

VORTEX

DARK SHADOWS

BLOODLINE

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UNIT: THE NEW SERIES

INCURSIONS

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VOLUME THREE

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COMING SOON

DORIAN GRAY THE LOST CONFESSIONS

LEADING ACTOR Alexander Vlahos reprises his role in a brand new set of **The Confessions of Dorian Gray** later this year. Created by producer, director and writer Scott Hancock, the **Confessions** range follows the life of Oscar Wilde's hedonistic and immortal Dorian Gray.

But these new adventures are not a continuation nor a sequel to the fifth series of **The Confessions of Dorian Gray**, but 'lost' stories from earlier in Dorian's timeline.

Dorian Gray – The Lost Confessions contains three brand-new readings of unmade scripts written by Scott Hancock and adapted by Scott Harrison. Scott Hancock explains: "When Alex and I wrapped up **The**

Confessions of Dorian Gray we said the story had ended... and it had. However, fast forward a couple of years and we remembered some scripts we'd written but never recorded: two from before Big Finish commissioned the series and an alternate finale to Series Five."

Due for release in August, **The Lost Confessions** will be narrated by Alexander Vlahos. The first episode, *Last Man Standing* is set in France, 1915; the second, *There Are Such Things...* set in England, 1930; and the third episode, *The Last Confession* is set in the future. **VORTEX**

Please note: **The Confessions of Dorian Gray** contains adult material and is not suitable for younger listeners.

THIS MONTH'S edition has proved to be one of the biggest challenges I've had since I started writing *Vortex* – there was so much to fit in! (Especially when I realised I'd submitted 350 extra words for two features!).

We've got a preview of the Tenth Doctor's third run of adventures with Big Finish – and I cannot wait to hear more from David Tennant and Catherine Tate. I love this pair, and after having written the production notes for the special edition box set, I know these are going to be just brilliant.

There's a fantastic booklet to go with it and having read it over it's worth getting – especially as it's beautifully illustrated with extras by Mike Tucker and June Hudson.

We've got two doses of **UNIT** past and present with **The Third Doctor Adventures** and **UNIT: Incursions** – the eighth box set of **UNIT: The New Series**. I particularly can't wait to hear more of Jon Culshaw's Brigadier arc, having spoken to him for this issue, he slipped into the voice with ease. Jon understands the Brig and brings him to life with such affection. And with Caroline John's daughter Daisy Ashford taking over as Liz Shaw, we're going to be in really safe hands.

And then we've got **Dark Shadows – Bloodline**. I recently re-listened to *Bloodlust* to get ready for the new series, and wow, it's fantastic! If you enjoy a bit of horror and fantasy it's a great range to get into, especially if you're a newcomer to CollinSport like me. And *Bloodlust* is a great introduction – what are you waiting for? Go and buy it immediately! **VORTEX**

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AT LAST!
THE DOCTOR
AND DONNA
ARE BACK!

PARTNERS

IN TIME

THE DOCTOR and Donna Noble are arguably one of the most popular Doctor and companion pairings ever, and their adventures in space and time continue in *The Tenth Doctor Adventures Volume Three*. David Tennant and Catherine Tate reprise their TV roles for a second run of audio adventures from Big Finish.

Producer David Richardson says: "I actually got very nervous in the weeks before recording, as I did on their previous box set. You are just so aware that you

are going to be working with two of the biggest stars in this country, and you want them to have a brilliant time and for the whole thing to run smoothly.

"The night before recording I just told myself, forget the nerves, treat it like any other production and it will be great. And actually by the time David and Catherine arrived at Moat Studios, the nerves had totally evaporated.

"David and Catherine don't behave like stars – they walked in as two normal people who

get on with everyone. When you're sitting having a cup of tea with David Tennant talking about *The Avengers* or whatever, you're really just chatting to a lovely human being."

It was director Ken Bentley's first time directing David and Catherine, and before recording began he admitted to *Vortex*: "I've not had much time to think about it as we've been extremely busy through August and September. I only just managed to squeeze in the time to schedule it!



Above (l-r): David Tennant and Catherine Tate

“I’M LIKE ANY FAN, DYING TO HEAR WHAT THE NOBLES, WILF AND THE DOCTOR GET UP TO. WHAT A DREAM CAST!”

RUSSELL T DAVIES



“I always get excited about working on a new range. The bit I love the most about directing is working with actors, and to work with actors new to me is always something I look forward to.

“In my line of work it’s the rehearsal room and the recording studio where the magic happens, and it’s always a treat to watch professionals bringing roles to life.

“All actors work and respond differently. Part of my job is to quickly figure out how an actor likes to work so I can help make the recording go as smoothly as possible for them – and for everybody else. It’s a challenge I enjoy and I like to get it right. So it’s exciting for me to work with an entirely new team and to figure out what makes them tick.”

THE FIRST story in the set is *No Place* by James Goss. Script editor Matt Fitton says: “We knew straightaway we

could bring the wider Noble family into it by having Donna and Sylvia together, so we gave James that brief. It meant it had to be set on Donna’s contemporary Earth, since her mum isn’t aware of her space and time travel yet.”

Former **Doctor Who** showrunner Russell T Davies, creator of *Donna, Sylvia and Wilf*, tells *Vortex*: “I’m so excited about the return of the Noble family. I put in a request to Big Finish never thinking they’d actually pull it off. But, I might have known, they’re unstoppable! Marvellously, I haven’t heard the adventure myself yet, so I’m like any fan, dying to hear what the Nobles, Wilf and the Doctor get up to. What a dream cast!”

