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COMING SOON

DOCTOR WHO RAVENOUS 4

BY THE time you read this you'll know EXACTLY how the third series of the Eighth Doctor's ongoing adventures concluded in *Ravenous 3*. And you'll know that having faced River Song earlier this year, four incarnations of the Master will take on the Doctor in the fourth and final run, *Ravenous 4*.

In October, Michelle Gomez, Derek Jacobi, Geoffrey Beevers and Eric Roberts become embroiled in the Doctor's latest adventure and meet his companions, Liv, Helen and the Eleven – played by Nicola Walker, Hattie Morahan and Mark Bonnar.

It's of particular note that this will be the first time the Eighth Doctor has faced Eric Roberts's incarnation of the villainous Time Lord since the 1996 TV movie.

The three stories are *Whisper* and *Planet of Dust*, both by Matt Fitton and the concluding two-parter *Day of the Master* by John Dorney.

John says: "*Day of the Master* was possibly the most exciting and yet terrifying brief I've ever had. Finishing off the *Ravenous* arc was a big enough responsibility on its own... but throw in wanting to give great material to Sir Derek Jacobi... and Michelle Gomez... and that's before we even get to the heart-stoppingly fantastic prospect of bringing Eric Roberts's Master back face to face with the Doctor again for the first time in over 20 years...

"Well, you can see why it might be intimidating! But honestly it was one of the best times I've EVER had writing a **Doctor Who** story!" **VORTEX**



I KNOW THAT I wasn't the only one who was heartbroken when **Jago & Litefoot** came to an end following the sad passing of Trevor Baxter.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Trevor twice for *Vortex*, and listening to *Jago & Litefoot Forever* definitely brought a tear to my eye when I heard the archival clips giving us a final farewell to the professor. So it's with great joy that we can now return to Victorian London with the arrival of **The Paternoster Gang** – Madame Vastra, Jenny and Strax.

The torch was passed on from *Jago & Litefoot & Strax*, ensuring there was a link between the two series. These are different tales told in different ways, but the Victorian period just lends itself to the **Doctor Who** universe.

We also have the conclusion to **Torchwood** series six – *God Among Us 3* to come, and I can't wait to hear it. The **Torchwood** box sets are something I look forward to with glee, as I love the mix of science fiction, real life, and more than a dash of danger. I have no idea where the series is heading... but I like it!

And talking of where things are heading, we bid farewell to **Survivors**. After nine series it's all coming to an end, and when doing this issue's interviews, no one let slip who's going to live or die... But I don't mind. I do like a surprise! **VORTEX**

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ONE OF the most popular requests for a new **Doctor Who** audio spin-off series from Big Finish has been for more adventures for

Madame Vastra (Neve McIntosh), Jenny Flint (Catrin Stewart) and Strax (Dan Starkey) – or as we know and love them, The Paternoster Gang. And now the time is finally right for the Silurian warrior, her human wife and their Sontaran butler to return to audio life.

Producer David Richardson was delighted to welcome the Paternoster Row residents to Big Finish. He reveals: “I’d been pitching the idea of a Paternoster Gang spin-off from the moment we got the new series licence

(was that five years ago?), but it’s taken a while for everything to fall into place. So we’ve had plenty of time to think about it and tackle questions like, ‘It’s in the same time period and setting – how does this differ from **Jago & Litefoot**?’ (an answer to that came easily).

“We started pre-production with a meeting that Neve and Dan came along to (sadly Catrin was away), where we just threw ideas around – many of which will be incorporated into this 12-episode run.



Above (l-r):
Catrin Stewart, Dan Starkey
and Neve McIntosh

"It's great that we've been able to have a degree of input into the wider arc. It's exciting to see what's going to develop."

