them as people, and knowing their characters as Ace and Benny, it wasn't as if I had to start from scratch.

"It's great fun to put these two women head to head. I listened to a few of the other stories they've been in so I was able to hear how they interacted under other writers, and then could put my own spin on it. How would these very different tough, intelligent women interact when left on their own, in a difficult situation. How would they survive?

"I wanted to peel away the layers so there was a real mystery there. For *The Big Blue Book* I wanted to think of the worst possible thing that I could do to the TARDIS – or rather, what's the worst thing Ace could do to the TARDIS – and then have it happen. I took it back from there and worked out how to get to that situation: with something you love and trust, in the form of the TARDIS which has an intelligence – but what if you suddenly messed that up?"

HERE'S A Big Finish debut for Jenny in Gemma Langford's adventure, Inside Every Warrior (Vastra and Strax having already featured in a Big Finish audio).

Gemma grins: "When they asked which character I'd be interested in writing for I was straight away like, 'Give me one of the kick-ass women, please. That's all I want!', and lucky for me they came back



SOPHIE ALDRED KING TON THE AMESON VALUE KINGSTON

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EMANCIPATION BY LISA McMULLIN

THE BIG BLUE BOOK BY LIZZIE HOPLEY

INSIDE EVERY WARRIOR BY GEMMA LANGFORD

NARCISSUS BY SARAH GROCHALA

Cast Sophie Aldred (Ace), Lisa
Bowerman (Bernice Summerfield),
Louise Jameson (Leela), Alex
Kingston (River Song), Neve
McIntosh (Madame Vastra),
Ingrid Oliver (Petronella Osgood),
Jemma Redgrave (Kate Stewart),
Catrin Stewart (Jenny Flint),
James Joyce (Josh Carter),
Tracy Wiles (Jacqui McGee)



with, 'Well, have we the project for you!' When they proposed I write the first adventure for the Paternoster Gang's return... there are no words.

"It's very hard for me not to go totally fan-girl when I talk about the Paternoster Gang. They are such beautiful characters. The first time I saw them on the TV show I felt genuinely excited. They were just so different from anything we'd seen before. Strong, funny, loving... the romance between Madame Vastra and Jenny is gorgeous. And what I loved the most (having experienced being an outsider myself) is that this group of outsiders found each other and made this wonderful family that can stand up to anything. Isn't that the dream everyone has? To be part of something like that?

"So yes, to have the chance to write for them was an absolute honour and a joy. Strax, Madame Vastra and Jenny are all such richly drawn characters, it was easy to sink into them and take them on an adventure. Now it's done, I find myself genuinely missing them!"

So what will the friends encounter? Gemma teases: "Terrifying creatures, midnight break-ins and mad scientists – all in a day's work for the Paternoster Gang. But when Strax becomes the latest victim, they find they must solve the mystery or lose their friend forever."

HE FINAL story in this set is *Narcissus* by Sarah Grochala, featuring Kate Stewart, Osgood and... the other Osgood! Sarah tells *Vortex* about her brief: "It was very practical. Initially it had to be an all women cast – though they let us add a few men in later! The story had to take place on March 8th and we needed to use original aliens. I was given UNIT so obviously my story had to also be set in the present.

"I loved it. Osgood has been a favourite character of mine for a while; I think I identify quite heavily with the geek in her. I also like the fact that although



she is so accomplished and clever, she still doubts herself at times. It was fun to explore what it might be like for Osgood to have to live with a second version of herself. And Kate is really intriguing site. The two Osgoods have to work with Kate to save a friend, and there are moments where having two Osgoods proves very useful. It's about learning that sometimes the things you desire can be the

"I think this release is an **important** one in terms of further demonstrating Big Finish's ongoing **commitment to diversity**."

HELEN GOLDWYN

as a character. She has to be so strong and infallible to lead the UNIT team and hold everything together at times of crisis. It's really interesting to think about what might be going on underneath her confident surface."

How would Sarah sum up the story? "It's **Blind Date** with an alien twist. One of the UNIT team goes missing after meeting someone on a dating things that destroy you. It's also about how it's important to be happy in yourself."

RINGING THE stories to life in studio was director Helen Goldwyn. She says: "When David Richardson first mentioned The Eighth of March stories, I loved the idea of bringing all these Doctor Who women together in one set, and to give them centre stage. **Doctor Who** has often been ahead of its time in giving strong, leading roles to women, and although some of them may have started out as sidekicks, the female characters have evolved with the series to become protagonists in their own right. That's what we're really celebrating here, I think."

Helen continues: "I think this release is an important one in terms of further demonstrating Big Finish's ongoing commitment to diversity. Science fiction has long been the domain of men and this rise of female writers and creatives is still relatively new. It's wonderful to be part of something that creates so many opportunities for female creatives but it is significant that it's still necessary to comment upon it.

"In the midst of innumerable all-male production teams, it's still a novelty to have an all-female one. I'm looking forward to the day when we don't feel the need to describe it as 'all-female' but simply accept it as a team like any other." VORTEX

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GALLIFREY INTERVENTION EARTH

ONE of the fascinating things about the wide universe of **Doctor Who** is that it opens up a plethora of alternative realities, as we saw in the TV episode *Turn Left*. And there are plenty of other 'what ifs' to be had – just look at Big Finish's **Doctor Who Unbound** range.