Jacqueline King was delighted to be back as Sylvia.

She says: “Since we finished on TV I’ve seen David a couple of times, and I keep in touch with

Bernard because he’s so gorgeous! He and I did the quiz show **Pointless**. And Catherine was in a play which Bernard and I went to see together, so that was lovely. We’ve just not been all together so there was so much to catch up on. I felt desperately maternal towards Catherine, wanting to know how she was!

“I was very jealous that David and Catherine were going on to do more stories over the next couple of days without Bernard and myself. Bernard and I were joking, asking, How can you do that? That’s just disloyal!”

“It was lovely, and if we could have carried on I would have but it was just one day. It would be heaven if we could do more!”

Matt continues: “James came back with this ‘haunted makeovers’ idea which was great, and as it was being developed we asked James to keep in mind a

role for Wilf in case we were able to get Bernard Cribbins – perhaps just a cameo role. As it turned out we learned fairly early on that we could have Bernard for the whole day, so it all worked out perfectly and Wilf was fully included in the episode at the storyline stage.”

In a similar vein to what the TV show did at the time, *No Place* taps into the zeitgeist of what is currently popular on TV, which in this case brings in the feed of ghost and home makeover reality TV shows.

James explains: “Honestly, when you think about it most horror films are home makeover shows! Family moves into house on haunted graveyard. Tries to



Above: David Tennant

“IF YOU’RE A FAN OF EITHER **BUZZFEED UNSOLVED** OR **HOMES UNDER THE HAMMER** YOU’LL FIND LOTS TO LOVE IN THIS.” JAMES GOSS



do it up. Ends up running away screaming/being dead/finds out they were always dead so probably shouldn’t have bothered wallpapering the downstairs bathroom. This was inspired by that. Imagining a horror film but with Kirsty Allsop following our screaming family about. And making the screaming family the Doctor, Donna, Sylvia and Wilf.

“If you’re a fan of either **Buzzfeed Unsolved** or **Homes Under the Hammer** you’ll find lots to love in this. We’ve got a ghostbox, we’ve got replacement

light fittings, we’ve mysterious voices, we’ve endless discussions about plumbing. The one thing we couldn’t do was **Hammer’s** endless, appalling punning music track. (Presenter: ‘They really do love this hopeless place.’ Music: ‘We Found Love in a Hopeless Place!’)”

Producer David Richardson adds: “I’m struck by how creepy it all sounds. Some of the sequences in the old house are really unsettling even without any effects or music, which is a sure sign

of how great the writing, performances and direction are.”

O NE MILE Down by Jenny T Colgan continues the Doctor and Donna’s adventures when they find themselves in an underwater city and encounter the Judoon.

Matt continues: “In terms of using new series monsters, the Judoon are one of the most recognisable and the Tenth Doctor has some history with them, meeting them several times during his era.

“Because of what’s been established on screen there are certain monsters he’s meeting for the first time, but with the Judoon he knows what they’re about and how they work. They are not power-crazed evil monsters, they are mercenaries working for other people, and their agenda isn’t always immediately clear. It’s nice to have that bit of potential uncertainty – are they an ally?



but when we checked with Russell he watched it back and felt there was no reason why Donna couldn't have met them before.

"What's clearly a surprise to her is the Doctor speaking Judoon, so we were very careful not to have him doing that in front of her."

C ONCLUDING THIS series is *The Creeping Death* by Roy Gill.

David explains: "We asked the writers for short pitches – I think they might have sent in three ideas each. I've actually been keeping a list of things I want to see in a **Doctor Who** story,

to write – and yes please, if the opportunity ever comes up, I absolutely want to do more!"

Roy travelled from his Edinburgh home to attend the recording at Moat Studios in London, and has plenty of happy memories from the sessions.

Roy adds: "Oh, loads! David asking, 'Is that a Scottish accent?' as soon as he met me – and then me kind of over-explaining where I'm from (sorry, David...). Catherine cracking up over her lines about 'bad air' and cheese and onion crisps... How quickly all the big, exciting scenes flew by in the recording booths.

Are they a threat? We get to play with that in this story."

"We have individuals in the Judoon ranks which we've touched on before. There's the trainee, Klo, who starts to side with the Doctor and Donna, realising they can do some good during the story, which is a fun thing to play with."

The story's setting lends itself to a good soundscape, with a city beneath the waves.

Matt explains: "In the TV episode *Smith and Jones*, the first thing we see the Judoon do is control the rain and send it upwards with their H2O scoop.

"That means we can make use of their technology which lends itself perfectly to an audio story."

Of course, Donna has also encountered the Judoon on TV, and Matt adds: "Watching Donna in *The Stolen Earth*, we get a reaction from her to the Judoon,



one of which was 'The London Fog of 1952', so it was a no-brainer when Roy pitched that one!"

Roy was delighted to be able to write for David Tennant, a fellow Scotsman, as well as Donna.

He admits it was: "Hugely exciting. They're one of my **Doctor Who** dream teams, really. The Doctor and Donna are best friends, they're fast and funny, they wind each other up but most importantly they make each other stronger and better. Their dialogue was a joy

"Stephen Crichtlow talking over lunch about the classic **Who** he'd been watching with his daughter. Lauren Cornelius telling me she'd loved her character and the story so much that when she got the script she read it from cover to cover then immediately turned it over and read it again! Theo Stevenson saying he'd watched David Tennant's Doctor when he was about 10 or 12. He was thrilled to be in a **Doctor Who** – making us all feel ancient!"