THE SERIES begins with a story from a *Doctor Who* veteran writer – *The Cars That Ate London!* by Jonathan Morris. He says: "It's flattering to

“ YOU ONLY HAVE TO WATCH THE FIRST HALF OF THE CRIMSON HORROR TO SEE EXACTLY HOW A VASTRA, JENNY AND STRAX SERIES WOULD WORK... ” JONATHAN MORRIS



Above (l-r): Beth Goddard, Arthur
Hughes and Christopher Ryan

"For a brand new series, this hit the ground running when we got into studio. Neve had played Vastra for us before (*The Churchill Years 2*), Dan had appeared as Strax in *Jago & Litefoot & Strax*, and Catrin had appeared in *Torchwood* – albeit not as Jenny. So they all knew the process, and of course knew their characters, and they just got in front of those microphones and had a brilliant time."

Bringing the series to life has delighted Dan Starkey

who was thrilled to return to playing Strax. Dan says: "Neve had an idea, that we – her, myself and Catrin – should have a meeting with David Richardson and Matt Fitton, and they said, 'It's your series – have you got any ideas about what you'd like in it?' Sadly Catrin wasn't able to make it, but it was a good meeting."

"It's very unusual to be asked to do something like that, when the producer says, 'What do you think?'"

be entrusted with such responsibility, but in this case it doesn't really feel like a step into the unknown because the format had already been established.

"You only have to watch the first half of *The Crimson Horror* to see exactly how a Vastra, Jenny and Strax series would work, it's all there. And, of course, *The Cars That Ate London!* isn't the first story that Big Finish has released with these characters.

"If anything, my responsibility was just to set up the tone of the series; to establish what makes it different from all the other series that have gone before. So my story is, quite deliberately, what you might expect a 'traditional' Paternoster Gang story to be like. Then other people can come along and go off on weird and wonderful tangents."

What kind of brief was Jonny given by script editor Matt Fitton? "Basically to set up the series, showcase the three characters and establish the 'world' and the scale of their adventures. Specifically, to tell stories with aliens, scares, and Steven Moffat-style humour and storytelling, and make it clear that, although also set in 19th-century London, this is an entirely different series to *Jago & Litefoot* and will be



Above (l-r): Lucy Briggs-Owen, Catrin Stewart, Joseph Kloska, Neve McIntosh, Trevor Cooper, Dan Starkey and Daisy Ashford

telling different kinds of stories.

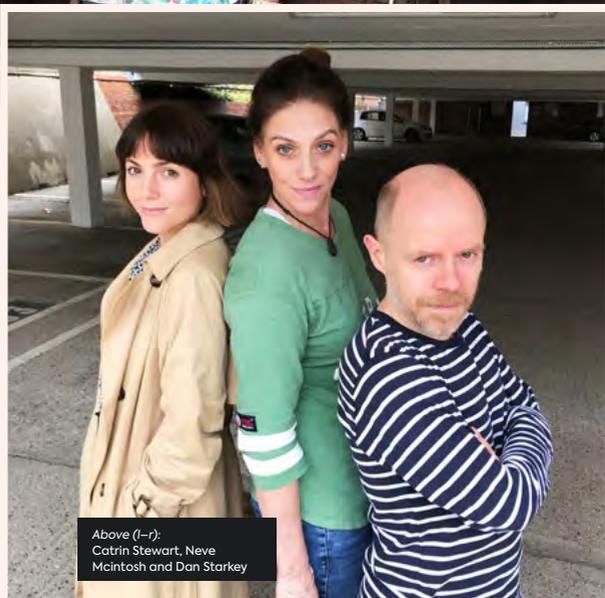
“Our heroes investigate a factory in East London where a sinister genius called Fabian Solak is producing a new type of electric car... a car that has a mind of its own!”

Recording was a delight for Dan. He explains: “It was good being back in character again, and we all have a very easy chemistry between us. We’ve hung around with each other on and off set since we first appeared – and it’s now over five years since we worked together on screen.

“But being in studio for Big Finish is a bit different for Neve and myself as we can actually hear ourselves speak!

“When I came in to do *Jago & Litefoot* & *Strax*, it was very different for me as I didn’t have to shout quite as much to hear myself. With the part of *Strax*, the voice partly came from the fact my ears were blocked up by 2–3cm of latex. It’s all about projecting – *Strax* barks at people as if he’s still on the Sontaran parade ground!