The **Gallifrey** series also gave us a range of alternative presents in its fourth, fifth and sixth series, while series 7, *Intervention Earth*, gave us a glimpse into a future that could have been.

Gallifrey VI introduces us to Trey, a future incarnation of Romana, and *Intervention Earth* shows us the events later in her presidency – but it was a future that never came to pass when the second Romana retained her current body.

Intervention Earth began from a brief by senior producer David Richardson.

Producer Scott Handcock says: "Following her appearance in the **Companion Chronicle**, *Luna Romana* and previous **Gallifrey** dramas, listeners were keen to hear more from the future incarnation of Romana played by Juliet Landau. Executive producer Jason Haigh-Ellery thought we could we explore this in a one-off drama. "David suggested introducing Ace as another familiar element alongside Narvin to make more of the Celestial Intervention Agency, and from there the pieces began to come together."

Juliet explains more: "In Intervention Earth we see Romana in power and in charge. She is in 'take action' mode. We see her as both a stateswoman and as an adventurer. She is more alone than in prior stories and has to figure out whom to trust. Loyalties are challenged."

Scott and co-writer David Llewellyn had a blank slate to start with but soon decided on bringing back a familiar face – or rather, voice – for the adventure.

Scott says: "We wanted to find a way of linking Gallifrey with Earth, and Omega seemed an ideal threat for our heroes...

"Once everyone was on board and the elements were in place, it was then just a case of finding the right kind of story. As we were telling an adventure with Juliet's Romana, it couldn't be the sort of tale we'd have told with Lalla Ward. Juliet's Romana is more of an observer than Lalla, so Intervention Earth allows Romana to



take more of a backseat as events unravel around her.

"In that sense the four-episode format came quite naturally as it allowed us to focus one episode on each of our main characters – Ace, Romana and Narvin – before all three unite properly to tackle Omega in the fourth and final episode. And I think that serial feel really helps to drive the drama. We cover a lot of ground in a relatively short space of time; we flit between locations and time periods; but it never feels rushed because we're cutting between our characters."

Of course, **Gallifrey** wouldn't be **Gallifrey** without Co-ordinator Narvin, played, as ever, by Seán Carlsen. Seán enjoyed the recording: "What a cast! And Stephen Thorne, what a voice! That's the first time he has played Omega since *The Three Doctors* back in 1973, and I just assumed that he had done it again at some point – but that wasn't the case. When he did his first scene, the voice was there instantly. I felt really proud to have been part of it." **VeRTEX**

Intervention Earth is available for download now at the special price of £4.99.

FOR FOR AND COUNTRY

WE'RE BACK IN **AVENGER-LAND** FOR NEW EPISODES WITH **JOHN STEED**

HE AVENGERS range at Big Finish has grown and grown even though the plan originally was to adapt just the scripts that still existed from the first series of the TV show. The range then expanded to include TV episodes that still survived, plus adventures extrapolated from episodes no longer in existence. Julian Wadham's Steed and Anthony Howell's Dr David Keel eventually spanned seven volumes in **The Lost Episodes** range.

Julian Wadham subsequently paired up with Olivia Poulet for two volumes of **The Comic Strip** Adaptations, plus the release of an adaptation of the original novel *Too Many Targets* last year. And now there are more adventures for Steed with Emily Woodward playing his latest partner in anti-crime, Tara King.

Producer David Richardson says: "We love working on **The Avengers**. Every aspect of the range is a joy – from the writing, the production, the cast, right through to dealing with our licensing contacts at StudioCanal. It's a truly positive experience. And so, after completing our adaptation of *Too Many Targets*, we were eager to find

"I'm told I've quite a youngsounding voice, so I think that matched her quite well. Although she's an Avenger, she's still finding her own way. She has a twinkle in her eye, but she's young and getting out there on her own."

E BEGIN with It's a Wild Wild Wild West by John Dorney, which sounds exactly like a TV episode from the period. John says: "The first one I've written in this set is It's a Wild Wild Wild West, When I read the comic strip, it just leapt out at me as being so entertaining - it's cowboys rustling in

Above (I–r) Julian Wadhan and Emily Woodward

> more stories to adapt - and the strips from TV Comic seemed ripe for the choosing ... "

HE AVENGERS: The **Comic Strip Adaptations** Volume Three follows in

infectious

charm and

energy-and, as

Linda Thorson was

to Diana Rigg, she's

a fascinating contrast to

Olivia Poulet's Mrs Peel." Emily

of Doctor Who for Big Finish,

says: "Too Many Targets was a great

experience. I'd done a few episodes

and a small part in The Avengers

before – playing a girl in a hair

salon - so it was great when

the offer came through to

"I didn't really know

work with Julian again.

that much about The

Avengers beforehand, I

hadn't watched any until

I got offered the part of Tara

clips of Linda Thorson. What Big

Thorson - they wanted an essence

of her - but they said that I could

bring whatever I wanted to her.