Producer David adds: "This story is brilliant! Just a character

piece about a group of people lost in the fog and there's something really nasty out there... David has some terrific speeches, Catherine gets to play out some lovely relationships with the guest characters, and the whole thing feels like it was on TV back in 2008."

Director Ken Bentley was relieved when recording was complete after three successive days in studio – which Big Finish rarely do.

He explains: "It's great to know we have a complete box set in the bag! These days availabilities are such that we're squeezing in recordings as and when we can, sometimes over quite long periods of time. It's rare to record three days straight and know you've got

"THE WHOLE THING FEELS LIKE IT WAS ON TV BACK IN 2008."

DAVID RICHARDSON

if there are any background or atmosphere tracks that reappear throughout the play, or any individual recurring effects (specific vehicles or weapons, for example). If so I will create these in advance and add them to the project library so they are ready to drag and drop in when I'm working. I'll record the foley sound as I go and layer up all the

if there's more time I will always spend longer (I'm a composer by trade!). At this point I know the play well so will have a sense of the mood, style and pacing.

"If I'm working on a completely new play I'll create a template and start adding instruments and sounds as I see fit in order to start with a completely fresh palette. Every play is different so I don't have one fixed approach. There are scene breaks which usually need a cue, and there are sometimes musical directions in the script, but otherwise a lot of the process is instinctive. A play may need a lot of music to keep energy levels up and maintain a sense of pace, or it may need the music to really take a background role and just glue certain elements together. Each one is unique." **VORTEX**



it all, but given the schedule we're all on it's a huge relief!"

Responsible for music and sound design is Howard Carter, who says: "I'll usually go through and work out

relevant backgrounds and effects scene by scene. Once the full play is assembled I'll send a draft off to the director and move on to the score.

"I will usually spend a couple of days scoring a play although



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VORTEXMAIL



AUDIO MASTER

With all the Master exposure lately I was wondering... is Alex Macqueen's Master going to make a comeback any time soon? It feels he's been somewhat forgotten lately in favour of the War Master, especially with him meeting the Eighth Doctor. It's a shame to see him somewhat left behind in comparison to the other Masters' exposure lately, since he is Big Finish's first original Master. We were told when James Dreyfus was cast as the First Master that he had recorded three stories already at that point, but he seems to have disappeared too. Any word on when those stories will see the light of day?

SAM GEDEN

Nick: All good questions, Sam. Spoiler alert if I answered, though!

V2 FOR 9, 10 & 11?

Are there plans for Volume Two of the **Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Doctor Chronicles**? Or maybe a **War Doctor Chronicles** as well?

@OPROPRIOGUIGU

*Nick: There are plans for more of those **Chronicles** and some other top secret plans.*

BACK TO SCHOOL?

Is there any chance we might see the Coal Hill

Academy gang return for more **Class** audios? Safe to say that I'm hoping for some more amazing stories.

JAMIE

Nick: We'd certainly like to do that, Jamie.

BOURNE ORIGINAL

What likelihood is there of second series for any of the **Big Finish Originals**, particularly **Jeremiah Bourne**?

RICHARD MARKS

Nick: No decisions yet, Richard. We're still waiting to see how well they do.

SHORT BONUS

Will the bonus **Short Trips** released alongside the Main Range be available on the app? Would it be possible to download individual episodes from box sets on the app?

LEIGH WOOD

Nick: We are looking into these thorny technical issues, Leigh. No news yet.

AUDIO LIVES

Ridiculously exciting about **Adam Adamant Lives!** coming to Big Finish! When can we expect any details? Dying to know if it's Gerald Harper and Juliet Harmer or recast. With they be original stories or lost stories?

KARL WILLIAMS

*Nick: Ah yes. I leaked this at Gallifrey One to see how far the news would spread! No news on casting yet, Karl, but I do have the first draft of the first box set... **VORTEX***



THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES RETURN FOR THEIR FIFTH SERIES – AND THERE ARE SOME FAMILIAR-SOUNDING VOICES IN THE MIX...

VOICE RECOGNITION

EVER SINCE *The Third Doctor Adventures* began with Tim Treloar stepping into Jon Pertwee's shiny shoes, the stories have been restricted to series eight to ten of the TV show. The sad passing of regular cast members Nicholas Courtney as Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart, Caroline John as Liz Shaw and Elisabeth Sladen as Sarah Jane Smith had limited when the adventures could take place.

But now Big Finish has boldly added to the cast with Jon Culshaw taking on the part of the Brigadier, and Daisy Ashford keeping things in the family reprising her mum's role as Liz.

Producer David Richardson admits it wasn't an easy decision to make: "It was very difficult, of course. As you can see, it took

us until now to even consider doing it, not least because we adored both Nicholas Courtney and Caroline John so much. They were just such special people, and their characters are so beloved.

"So yes, there were demons on my shoulder saying, 'It would be madness to recast those roles'. But then you realise that if it's done in the right way with the right people, then it would be a really lovely tribute to the originals. Elliot Chapman has similarly reprised the role of Ben Jackson in the Second Doctor stories, honouring the original work of Michael Craze."

What led Big Finish to the doors of Jon and Daisy?