“It’s lovely being back together again. Every time we



Above (l-r): Catrin Stewart, Neve McIntosh and Dan Starkey

do a convention people have asked us when the Big Finish spin-off series is going to happen – and now we know.

“It’s nice that people have such affection for the characters, and we want these stories to live up to their expectations. You can do so much on audio that would require a budget of millions to realise on

television. For example, we’ve got Victorian Transformers!

“The era is so rich for storytelling. Big Finish did the *Jago & Litefoot* series for so long, playing with aspects of Victoriana, but we’re very vague about the date of when these stories are set. There was so much happening historically in the real world at this time which we can put a



Above (l-r): Neve McIntosh and Catrin Stewart

sci-fi spin on, and we can feature things that haven't appeared in **Jago & Litefoot**. And the pictures are definitely better on audio!

"We have some great stories and guest casts with Alan Cox as a Tesla-type of figure."

A **PHOTOGRAPH TO**
Remember by Roy Gill
puts London's most

unlikely family unit in the picture. Roy says: "I don't know if Steven Moffat always intended the Paternosters to be running characters, but they certainly pop off the screen from their very first appearance! They're fun and they have very recognisably human quirks and foibles and affections – even if two of them are aliens. You just want to know more

about them, and spend more time in their company. I was always a bit sad they didn't turn up again opposite Peter Capaldi, but instead we get to give them their own series on audio!

"Matt and David were keen that we might look into unusual areas of Victoriana. My storyline touches on some surprising aspects of Victorian photography – usefully I'd done some research into that for **The Omega Factor** (although this is a very different sort of story – and a different sort of photography!). I also did some reading on the craze for spiritualism. There are a few little details that made it into this that people might think are bizarre enough to have been made up but are actually true!

"Vastra is investigating some people who seem to have come back from the dead. Meanwhile, Jenny and Strax have an afternoon off – and

“THEY HAVE VERY HUMAN QUIRKS AND FOIBLES AND AFFECTIONS – EVEN IF TWO OF THEM ARE ALIENS.” ROY GILL

find themselves at an unusual exhibition. Who or what are the Bloomsbury Bunch, and what are they up to?"

Ah yes – the Bloomsbury Bunch. As we're about to discover, Vastra, Jenny and Strax aren't the only Silurian, human and Sontaran living in London.

Roy says: "The Bloomsbury Bunch are a wideboy Sontaran – Stonn; his human boyfriend, Tom; and Silurian warrior Vella. They're sort of like the Paternoster Gang, but up to no good and not very competent! They're going to be recurring characters. A lot of my script introduces the Bunch. I had



Above (l-r): Catrin Stewart, Arthur Hughes, Neve McIntosh, Beth Goddard, Dan Starkey and Christopher Ryan

a lot of fun with them!"

Director Ken Bentley says: "I've worked with Beth Goddard a couple of times before and she was my first choice to play Vella. Beth's always great to work with, but it was a joy to see her throw herself into playing a Silurian warrior."

Dan was delighted to be joined in studio by his former Sontaran commanding officer, in the form of Christopher Ryan.

He says: "We have got Chris Ryan back, and we had some great fun with photographs and zombies!"

Roy adds: "I wasn't in studio for this so I'm really keen to hear it. Dan Starkey tells me he especially enjoyed some of his scenes facing off against Chris Ryan, so I'm particularly looking forward to those!"

"There's a throwaway line about Vastra's blade being made of 'Scottish steel' – it is, of course, a nod to Neve's background (and accent as demonstrated opposite Peter Capaldi). I'm sure people will think it's a reference to Jodie's

screwdriver – but spookily I submitted my script the same day her first episode went out!"

This first series concludes with *The Ghosts of Greenwich* by Paul Morris, who admits that he's delighted to return to the Victorian era.

He explains: "I've often dreamt of the day that Big Finish would be able to play with the Paternoster Gang – working on **Jago & Litefoot** it sometimes felt as if they were just around the corner (especially after Strax took his first tentative steps into that world).