Finish told me was they didn't

want an impression of Linda

and I went online and found

the footsteps and format previously established with adaptations of the Emma Peel strips from Diana comic, under the watchful eye of script editor John Dorney. John savs: "There are no hard and steady rules with the adaptations. People can use as much or as little as they want from the original strips. I try to keep every single line of dialogue in there if I can, but sometimes you'll move them around a bit to make them work, or even drop them if they don't quite make sense or feel Avengersy-enough."

David recalls: "Emily is perfect casting for Tara - so full of

WANT AN IMPRES

"THEY DIDN'T EMILY WOODWARD

the New Forest. which was immediately screaming out to me as an Avengers idea, and not something they did on TV. It felt like a great opportunity to draw on something I know about.

"The first thing I ever wrote was about a Western film society, so I know how they work and what the dialogue should be like.

"We were discussing how the accents should sound, and felt they shouldn't quite be American - they should be bad British-trying-to-do-thecowboy American accents. That fits with the tone of it.

"The title's also a nod to It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World, with the Old West, and it feels like the right title. I just had a ball doing it, getting to write all this cod-Western dialogue."

Under the Weather by Phil Mulryne continues the escapades, and Phil admits: "The original strip for this story was great fun to read. I grew up avidly reading

"WE WERE Doing a sequel to a story that's not been made yet, including flashbacks!"

JOHN DORNE

Above (1-r): Edward Dede, Emily Woodward, Ewart James Walters, Natalie Simpson, Jude Owusu, Christopher Benjamin and Julian Wadham

Right (I–r): Julian Wadham, Emily Woodward, Christopher Benjamin

d. so it was fun simply to sit down and enjoy it. It's

told really excitingly, with loads of energy and very well drawn. Despite a pretty sweeping plot, it's very economical thanks to the original form. But that only left me excited at being able to expand some elements and let the story breathe.

"It stuck me how many different locations this adventure has – as Steed and Tara run across the country trying to find out what's causing some freak weather conditions. But actually I felt that would work well on audio, with distinct environments from an RAF airshow, to on board a fishing trawler, to crossing frozen sea ice! Comics and audio share that ability to leap to any number of locations for the same cost, in a way that would make a TV producer faint!

"This story sees Steed and Tara rowing, skiing, piloting fishing trawlers and trekking across Arctic-like tundra. All with a villainous plot to uncover and stop. And at the end of the day, it's an **Avengers** episode – a quintessentially British show – about the weather (a quintessentially British subject!)."

south a

atlantic

HERE'S MORE trouble in store for Steed and Tara in *spycraft* by Robert Khan and Tom Salinsky. They tell Vortex: "The original strips were somewhat dated to say the least. Quite a lot of the content would be totally unacceptable now. We had to try and find a way of respecting the storyline while updating the attitudes. Luckily turning a seven page comic strip into a 60 minute audio requires quite a lot of new material. We hope listeners appreciate what we've done.

"The Tara King era is a bit

lighter and more whimsical than especially the black and white Diana Rigg episodes, but there's that same core of **Avengers** eccentricity and sense of British fair play at its heart." TOm adds: "The first episodes I watched were Linda Thorson's, so there's an extra bit of nostalgia working on these stories. "We haven't heard the final version yet, but the cast is top-notch and Big Finish's sound designers and composers are the best in the business, so I know it will sound amazing."

The set concludes with ... Now You Don't by John Dorney. He says: "The fourth story in the set was originally going to



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THE AVENGERS: STEED AND TARA KING

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IT'S A WILD, WILD, WILD, WILD WEST by John Dorney

UNDER THE WEATHER by Phil Mulryne

SPYCRAFT by Robert Khan and Tom Salinsky

NOW YOU DON'T by John Dorney

Cast Julian Wadham (John Steed), Emily Woodward (Tara King), Christopher Benjamin (Mother), Hywel Morgan (Cody/Jim), Daniel Easton (Billy/Sam), Karina Fernandez (Jessie), Leighton Pugh (Flight Lieutenant Tudor/Volkov), James Joyce (Flying Officer Halliwell /Melnyk), David Sibley (Dr Weatherby), Edward Dede (Miles Yeboah), Natalie Simpson (Ruby Sesay), Jude Owusu (Charlie Okonjo/Kasim), Ewart James Walters (General Babatunde). Nicholas Asbury (Margrave the Magnificent/Sir Godfrey Thorpe), Maggie Service (Circe/Mina)

be a different idea from another writer, but they had to drop out and I was in the best place to work up a replacement script.

"I looked through the rest of the storylines and this wasn't the storyline we had planned. I think this was story number 10 in the list, a story about an evil magician. I'm a hobbyist card magician, so it appealed to me straight away. But when I opened up file 10 it was a story that featured Mrs Peel-it turned out that two **Avengers** stories featured an evil magician! That could have been a problem but I decided the best thing to do was to tie the two together. I knew we would be doing the Emma Peel strips and so we could link them with a returning villain against Steed and Tara. The only thing was, we hadn't written the original story yet! We were doing a sequel to a story that's not been made yet, including flashbacks!"