David reveals: "In recasting Liz, we offered it to Daisy first. We have worked with Daisy many

times before and she's a brilliant actress – and she's her mother's daughter! At the recording Katy Manning said to Daisy, 'When you smiled just then, I saw your mother', and it's true. There's something really reassuring and lovely about that. If Daisy had turned us down we'd decided we would not move on with using a different Liz. It was Daisy or we wouldn't have done it at all.

"For the Brigadier we asked about a dozen actors to audition for it. Every one of them did something really lovely, and the only reason they didn't get the role was there was just an essence of Nicholas Courtney that was missing. The performances were great, but they hadn't quite caught the Brigadier as we know and love him. And then one day I



Above (l-r): Tim Treloar and Katy Manning

“IT WAS CLEAR THAT THIS WAS A VERY SPECIAL THING TO BE DOING...” DAISY ASHFORD

sat down and listened to the BBC Audiobook of *The Five Doctors* read by Jon Culshaw and there, suddenly, was the Brigadier in my ears. I got straight onto Nick [Nicholas Briggs] and said, ‘Listen to this – Jon is perfect’. This was a Sunday and by the next day Jon had been signed up!”

Daisy tells *Vortex* that she was delighted to be offered the role. She explains: “When David Richardson asked me if I’d be interested in playing Liz, I said yes immediately! I didn’t even have to think about it. It was a real honour to be asked to play my brilliant mum’s character, and I was very moved. I know she would have been thrilled!

“It’s always wonderful to be welcomed back into the Big Finish family. And it really is a family. I have always loved doing Big Finish stories, but this was the best yet! I’d previously worked with Tim on my first theatre job at the Orange Tree Theatre, so it was great to see him again and have a familiar face to play opposite. He’s sounds so like Jon Pertwee it’s amazing!

“It was clear that this was a very special thing to be doing, and I hope we all did justice to the brilliant actors whose rather big shoes we were filling!”



Above (l-r): Tim Treloar and Jon Culshaw

Fresh from stepping into the steel shoes of Gerald Flood as Kamelion, Jon Culshaw is also resurrecting another *Doctor Who* regular as he plays Brigadier Alistair Lethbridge-Stewart. Jon says: “The Jon Pertwee era was the first *Doctor Who* I remember, and I loved it. I met Nicholas Courtney on a number of occasions and he was the warmest, loveliest, funniest fellow you could ever wish to know. What wonderful company he was. It’s a real honour to take that on.”

At this point, Jon slips into a note-perfect impression of the

Brig. “He’s such a well-loved character with that wonderful richness when he speaks. Nick had a great voice when you hear him in interviews, and then as the Brigadier he gave a more clipped tone to it... ‘Doctor, come back at once!’”
“What a terrific character Nick created. I just love that era. I hope they will let me do some Third Doctor **Short Trips**...”

THERE ARE two very different stories in this new set with Liz Shaw and Jo Grant meeting each other, as well as the return of the Primords from the TV episode *Inferno*. *Primord* has been written by John Dorney, also the script editor on this set, and it’s a special story for him. John admits: “I asked to write a Jon Pertwee adventure because I was aware it was the Doctor I hadn’t written for yet

– I wanted to get all the past Doctors done!

“There were a few of us Big Finish writers at Guy Adams’s birthday party, and I was speaking to James Goss. He said, ‘I’d love to write for Liz,’ and I said if the part was recast, it should be offered to Daisy Ashford.

“The next day, I went out for a drive and my brain was ticking over, and then all of a sudden I thought, Oh! Would that be an interesting thing to do? It would bring things together with her background in science and having

met the Primords before... So, I emailed David and said, 'What about this?' He emailed Nick and they both came back, all enthusiastic, saying it could open up the season if Daisy was up for it. I started developing the story once she said yes." Daisy adds: "I loved the story and had a wonderful time rewatching *Inferno* as research. John Dorney writes great scripts so it's always a pleasure to be working on them."



Above (l-r): Daisy Ashford and Katy Manning

"I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING INSPIRED BY HAUNTOLOGY AS A PRINCIPAL." GUY ADAMS

John continues: "All the Primords from the other world have gone. But there's every possibility that if someone else went drilling into the Earth's core, then there would be some of this slime stuff still around. No one would go drilling again in the immediate aftermath of *Inferno*, but it's not unthinkable it could happen in the future.

"You need to find ways of dealing with this as a potential problem – if it has happened once, you should find ways of dealing with it to stop it from happening again.

Particularly if you are worried about the slime substance, you would be foolish to just leave it. There would be experiments and studies of it, and that's where the story started from."

The adventures continue in this set with *The Scream of Ghosts* by Guy Adams.

Guy explains: "Usually with the Third Doctor it's a pretty simple brief: to either do a story set in the wide universe of space



Above (l-r): Daisy Ashford and Jon Culshaw

with lots of shininess, or it's Earth-based and UNIT-orientated. This was an Earth-based story.