"Now that it's finally happened it's a joy to be here at the start as we discover just how the gang get on when the Doctor isn't around. And while this new series is its own thing and not a replacement for **Jago & Litefoot**, it's great to be back in those foggy backstreets.

"The brief was very brief! It just had to be a standalone story as this first set is intended to showcase the Paternoster Gang themselves before throwing any complicated story arcs at them.

"*The Ghosts of Greenwich* is primarily a mystery, a genre I return to a lot and which feels particularly appropriate for Madame Vastra. It's also, as the title suggests, a ghost story (of a kind). And at its heart is a big sci-fi idea that I'm quite pleased with. The usual mixture of genres that you get with **Doctor Who**!"

DIRECTOR KEN Bentley had previous experience of launching a new **Doctor Who** spin-off series having worked on **UNIT**, and he was delighted to work on **The Paternoster Gang**.

He reveals: "It's always exciting to work on a new series, but I particularly like working on comedy so I'm keen now for this to be released and to hear what listeners think.

"Every now and then we've had fun with an episode of **Doctor Who**, but **The Paternoster Gang** must be amongst the most overtly comedic characters in the **Whoniverse**. It's brilliant." **VORTEX**

VORTEXMAIL

OLD AND NEW

I really loved **Classic Doctors: New Monsters** not only for the mix of classic meets modern **Doctor Who** but for the fact that there were stories with different incarnations of the Doctor. My questions are: a) Any plans to do any other box sets combining different Doctors (not a multi-Doctor story or necessarily another volume of **CD:NM**) and b) Now Big Finish have the rights to the Twelfth Doctor era, is there scope for another volume of **CD:NM**? These guys spring to mind – the Scovox Blitzler and the Mire!

@CParry90

Nick: There are some top secret plans underway! Sorry to be cryptic but we must get our metaphorical ducks in a row before announcing anything...

HOLMES AND THE DOCTOR

Any plans for original stories with the Seventh Doctor teaming up with Sherlock Holmes? I really loved the *All-Consuming Fire* adaptation and would love more stuff like that.

@KevinCV

Nick: Glad you enjoyed All-Consuming Fire, it was a blast to do, Kevin. But no plans at the moment.

CHAINSAW REACTION

I know these things can be fraught with rights issues but with **The Comic Strip Adaptations**, is there any chance the Star Tigers and Abslom Daak might appear?

@Maxkrank

Nick: It's too early to see how



popular The Iron Legion and The Star Beast as yet. If they do well, we would certainly like to do more.

CHARLEY CHAT

Nick mentioned a third and final **Charlotte Pollard** series several *Vortexes* ago. Is any more information on that available?

@Scraxiatel

Nick: No information yet. First draft scripts have been written by Iain Meadows and I have been working on them – Iain and I are sharing the writing duties on this. But India Fisher is primed and ready, and so is James Joyce. It will be a glorious, heart-rending finale for Charley.

LURKING IN THE SHADOWS

Bit of an odd one but I've always wondered what is the extent of Big Finish's

rights to **Dark Shadows**? Are there storylines from the TV show or characters you can't use? Is there a limit to how far you can go with certain characters/relationships?

@SpaceAndTina

Dark Shadows producer Joseph Lidster: We can use basically anything from the original TV series and all our storylines have to be approved by Jim Pierson/MPI Media Group who own the rights to the series. So far they haven't rejected any of the horrible stuff that we put the characters through!

IN THE PICTURE

Please can we have a book of the wonderful cast photos from the studio sessions of the amazing audios?

Phil Smith

Nick: Now that's an interesting idea, thank you Phil. We'll look into that one. VORTEX



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THE END IS NIGH FOR THE SURVIVORS... OR IS IT?

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SINCE JUNE 2014 Big Finish has been taking us to the end of the world. The majority of humanity was wiped out by the 'Death', and we've followed a small but determined group of people who refused to give in and battled on – to live. Five

years later and it's time to bring everything to an end in the ninth box set of **Survivors**.