Tara King actor, Emily Woodward adds: "The stories are great – we all need something that takes us away from the reality of everyday life. Some of the most successful series have a bit of reality, with a bit of the fantastic. You know what you are getting with **The Avengers** – they will be in danger but you know they will be okay in the end. You feel safe with an episode of **The Avengers**."

Director Ken Bentley was delighted to be involved in a new Avenging era for Big Finish.

He admits: "I love **The Avengers**. It's such fun to work on. I love everything about it. The period in which it's set, the humour, the style of the series. It doesn't feel like work to me, I just feel at home. I think it's because, more than anything else I've worked on for Big Finish, **The Avengers** has a theatricality that I'm very comfortable and familiar with.

"The Lost Episodes were much straighter, and the relationship between Steed and Peel very different. But **The Comic Strip** Adaptations are much more like The Avengers we all know and love. Whether it's Emma

Peel or Tara King, the whole experience is much lighter and brighter. They're a lot of fun to work on and are hopefully a lot of fun to listen to. Olivia and Emily have a similar relationship with Julian, that

have with Steed. They all knuckle down and get the work done, but they have a lot of chuckles along the way."

As with the TV show, the Big Finish series features a change in the theme tune, with more brass added to the theme used in the Emma Peel series by composer, Laurie Johnson.

David adds: "We've properly entered a new era here – not just with Tara, but with the addition of Mother (Christopher Benjamin) and even the remixed theme tune, courtesy of the genius Alistair Lock."

Alistair tells Vortex: "Producing the new theme was not as hard to produce as the earlier one. I already had a theme recorded which I could further edit to form the basis of the 'new' Tara King version. Firstly the brass in the main theme was replaced by a new string arrangement using two small string sections. That was quite straightforward. The real fun part was playing in the Tara King theme on a solo trumpet. Luckily I have a comprehensive brass library, so performing the part was not too difficult. With a little extra programming, I was able to record a decent jazz trumpeter." VORTEX



HOW DO YOU GET AWAY FROM A MYTHICAL RACE? THAT'S THE EIGHTH DOCTOR'S CURRENT PROBLEM...

HE EIGHTH Doctor's adventures have landed him in many tricky situations, but few have been more difficult than where he and his friends found themselves at the end of the **Ravenous 2** box set. The Doctor, Liv and Helen are trapped on an alien world surrounded by Ravenous creatures. How do they get out of that one?

Producer David Richardson says: "I knew where **Ravenous 3** had to get to – with some significant beats in its final episode that will shape **Ravenous 4**; and I knew that I wanted the second episode to bring together a number of the Eighth Doctor's companions who have been abducted by the Nine. And from there our writers John Dorney and Matt Fitton set about refining the arc of these tales.

"Episode one, Deeptime Frontier, originally started life as the last episode of **Ravenous 2**, but when Matt became unavailable to write it, we drafted in Guy Adams to fashion a different dark episode that would lead into the events in Matt's script. So our overall plan was very much a moveable feast, and I always find that the best way to approach story development is not to be prescriptive." Matt confirms: "The idea for Deeptime Frontier was originally going to be the last story in the second **Ravenous** box set which I was working on this time last year, but I had a family bereavement and then didn't have the time to do everything, so Guy Adams' superb Seizure was brought forward.

"It actually worked out really well in that his story introduced a single Ravenous, and we had a cliffhanger that introduces a lot more of them. Guy got to do *Alien*, and I get to do *Aliens*!

"What this does is expand on the premise I had for the Doctor and friends' original meeting with the Ravenous. There's a lot of information that comes to light about what the monsters are. I had a 'now get out of that'





"At the very end it sets up the situation for *Companion Piece* and reintroduces the Eleven, who realises he's in just as much trouble as the Doctor is: he knows the Ravenous have his scent too! He's tried running as far as he can, but they keep coming after him. The Eleven wants sanctuary with the Doctor, and in return he will help him – so he becomes the Doctor's companion."

The returning Eleven isn't the only Time Lord we come across in this series.

Matt adds: "We've got a few more Time Lords around who are as thoroughly scared of the Ravenous as the Doctor is. One of them is Rasmus, who may well pop up a few times across the Doctor's timeline in various incarnations. We will have him in Seventh and Eighth Doctor stories, and it means there's another person we know in the Time War too. He's a bit like Romana in a way – he can turn his hand to anything."

HE SECOND adventure of the set, Companion Piece by John Dorney, was unveiled at Big Finish Day last November, revealing that not only are Helen and Liv in the tale, but Charley, Bliss and River Song too!

Above (I–r): Tania Rodrigues, Hattie Morahan, Dan Starkey, Susie Emmett and George Asprey

"GUY GOT TO DO ALIEN, AND I GET TO DO ALIENS!" MATTERTON

cliffhanger from Guy to pick up on, and I think I've come up with a nice way to escape from it!"

The sad circumstances which made Matt's story drop back to **Ravenous 3** gave him a benefit he would not have had otherwise.