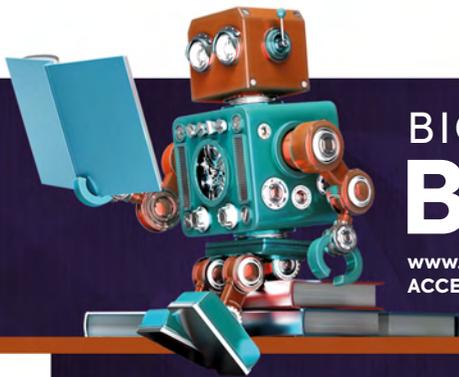
"I wanted to do something inspired by hauntology as a principal. It's quite a complex plan. It's the idea of creating modern works of nostalgia but at what point is something new or old? If you create something now that's seeking to evoke the spirit of the past, is it something old fashioned or is it new? You find it



happening a lot in music – there are whole labels set up creating electronica using old equipment and sounding as if they were recorded in the 1960s or 70s. In many ways, that's what Big Finish is doing on a daily basis!" **VORTEX**

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DARK SHADOWS

DREAMS OF LONG AGO

THERE'S FAR more to **Dark Shadows** at Big Finish than you might think... Co-producer David Darlington tells us more: "The short story collections came about around the time of the anniversary release, *Blood & Fire*. We were making a special piece to put out around the time of the show's 50th anniversary, but as we were developing it we sort of felt we were missing something. Because it had been decided that there weren't going to be any more 'dramatic readings', it felt as though there was only one flavour of story left in the mix and we wanted to address that – hence the launch of the short stories collection with *Echoes of the Past*."

Co-producer Joseph Lidster continues: "With the short story collections we wanted to get a real variety of writers and performers in each release. When we knew what we were getting from each of the writers we were then able to decide which story should be in each collection. For *Dreams of Long Ago* we went with *The Reflected Man* by Alan Ronald, *Old Acquaintance* by Matthew Waterhouse, *Devil's*

Rock by Kate Webster and *Cobwebs* by Aaron Lamont.

"Only Aaron had written for the **Dark Shadows** range before so we knew we'd be getting something terrifying from him. And *Cobwebs* is genuinely terrifying! It's a one-man play featuring an astonishing performance by Christopher Pennock about a man losing his sanity and it's just... you've never heard anything like it.

Alan Ronald had contacted me a few times in the past. Alan's a big bearded bloke who loves slasher movies so I was expecting something visceral and horrific and blood-thirsty... and instead in *The Reflected Man* he's written one of the most moving pieces about grief I've ever read. It's beautifully performed in first person by Lisa Richards."

Joe continues: "Kate Webster had written some lovely stuff for fringe theatre so I asked her to submit some ideas. *Devil's Rock* is a creepy, Stephen King-style piece about a village in Maine with some very *Wicker Man*-esque ideas about how to keep the fishermen busy. It's a lovely, introspective reading by Andrew Collins.

"And Matthew Waterhouse – obviously most well-known



to readers of *Vortex* as **Doctor Who's** companion Adric – has performed for us a couple of times but I knew he was a brilliant writer as well so asked him for an idea."

David adds: "Matthew actually wrote an early draft of what became *Old Acquaintance* in script form with the thought that it might become a dramatic reading. In that form it scared the heck out of us – but not completely for the right reasons! It would have been about three discs long with a cast of dozens! But once re-worked it fit the brief for the short-story releases beautifully." Joe agrees: "*Old Acquaintance* is a gorgeous piece performed by the amazing David Selby. It's basically a feature film but told as a short story."

Joe concludes: "None of these short story special releases require any previous knowledge of **Dark Shadows**, so if you're looking for an evening or two of listening to some spooky adventures then this is the perfect range for you." **VORTEX**

DARK SHADOWS DREAMS OF LONG AGO IS AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD NOW AT THE SPECIAL PRICE OF £2.99.



BLOODLINE OF DUTY

AMERICA'S MOST HAUNTED TOWN IS BACK
IN A NEW SERIES OF DARK SHADOWS...

THE AMERICAN east coastal town of Collinsport is full of mysteries, secrets and lies. But that's hardly surprising given that it's the location for legendary horror soap opera, **Dark Shadows!** Collinsport is a town which includes witches, vampires, werewolves and near immortals in its population.

In 2015, Big Finish released *Bloodlust*, which returned the audio series to its original format with an ongoing story

and episodes being released in quick proximity. The sequel, *Bloodline*, being released this month follows the same form.

Producers David Darlington and Joe Lidster tell *Vortex*: "It's a format which worked for the original TV series and for *Bloodlust*, so it was worth using again as it really helps new listeners find their way around the place. While *Bloodline* is a bit less newbie-friendly than *Bloodlust*, it does still feature a new character – Vivian

Bell – arriving in town and meeting the local residents.

"For anyone new, **Dark Shadows** is about the Collins family who live in a big old spooky house in 1980s America. The family has battled curses and monsters since they first arrived in the country back in 1690. *Bloodline* is about the wedding of David Collins to his fiancée Amy Jennings, so there'll be no curses or monsters involved. It's simply going to be a lovely happy



Above: Alec Newman

a series of books, a 1990s remake, a Tim Burton movie...

"It was never a particularly huge thing in the UK so to try and get the Big Finish audience to come on board has always been a challenge. *Bloodlust* proved to us – and to the Big Bads who run Big Finish – that the audience are definitely willing to try it if we have the confidence to really go for it and to market it well. It's all about telling a good story with strong characters and amazing bonkers cliff-hangers – and saying, 'Go on, see what you think!'"

Fans of the original series will be pleased to meet some old favourites again. David tells us more: "Quentin Collins –

wedding day, where absolutely nothing will go wrong...!"

With the production team based in London and the original TV cast members in the United States, it gave David and Joe an immediate challenge.



Above: Stephanie Ellyne

“DARK SHADOWS IS A CURIOUS THING...”

DAVID DARLINGTON and JOE LIDSTER

They laugh: "You'd think we'd have learned the size of the task of creating a multi-voice drama where even the cast who live in the same country are spread far and wide over thousands of miles. Apparently, though, we didn't!"