Producer David Richardson explains: "We knew we were reaching an end point with the full-cast **Survivors** stories – we've run for nine box sets of 36 episodes (that's just two short of the TV series), and the longevity of a series is only guaranteed by sales.

"There's a law of diminishing returns with any audio series, and so we felt that by the ninth box set it would be best to conclude our ongoing storyline. It was great to have that notice, to be able to plan for a proper, final end. And I think the end is perfect – powerful, credible and with

maybe a hint of a beginning too."

Matt Fitton, the series script editor, adds: "We knew when Series Seven was being planned out that the idea was always to lead into a civil war which would cover Series Eight and Nine, introducing characters like Robert, and bringing back Peter. The final big story for this particular range was always planned out as the last two series.

"We've almost done as many episodes as the TV show, so that's quite a good run – I don't think I ever believed it would last this long. Because it's going into territory we don't usually cover, I thought we would get two, three



Above (l-r): Carolyn Seymour and Lucy Fleming

“IT’S ALL WOMEN, AND I HAD THE IDEA OF THEM ALL BEING IN THIS TENKO-STYLE CAMP.”

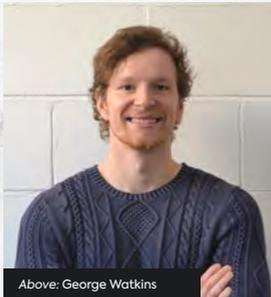
JANE SLAVIN

or four series at most out of it, but it picked up momentum and word of mouth gave it great reviews, so it was able to run for twice as long as I initially thought it would.

“Once I started listening to it and hearing back what the cast was doing, and how the whole thing sounded, we hoped people would pick up on it and give it a longer life. And they did.”

THE MAJORITY of the Series Eight writing team have returned for this final set with Jane Slavin, Christopher Hatherall and Roland Moore – and with Andrew Smith stepping in to write the fourth episode as Lisa McMullan was tied up on other work.

Looking at the overall arc of Series Nine, Matt explains: “We’ve had a hint of the person behind everything, the one pulling the strings – Meg Pritchard – and we finally get to meet her. She has been playing a very canny, strategic game, and there’s been



Above: George Watkins

no point in exerting herself in helping rebuild the infrastructure of society. She’s left it to the likes of Jenny and Greg and the Federation to get on with the hard work, and she’s now ready to swoop in and take over.

“Meg’s not a wartime leader, she sees herself as a peacetime leader, but in order to get there she has to run a coup to take power away from the Federation. She’s very manipulative and offers Jenny a role in her new world order. We’ll see how well that goes down!

“The Abby/Peter dynamic is also explored further following their first reunion in Series Eight and that could take Abby in an interesting direction. We’ll see a lot more of what Robert Malcolm is capable of and what he’s willing to do.”

IN THE first story of this set, we return to the group in *The Farm* by Jane Slavin. She said: “The whole concept of *Survivors* is such an amazing idea – what worked for me personally as a listener was that all the scripts are so very different – wonderful, horrific, daring storylines, never afraid to go dark and with fabulously different characters, even the lead characters are given new challenges with each passing season to keep it interesting. Louise Jameson is (as always) phenomenal. It’s just such a brilliant premise.

“I had a lot fun writing this one – it’s all women, and I had the idea of them all being in this **Tenko**-style camp. I am such a fan of **Tenko**! All women, full of humour in adversity, and they really are going through a kind of hell.

“Actually, there’s one man in it – we had just Leighton Pugh in studio! He was wonderful. I think possibly intimidated, but brilliantly supportive of the idea.

“It does push you as a writer, as people are failing in adversity, rather than coming together and triumphing, and that’s quite a liberating thing to write about. Failure is so much more interesting than rampant success, I think. We all recognise failure.