Matt explains: "When it came to writing *Deptime Frontier*, I could actually hear the voice of the Ravenous as the second series was already out. I had read Guy's script so had a feel for how they had been set up, but it makes a huge difference actually listening to it. You can play with that and drip feed in to that sense of menace and single-mindedness.

"There's more than one of them onboard this space station, the Deeptime Frontier, which is researching resources for Gallifrey – but comes across something else... Unsurprisingly, that created a bit of a buzz...

John grins: "People are asking how it all works with Bliss being there, but don't worry! It will work! If there's a question that springs to mind, it's fairly safe to assume it's cropped up and entered our minds too. There's nothing to worry about!

"The mechanics of doing a story like this always make it

tricky. There's so much you want to have in there, and I wanted to have variety in terms of how the story happens to the different characters, which becomes part of how you pull it together. There is a bit of a challenge as you don't want it to become repetitive, but I like a challenge. You've got a puzzle and you need to work out how it all fits, and make sure it feels natural and not contrived."

Pulling everything together is the Nine played by John Heffernan, who previously featured in the Eighth Doctor box sets, **Doom Coalition**.

John Dorney adds: "I had a great time writing for the character of the Nine. He felt like the natural fit for this one when I came up with the storyline. He's just a joyous character to write as he's so energised."

Returning to an Eighth Doctor story for the first time in over 11 years is India Fisher as Charley Pollard. India grins: "Working on **Ravenous 3** was brilliant. Big Finish are always great for writing strong female characters and this play was a tour de force.



Hattie Morahan, Alex Kingston and Rakhee Thakrar

"THE TONE OF RAVENOUS IS AROUND MYTH." MATTER

Above (I–r): Paul McGann and Nicola Walker

There was something wonderful about being part of the group 'the Doctor's companions'!

"It was also great fun to record. Working with the likes of Alex Kingston, Nicola Walker and Hattie Morahan, you've got to raise your game! We had a blast as they're all extremely lovely women, as was the disarmingly stunning Rakhee Thakrar. I kept thinking of Sean Connery's line when they told me her character name was Bliss, 'Of course it is!"

David adds: "I'm confident that *Companion Piece* is going to

be a fan favourite. What's not to love – Charlotte Pollard meets Liv, Helen and River Song. Bliss finds herself meeting her Doctor's future companions. And the Nine is on an obsessive quest that could change the Doctor's life forever. It's a story packed with Easter Eggs and a perfect fit for our 20th anniversary celebrations. I've heard a rough assembly of one key sequence and it's brought the biggest smile to my face."

Director Ken Bentley agrees: "That episode was great fun. We enjoy working with all the companions, but of course they rarely get to meet, so it was brilliant getting some of them in together. They've all done some amazing work outside of Big Finish and it was lovely to hear them congratulating each other on their achievements, and all the things they'd seen and heard each other do."

HE DOCTOR is on a quest in the third story, *L.E.G.E.N.D.* by Matt Fitton, who explains: "We have the TARDIS landing in 19th century



DOCTOR WHO: RAVENOUS 3

- RELEASED April 2019
- ▶ CD £23.00 ▶ Download £20.00
- Extras Bonus Disc
- Director Ken Bentley

DEEPTIME FRONTIER by Matt Fitton COMPANION PIECE by John Dorney LEGEND

by Matt Fitton

THE ODDS AGAINST by John Dorney

Cast Paul McGann (The Doctor), Nicola Walker (Liv Chenka). Hattie Morahan (Helen Sinclair), Mark Bonnar (The Eleven), John Heffernan (The Nine), Alex Kingston (River Song), India Fisher (Charlotte Pollard). Rakhee Thakrar (Bliss), Damian Lynch (Rasmus), Tania Rodrigues (Visteron), George Asprey (Ravenous 1/Glitch), Susie Emmett (Brallix/Ravenous 2), Dan Starkey (Original Brallix), Ajjaz Awad (Handmaiden), Tanya Moodie (Marathanga), Arthur Hughes (Wilhelm Grimm/Legend-M), Amaka Okafor (Agnes/Legend-F), Leighton Pugh (Jacob Grimm)

Europe and crossing paths with the Brothers Grimm.

"The Doctor and the Eleven are themselves looking for an alien collector of stories, someone who may have information about the Ravenous stored on their ship's computer, which could tell them how they can be defeated.

"Over time, we've realised the tone of **Ravenous** is around myth, horror and legends, almost fairy stories. The Doctor knows the Grimm stories, of course, and likes the idea of a world with of doom! It was good to spend more time with them and show a different facet of his character.

"When you're working with great people, you do up your own game, that's always been the case. Back in my younger days when I was working with actors of the calibre of Alan Rickman and Helen Mirren – I don't mean to name drop! – that can only help you, because you want to be on their level."

Ravenous 3 comes to a conclusion with *The Odds Against*



fairytales in it – but the reality is that there are darker forces, and everything becomes much more dangerous than he had feared."

The Eleven also comes more to the fore. Matt explains: "We're doing something different with the Eleven each time he appears, so he becomes a TARDIS companion in this story, and several others going forward. He's part of the team and it's nice to play with all the different dynamics. For a lot of this, he's paired up with the Doctor.