"We can say however, without wanting to sound boastful, that what we learned from *Bloodlust* is that it is possible to make it work. *Dark Shadows* is a curious thing. The television series morphed from being about a posh family with secrets, into being about a vampire, into

basically becoming **Sapphire and Steel**, where the vampire and his Van Helsing travel throughout time and into parallel universes to try and save the family from various baddies.

"*Dark Shadows* was, at first, mildly popular, then it became this absolutely huge thing on a par with *Beatlemania* and *Dalekmania*, and then it burnt out less than five years after it started! But, as with vampires and phoenixes, it never really died. There was

think werewolf meets Dorian Gray – and his new wife, Lela. David Collins, who has spent half of his life possessed by various ne'er-do-wells, and his fiancée Amy Jennings who has an unfortunate habit of losing those she loves. Maggie Evans – Barnabas's first victim – will be returning to town alongside the TV series' original bad boy, Burke Devlin. And Carolyn Stoddard – David's cousin – is coming back from her university course studying the supernatural."

Joe continues: “The big returns are Barnabas Collins – ancient vampire – and his Van Helsing-turned-best-friend, the amazing Doctor Julia Hoffman. Julia is a character we haven’t featured before because sadly the original actress who played her on TV is no longer with us. We wanted to wait until we could find an actress and storyline that truly made her return worthwhile and we think that *Bloodline* and Julie Newmar (yes, THE Julie Newmar) does just that.”

Of course, it’s not only about the original cast as we meet some new characters too. The producers explain: “The series opens with new



Aaron Lamont and Rob Morris. David and Joe say: “As with *Bloodlust*, *Bloodline* had to be written by writers who were geographically

it before. Of course, it’s a bit of a mystery as to why we chose four writers with such dark twisted minds because there is no horror in *Bloodline*. It’s

“THE BIG RETURNS ARE BARNABAS COLLINS AND HIS VAN HELSING-TURNED-BEST-FRIEND, THE AMAZING DOCTOR JULIA HOFFMAN.”

JOE LIDSTER

character Vivian Bell arriving in Collinsport played by the glorious Georgina Strawson. Vivian is British, she’s a bit of an enigma, and she’s funny and manipulative and brilliant and... well, why she’s come to town is a bit of a mystery. She has knowledge of the Collins’ family – but is she a friend or is she a foe?”

Four writers have brought *Bloodline* to life: Alan Flanagan, Will Howells,

close to each other. These thirteen-part serials can only work if there’s an actual real physical writers’ room so everyone can get together – usually over a bottle of wine or two – and bounce ideas back and forth. The writers also really needed a good knowledge of **Dark Shadows**.

“For listeners *Bloodline* works if you know **Dark Shadows** but it works equally well if you’ve literally never heard of

just a lovely romantic story about a lovely wedding...!”

Designing the covers and iconic imagery for this series is Alistair McGown. With the horror genre being so well defined, does that make it easier for him as an artist to work within the established styles, or more difficult to create something original?

He reveals: “Yes, you can have a lot of fun with the clichés like skulls and moons and



Above: Georgina Strawson

that kind of thing, but what I always try to bring to it is that **Dark Shadows** is not an all-out gothic horror show. It's a modern (or rather 1960s/70s) take on it. So design-wise I am always keen to take steers from the 60s merchandise for the show. When I got involved in the range the first thing I did was introduce a font close to that used on the old Gold Key comics. You want to bring a gothic feel to it, yes, so fog and lightning do feature, but also I try to bring in an element of 60s design, so there's a hint of James Bond in there at times and plenty of colour hopefully."

Bloodlust had some very distinctive covers which Alistair created: "I was trying

to pare those back, to make it more graphic and understated, and try not to go over the top with fogs and haloes which is always a temptation. With *Bloodline* we're being very careful to make the two volumes match as a set and yet look immediately different at first glance."

As with *Bloodlust*, *Bloodline* features strong imagery that will capture the imagination.

Alistair adds: "*Bloodline* is very much taken from a concept by the producers Joe and David. They came up with the idea of the bleeding wedding cake dominating – and hopefully that is quite different and striking for a Big Finish

cover! They were thinking in terms of a Stephen King novel or something like that.

"Quite often Big Finish releases try and get as many of their brilliant guest actors on the cover so there are a lot of faces. Hopefully we've managed to get a good balance between a strong idea and featuring faces of some of the famous **Dark Shadows** guest stars assembled for this serial.

"THERE'S AN ACTUAL REAL PHYSICAL WRITERS' ROOM SO EVERYONE CAN GET TOGETHER — USUALLY OVER A BOTTLE OF WINE OR TWO..."

DAVID DARLINGTON and JOE LIDSTER

"Remember all the covers have to be passed by Jim Pierson, our American producer, and of course he wants the fans to know who is in the guest line-up, so one tries to strike a balance.

"We went through a few tries on this one – I wasn't sure if we could make the big cake work initially and tried instead for a montage of faces and putting our wedding couple front and centre. Joe and David were right all along though, and once I went back to plan A, I think it worked!" **VORTEX**

**DARK SHADOWS
BLOODLINE VOLUME
ONE IS OUT IN APRIL ON
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Sylvester McCoy and Jessica Martin are reunited as Time Lord and werewolf in the **Doctor Who** Main Range...

mags-nificent seven

SOMETHING WHICH Big Finish's **Doctor Who** stories have always been good at is picking up on dangling threads. Interesting characters who appeared briefly on TV have been further developed on audio, and now Mags – the punk werewolf from *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy* – is the latest to benefit.