"No one knows whether or not to trust him fully – but he needs to save his own skin without killing any of them."

Mark Bonnar, who plays the Eleven, adds: "I'm one of the crew this time around – which is slightly unsettling for the rest of them! It's not long before the Eleven shows his true colours – he just can't help himself, really.

"It was lovely to work more closely with Paul, Nicola and Hattie all at once, rather than just come in and be the voice written by John Dorney – but he is unusually cagey about what he can say about the plot.

He explains: "In *The Odds Against*, the Doctor and his team are on the run from the Ravenous. They are looking for a place they have discovered, where the Ravenous were initially defeated. It's an abbey on a distant planet at the end of the cosmos.

"They arrive in the middle of a series of murders – and there's an enormous creature lurking beneath the surface. It was a fun one to do – to build up to the climax of the box set. You want to set it up, so there's a big clifthanger ready for **Ravenous 4**.

"When I was writing it I was keen to take the plot and push it in a different direction. I want it to go to a different place and time.

"There are reasons why it's one of the most fun things I've ever wanted to write, especially involving the Eleven and doing something with him. He was a bit in the back seat though and he wouldn't like that..." VORTEX



HE MONSTERS are

coming – and Torchwood is ready! This year's **Torchwood** monthly range features something a little different as it ties together **Doctor Who** with its more adult spin-off series through a number of classic and new series monsters. Producer James Goss explains: "With **Torchwood** vs monsters we're doing four stories that show how different Doctor Who monsters behave in a Torchwood world.

"There are less neat, happy endings, a fair number of deaths and sometimes the moral high ground just goes missing. It's a great way to bring in listeners who've never tried a **Torchwood** before, and it has also proyed to be an interesting project.

"We argued over which monsters to feature! Some we included for valid reasons (of course the Welshest sci-fi series ever should do a sequel to the Third Doctor TV episode, *The Green Death*) and some because we thought they'd be brilliant --the Fendahl one literally happened because we couldn't stop thinking about the cover. Fans of continuity will be appalled to hear that it's not too laboured, but Scott Handcock had great fun trying to explain the concept of the Right: Eve Myles and a Fendahleen

its hopelessness and its horror and asked for more cleavage?"

Summing up the tale, Tim says: "We're on a film set, about to shoot the final scene of a questionable horror. But Gwen Cooper's in the cast, so unless she's had a sudden career change that should set some alarm bells ringing. It's a homage to horror films through the ages, and it's not a tale for the faint-hearted.

"The Fendahl ramped up the horror themselves, I was powerless to intervene! Paralysing, draining, transmogrifying... the Fendahl's relentless apathy makes it a much darker threat than some of its contemporaries. In a **Torchwood** setting we get to lay bare this darkness, smearing this inky black like baby oil. I cannot express the sheer terror





Fendahl gestalt to Eve Myles! "It also allowed us to bring Indira Varma and Annette Badland together for a day, and let Kai Owen have fun kicking plastic monsters."

HIS FIFTH series of Torchwood begins in March with Night of the Fendahl by Tim Foley. He tells Vortex: "James asked me if I wanted to do an adventure about Gwen and the Fendahl (codename: Gwendahl). So I pitched some story ideas. I've always been fascinated with consequences and I think it's my favourite thing about this range. Whilst the Doctor zips off when an adventure is over, organisations like Torchwood have to mop up the mess. So what happened to Fetch Priory? Who told its story? Who took its history and and delight I feel about bringing back the Fendahl. I hope people aren't too disturbed... but then again, I secretly hope they are."

ICKING UP from the events of 1973's The Green Death this April comes, well, The Green Life, in which Jo Jones teams up with Captain Jack Harkness to face the giant maggots. Writer David Llewellyn tells us more: "Scott Handcock and I met up for coffee to discuss some other project and he mentioned in passing that they were looking for someone to write their 'Torchwood vs the Maggots story' as I think he called it."

David reveals he was given a very simple brief: "'MAGGOTS!' James was very keen that we open with maggots, and that we throw Jack and Jo in at the deep end. We talked through various ideas about what Llanfairfach might be like after all this time. I didn't want to go down the 'sad, depressing valley' route because that's a bit of a cliché and it's something we'd already explored in Gareth David Lloyd's story *The Last Beacon*. So I went in the

"MAGGOTS! JAMES WAS VERY KEEN THAT WE OPEN WITH MAGGOTS."

DAVID LLEWELLYN

opposite direction. Llanfairfach is thriving – in all sorts of ways!'

Jo, of course, is one of the happiest, loveliest characters to ever feature in **Doctor Who**, which in turn made it awkward to put her into the darker **Torchwood** world.

David admits it was: "Very difficult, actually. The temptation was to make Jo a more cynical character so that she'd fit in, but then James and Scott steered me back to her appearance in **The Sarah Jane Adventures**, where she's this





ball of energy and exuberance.

"So then it became more a case of how you create tension and friction and comedy and drama out of that contrast, between Jo's smiley optimism and Jack's more pragmatic, hard-nosed approach. That really brought the script to life, I think. Jo is enormous fun to write as a 'fish out of water'."

NEW SERIES monster faces off with the bad girl of **Torchwood** in Sync by Lisa McMullin, as Suzie Costello and Blon Fel-Fotch Passameer-Day Slitheen/ Margaret Blaine face off.

Lisa says: "The brief was wide open for this one – just an adventure with Suzie and Blon set at some point between the events of World War Three and Boom Town.

"Blon and Suzie are such gorgeous characters to write for because they're both such devious villains – you don't know who to root for. And they both have serious 'daddy' issues. It was fun looking for

"IT'S LIKE AN ALIEN THELMA AND LOUISE - IF THELMA AND LOUISE WANTED TO KILL EACH OTHER!" LISA MEMULLIN

ways in which they could bond, to create moments of empathy... whilst they were trying to kill each other.

"It's a race-against-time adventure caper, as Suzie and Blon have to join forces to track down the survivor of a crashed spacecraft before incoming missiles destroy half of Cardiff. But of course they've Before we recorded this I had been to see Indira in a play a few weeks beforehand, and she was just superb.

"I really enjoyed playing Margaret again – people still recognise me for it even though it was over a decade ago. She has such fun doing what she does, and that makes her even more fun for me to do, because I can



both got ulterior motives. It's like an alien *Thelma and Louise* – if Thelma and Louise wanted to kill each other!"

Reprising her role as Margaret Blaine is Annette Badland, who told Vortex: "Since I started recording audios for Big Finish I've been asking when they would bring back Margaret as I just loved playing her, but they told me it would be hard to fit her in because of the continuity. But now, here she is, in Cardiff opposite Suzie Costello played by the lovely Indira Varma. go with it. You don't get to be horrible to people in real life, so being able to do it through Margaret is so enjoyable!"

N JUNE, Rhys Williams is front and centre in Sargasso, which features the topical issue of plastic in our seas. And when you think of plastic, the chances are you'll think of Autons.

Writer Christopher Cooper says: "Scott and James already had a clear story in mind for Rhys and the Autons set on a ship lost in the Sargasso Sea. Rhys is on a delivery job to the U.S. which involves a tedious week on a container ship. He fills his time listening to CDs, reading and sleeping... until the engines stop. The crew have vanished and his only companion is Kaitlin, a terrified young American who really should have caught a plane home. And something plasticky wants them dead. It's straight-up horror in the vein of The Thing or Alien, or The Horror of Fang Rock."

How did Chris find writing for established monsters like the Autons?

He admits: "The Autons were a challenge because on TV they don't say very



much. so translating a verv visual baddie into an audio threat took some thought. The key was to think about how they worked best in Doctor Who - they take the form of mundane objects and the terror comes from seeing something from the everyday turn into a horrible murdering thing, so I looked for things you might hear in normal life But I think it'll be the silence when you don't hear those sounds that will be most scary." VORTEX

VORTEXMAIL

A BIGGER FINISH

I'm guessing Big Finish never expected to have such unreal stuff as Sir Derek Jacobi as the Master alongside Paul McGann's incredible Eighth Doctor, to have David Tennant do Big Finish, to have Sir John Hurt as a Doctor, to have new monsters, and to have amazing crossovers (like four Masters and River – I thought the cover was like fan art from a fevered dream!), and basically all these beautiful big moments and beautiful connections to the continuing series on top of their fantastic storytelling. I just wonder how you feel about how far Big Finish has come, and I suppose my real question is what was the most you had hoped or dreamed of in the first few years after getting Paul McGann? Getting Tom Baker? What was the hope? And what does it feel like now? DAVID CHERRY

Nick: David, the first thing is that it all feels like a dream come true! The second thing is that we're all working so hard to achieve this we hardly have time to stop and let it sink in. But there are those very special moments when, for example, Sir John Hurt, Sir Derek Jacobi or David Tennant turn up in the studio... What were our hopes in the first place? We thought we'd get Tom Baker before Paul McGann... but then Paul agreed to come on board first! But now, looking back and realizing that Tom has been working with us for more than seven years... it just seems unreal. Twenty years on it's still exciting – and there's always so much more to achieve.



A RAY OF LIGHT?

Bringing Mags back is a genius move! Any chance we may see more returning characters as companions? Ray (from *Delta and the Bannermen*) getting an arc would be splendid! And I always thought it would be a delight for good ol' Herbert/Wells (*Timelash*) to return with Colin.

JUSTIN BUSH

Nick: Thanks Justin, it was great when Alan Barnes (former script editor of the Main Range adventures, and all round genius) came up with the Mags idea. And I know that all the talented script editors and producers of Big Finish are just bursting with more canny ideas!

IN WITH THE **NEW** NEW? As a huge fan of the **New Adventures**, Iloved the recent **New New Adventures** box set! Will there be more in the future, and will there be more elements from the books integrated into them like Kadiatu or the Chelonians for instance? Will 'New' Ace and Benny make a comeback? Also, as we have the **New New Adventures** range, as well as the **Comic Adaptations** range, is there any hope of the **Novel Adaptations** range making a comeback? **STEPHEN BRENNAN**

Nick: We're not planning a comeback of the novel adaptations as yet, Stephen, I'm sorry to say – but I'd never rule that out. And no plans for more New New Adventures, but I think we should definitely consider that.