Jessica Martin returns to the role 30 years after the first recording, for three new stories starting in April with *The Monsters of Gokroth* by Matt Fitton. We discover that the people of Gokroth live in fear of the monsters in the forest, but worse than them, perhaps, is the strange doctor who does unspeakable, unholy work in the high castle on the mountain... And then this doctor receives a visit from Mags, formerly of the Psychic Circus...

Jessica tells *Vortex*: "A lot of people have been telling me there was a feeling of unfinished business after *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*. But wonderfully now all the dots have been joined up and I've come back at the right time. Listeners want a strong female protagonist: sci-fi has acquired this nowadays, but maybe it wasn't quite there when I was in the TV series. There's a renaissance in characters like Mags and I'm riding that wave with great pride!

"I've made the transition into comics in recent times which I think helped to light the fuse with Big Finish. It was fantastic to work with Sylvester again – he's such a lovely man, he never changes. In studio he looked a bit older than I remembered, but the Doctor was always a grown

up character. Sylvester has the same personality and energy I remember him having before.

"The ultimate compliment is to have a guest character promoted to companion – when does that ever happen?! It's brilliant."

Script writer Matt Fitton adds: "Bringing back Mags was Alan Barnes's idea and he offered the first story to me. I think he had the whole of the trilogy concept worked out, but I've written the story that brings her back."

In May's release, the Doctor and Mags travel to *The Moons of Vulpana* written by Emma Reeves, but it's not the savage homeworld that Mags was taken from but Vulpana in an earlier era. The Golden Millennium when the Four Great Wolf Packs – each devoted to one of the planet's four moons –



Above (l-r): Jessica Martin
and Sylvester McCoy

“The ultimate compliment is to have a guest character promoted to companion...”

JESSICA MARTIN

oversaw the height of Vulpanan civilisation. A time when the noblest families of the Vulpanan aristocracy found themselves in need of new blood...

Completing the trilogy, June's release is *An Alien Werewolf in London* by Alan Barnes and a space-time summons brings the TARDIS to the strangest place Mags has yet visited: Camden Lock, London in the

early 1990s. Ace has brought the old gang back together as she's on a mission to rescue an alien being held prisoner in a massive mansion.

Jessica is delighted with the scripts which give Mags plenty to do. Indeed, it's something for her to get her teeth into!

“Oh, they're very good,” Jessica explains: “Mags travels through these different worlds and in the first story by Matt we're in a kind of parallel Universal Studios reminiscent of the gothic horrors of the 1930s and European castles with mad scientists in them. Plus there are the very angry villagers who don't like outsiders and monsters.”

“In *The Moons of Vulpana*, Mags discovers she's part of this very high family. It's kind of *Game of Thrones* with feudal systems and family in-fighting and some people courting Mags, which is a fun aspect. You never know about her in a relationship, you don't know

her attitudes – and she's very much a 21st century feminist.

“Then, in the last one, *An Alien Werewolf in London* it's just bonkers! There's a puzzle to be solved – **Doctor Who** fans will be able to decipher the ins and outs. We have British and Australian vampires in it – and Ace is in there too!”

WITH MAGS returning in this trilogy, is there a chance she could be back in future stories? Jessica continues: “That's not for me to say! I don't know. Sam Clemens, who's a first-time **Doctor Who** director for Big Finish, had a ball doing this trilogy and if he's got anything to do with it he will be lobbying for more Mags stuff. Let's hope there's someone excited enough to write another little story for her!

“It's obvious that with Big Finish these stories are infinite – they are not shoe-horned, they are really well thought through and can stand on their own. You don't need to know the backstories to enjoy a ripping yarn.”

Life Drawing – A Life Under Lights, a graphic novel written and illustrated by Jessica, is also being released this summer. It follows her extraordinary life story and includes her dad being a Singaporean jazz musician and an extensive chapter on *The Greatest Show in the Galaxy*. A large number of **Doctor Who** fans helped to crowdfund the novel which is due out in late June/early July – just as the last of the Main Range Mags trilogy is released. **VORTEX**

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MONSTERS OF GOKROTH
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A Song of UNIT-Y

Two of Big Finish's most popular **Doctor Who** spin-offs come together...

IT SEEMS no time at all since Kate Stewart, Osgood and UNIT first arrived at Big Finish in November 2015. And now, some three-and-a-half years later, we're on series eight. And there's a third woman in the mix this time – none other than Professor River Song.

Producer David Richardson says: "There's a slight sense of 'the end of an era' with this box set as it brings our series of eight releases to a close. But it closes in style with the fabulous River Song stepping into Kate and Osgood's lives.

"And never fear, **UNIT** isn't ending! We'll have a longer than usual break between sets as myself and incoming script editor Andrew Smith bash out ideas,

and then we will be back with a new era for this **UNIT** team.

"And with this set we say goodbye to script editor Matt Fitton who has been across 32 episodes and two specials. He's done fantastic work."

Series eight opens in Abbey Marston, **UNIT**'s dark secret – a place where the laws of space and time, life and death, can be suspended. Written by Jonathan Morris, *This Sleep of Death* is a sequel to the Main Range story *Static*, released in December 2017.

Jonny explains: "Matt Fitton asked me if I'd be interested in writing an episode without any TV monsters, so I suggested a story using the monsters from my *Static* story as they had gone down particularly well.

And, you know, capitalising on a success is never a bad thing!