MONSTERS IN THE MAIN

Will we ever have new Who monsters appearing in the Main Range? DAN ROBBINS Nick: There's no reason why not, Dan.

CLASSIC TALES

Are you going to do any more classics? Will we ever be able to purchase directly from the app? **RAYN**

Nick: From time to time a classic bubbles to the surface in our collective minds and we set about producing it – nothing currently bubbling though, Rayn. Purchases via the app are a difficult issue because the companies that own app stores require quite a large percentage of the purchase price, leaving us with not enough revenue to make it viable. It's a shame and we hope there will be ways of changing this state of affairs in the future – we're constantly re-evaluating the situation. So, fingers crossed...

THE TWELFTH HOUR

Will you consider doing **The Twelfth Doctor Chronicles**, as you already do for the Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Doctors? **JACK** *Nick: Yes, Jack. We will do that.* **VeRTEX**

COMINGSOON

THE BIG FINISH RELEASE SCHEDULE

MARCH 2019

- DW THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES: THE KAMELION EMPIRE (249, FIFTH DOCTOR, TEGAN, TURLOUGH AND KAMELION)
- DW THE COMIC STRIP ADAPTATIONS: VOLUME 1 (1, FOURTH DOCTOR)
- DW THE EIGHTH OF MARCH
- DOCTORS AND DRAGONS (9.03) DLO
- GALLIFREY: TIME WAR 2
- BERNICE SUMMERFIELD: THE DOOMSDAY MANUSCRIPT (AUDIOBOOK) DLO
- TORCHWOOD: NIGHT OF THE FENDAHL (25)

APRIL 2019

- DW THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES: THE MONSTERS OF GOKROTH (250, SEVENTH DOCTOR AND MAGS)
- DW EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: RAVENOUS 3 (BOX SET)
- DW SHORT TRIPS: YEAR OF THE DREX OLYMPICS (9.04) DLO
- UNIT: THE NEW SERIES: INCURSIONS (BOX SET)
- BERNICE SUMMERFIELD: THE GODS OF THE UNDERWORLD (AUDIOBOOK) DLO
- TORCHWOOD: THE GREEN LIFE (26)
- DARK SHADOWS: BLOODLINE: VOLUME 1
- DARK SHADOWS: BLOODLINE: EPISODES 1-13 DLO

MAY 2019

- DW THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES: THE MOONS OF VULPANA (251, SEVENTH DOCTOR AND MAGS)
- DW THE TENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: NO PLACE (3.1 TENTH DOCTOR AND DONNA)
- DW THE TENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: ONE MILE DOWN (3.2 TENTH DOCTOR AND DONNA)
- DW THE TENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE CREEPING DEATH (3.3 TENTH DOCTOR AND DONNA)
- DW THE TENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: VOLUME 3 (BOX SET)
- DW THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES: VOLUME 5 (BOX SET)
- DW SHORT TRIPS: TBA (9.05) DLO
- TORCHWOOD: SYNC (27)
- DARK SHADOWS: BLOODLINE: VOLUME 2

JUNE 2019

- DW THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES: AN ALIEN WEREWOLF IN LONDON (252, SEVENTH DOCTOR, ACE AND MAGS)
- DW THE COMPANION CHRONICLES THE FIRST DOCTOR: VOLUME 3 (BOX SET)
- DW THE PATERNOSTER GANG: HERITAGE 1 (BOX SET)
- DW SHORT TRIPS: TBA (9.06) DLO
- TORCHWOOD: SARGASSO (28)
- TORCHWOOD: GOD AMONG US 3 (BOX SET)
- SURVIVORS: SERIES 9 (BOX SET)

JULY 2019

- DW THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES: MEMORIES OF A TYRANT (253, SIXTH DOCTOR AND PERI)
- DW THE LEGACY OF TIME (BOX SET)
- DW THE WAR MASTER: RAGE OF THE TIME LORDS (BOX SET)
- DW EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE FUTHER ADVENTURES OF LUCIE MILLER (BOX SET)
- DW SHORT TRIPS: TBA (9.07) DLO
- TORCHWOOD: TBA (29)

BLAKE'S 7: RESTORATION PART 2 (BOX SET)

AUGUST 2019

- DW THE MONTHLY ADVENTURES: EMISSARY OF THE DALEKS (254, SIXTH DOCTOR AND PERI))
- DW . THE EIGHTH DOCTOR: THE TIME WAR 3 (BOX SET)
- DW THE DIARY OF RIVER SONG: SERIES 6 (BOX SET)
- DW SHORT TRIPS: TBA (9.08) DLO
- BIG FINISH ORIGINALS: TRANSFERENCE DLO
- TORCHWOOD: TBA (30)
- THE PRISONER: VOLUME 3 (BOX SET)
- THE CONFESSIONS OF DORIAN GRAY: THE LOST CONFESSIONS DLO

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