"Matt and David were enthusiastic about the idea, so then I had to go away and come up with an actual story. As *Static* ended with the Doctor calling **UNIT** and telling them to destroy the stone circle, my thought was, Well, they're not going to destroy something as potentially useful as that, are they? They're going to hang on to it, in case of emergencies. So then I had to come up with a reason for them to want to go back and use the stone circle, and when they got there to participate in a very contained, very claustrophobic story. It is mostly Kate, Osgood, Carter and one other **UNIT** soldier trapped together in a bunker!"

How much do listeners need to know before hearing this? Jonny reveals: "Nothing at all. Well, some familiarity with the world



Above (from left to right): Enzo Squillino Kr, Alex Kingston, James Joyce, Ingrid Oliver, Jemma Redgrave and Ken Bentley

of *Doctor Who* and *UNIT* may help. But do they need to have heard *Static* first? No. I made sure everything for a first time listener is clear, and everything you don't need to know is left out. But *This Sleep of Death* does contain some 'spoilers' for its predecessor,

"I had a very **Trumpian thought**, What if there was **something alien** behind climate change?"

LISA McMULLIN



so you might want to listen to *Static* first to get the full effect."

A **NOTHER WRITER** new to **UNIT** is Lisa McMullin. In *Tempest*, when the planet's weather systems start behaving strangely, Osgood and

Sam Bishop head to a remote Scottish island, while Kate Stewart visits a deep-sea oil-rig.

Lisa tells *Vortex*: "The weather idea came before the location idea. I have climate change on my mind at the moment (who doesn't?) and I had a very Trumpian thought,

What if there was something alien behind climate change? At this point, I'd like to make clear that it's not aliens destroying the planet, it's humans. But that's where the idea sprouted.

"I wanted somewhere remote, cold and windy and I'd just come back from a holiday in the Highlands so... I can't imagine the character of Mother McCracken as anything other than Scottish (I love Scotland it's stunning - and very weathery!)."

Lisa also had fun with the series' two main leads. She adds: "Kate and Osgood are fab fun to write. Kate because she is so dry, takes no nonsense and gets the job done - I'd vote for her for Prime Minister if she were in politics (and not fictional). And Osgood is so enjoyable because she's whipsmart but also a massive Doctor geek - Osgood is all of us!"



Above (l-r): Ingrid Oliver, Alex Kingston and Jemma Redgrave

Director Ken Bentley adds: "I love Lisa's episode, *Tempest*, I'm really enjoying her writing. Every time Lisa gives me something refreshing to work on, and with some delightful characters thrown in. We all fell in love with Alexandra Mathie playing Mother McCracken. There's always a marked increase in energy and enthusiasm in studio when writers give us a classy script to get our teeth into."

THE BOX set concludes with *The Power of River Song* by Guy Adams, in which, perhaps unsurprisingly, the Doctor's wife arrives on Earth.

UNIT has been assigned to monitor the switch-on of a revolutionary new power system, while Osgood and Lieutenant Bishop investigate mysterious disappearances – and appearances – of trans-temporal phenomena. When a corpse is found, River Song is the prime suspect. Guy says: "I was trying to find the right balance with stuff that



was fresh for both ranges, and getting all the characters to bounce off each other in a way that made it worth doing.

"It's quite a complicated plot. David came up with the fun idea of modern UNIT in an old fashioned UNIT setting, with a remote research facility where something goes very wrong indeed. Not only that but the person running the research centre seems familiar but is, in many ways, not..."

"It's a case of finding enough story for them all to roam. It's a two-part story, it's two hours'

worth, and various elements of the plot are broken down so everyone gets their own thread to follow, to make sure they all have their time in the spotlight."

With the characters from the TV series being so well defined, does that make it easier or more difficult for Guy as a writer?

He admits: "The more defined the character, the easier it is to write for them – their voices are so clear. That's the easiest part of the job – I find that with most of the characters we work with. I can't remember ever particularly struggling with a character.

"Whether the characters are defined on paper or not, they are very well-defined in the performance and that's across the whole of *Doctor Who*, not just

River or *UNIT*, where they are strong. I'm sure we could look at some earlier companions where there are gaps or inconsistencies such as Steven speaking Barbara's dialogue, but because of the performance of the actor, you don't really notice. I just close my eyes and hear it, I don't have a problem finding their characters."

Guy adds: "The thing I particularly wanted to achieve was pace – a self-imposed challenge. When I looked at the storyline I had submitted and had approved, I realised if I could take what was effectively the first half hour, the

first half of the episode, and drop all of that in pre-title, what would that do to the speed of my story... and that's what I tried to do."

"David came up with the fun idea of **modern UNIT** in an **old fashioned UNIT** setting."

GUY ADAMS

T HIS SET has been directed by Ken Bentley who has worked on both **UNIT** and **River Song** box sets, and he enjoyed bringing the two different strands together in studio. He grins: "I'm loving the way River can pop up here there and everywhere, but I try not to follow the chronology of who's allowed to know who she is. At first I tried to keep up but now I'm not convinced many of the writers even know for sure! David and Matt seem clued up and that's all that matters.

"It was a hoot having Alex join the UNIT team, and it all got very festive very quickly. For logistical reasons we were recording at Wisebuddah in the West End, and since it was so close to Christmas everybody was champing at the bit to take advantage of all the shopping that was on our doorstep." **VORTEX**

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- **Dark Shadows: Bloodline: Volume 1**
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The Moons of Vulpana
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SEPTEMBER 2019

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