“Matt is a wonderful script editor. He begins with, ‘This is where we are, what have you got for us?’ and you make an informal pitch, and so far, mine have been accepted, partly because often they’ve been born from a meeting between four or five of us and the other writers are inspiring – you’re sitting together chewing over the plot of something and you get an idea from the side of your brain that you didn’t expect, and that’s when you go away and start writing.”

Hearts and Minds by Christopher Hatherall is the second story of this set.

He says: “As always, the brief from Matt was crafted and focused enough to frame a fitting final series, but also freeing within itself to allow us to indulge ourselves and expand our chapters to suit the overall series needs. There is a new power structure in place in the **Survivors** world which is bigger and more organised than anything our heroes have faced before, so we were encouraged to explore the well-known characters in the midst of another challenge that their post-apocalyptic world presented.

“It’s an action adventure story that embellishes the status-quo of the new world order, pitting a small but committed group of rebels against the superior power that has taken control. Within that exists conflicting opinions on methods and approaches that threaten to destabilise both sides. And at the end of it someone we know so well makes



Above (l-r): George Watkins and Joel Davison



Above (l-r): Carolyn Seymour, Joel Davison, Hywel Morgan, Helen Goldwyn, George Watkins and Lucy Fleming

a surprising decision about the future. Hopefully it is engaging and compelling through the excitement and jeopardy of the action and also through the conflicting morality and principles of the characters too. Typical **Survivors** material, dare I say...”

THE THIRD story of the series, *Fade Out*, is written by Roland Moore, and the conflict continues. He explains: “The writers and Matt Fitton all discussed the story arc and where it would end up. These meetings are always great fun as we thrash out ideas and get excited, thinking,

Can we really do that? And sometimes, Should we really do that? But as it’s **Survivors**, the answer is nearly always YES!

“So my brief was – without giving too much away – to intensify the division between two of the main characters. We wanted them to be facing a collision course in which the listener will realise that only one of them will walk away at the end of the series.

“And I was instructed to end the journey of another main character – so that’s suitably traumatic!”

Summing up the story, Chris says: “I hope it’s a claustrophobic little tale with a sense of



impending doom but with moments of quirky humour. I have some characters trapped in a disused cinema and they know they won't all get out alive. It's intriguing as the characters have to decide which of them will live and which will sacrifice themselves. It's a real dilemma motivated by self-interest and duty.

"But there are also fun things like them playing an old film as they wait. So there's a slight change of tone as we have lighter moments with scenes from a 1950s B movie."

And so, it comes to an end in *Conflict* by Andrew Smith. Andrew tells *Vortex*: "I was so chuffed to be asked to write it. Series Six was the last time I'd written a *Survivors* script so when Matt asked if I'd like to do the last one, I said yes straight away. I re-listened to Series Seven and was sent the scripts for Series Eight to catch up with the continuing narrative and to get a handle on the new characters of Malcolm and Meg Pritchard.

"Being asked to round it off was very special. I always knew where we were going and what the very final scene was going to be – we

had a meeting early on, when Matt, myself, Jane and Roland met in the Big Finish office; Chris wasn't free to make it. We chatted our way through the series and where we would be at the end.

"This will be the culmination of the civil war that's been going on. The Federation are going to be making the final pushed to resolve things. We also had to consider where we were going with Abby and Peter – and it might not go the way people think it will..."

Andrew adds: "With *Survivors* we're in a dangerous environment and hostile world – I hope people will like how we resolve things. We're left with a catalogue of nine series – and within them there are some of the best stories Big Finish has ever done. I can honestly say, it's one of my favourite jobs."

A LONG WITH David and Matt, another person who has worked on the whole series is director Ken Bentley. He reveals: "I've enjoyed every minute of *Survivors*. The thrill for me hasn't just been about what we've put the characters through, but what we've put listeners through. All the choices we've made have been to impact the listening experience. It needed to be tough going, and I'm really proud of the response we've had from listeners and the loyalty they've had towards the series."

Ken has been particularly pleased by the team work he has experienced on *Survivors*. He says: "The thing I love most about my job is that it's collaborative, and *Survivors* has been such a delightful company of people

“ ONLY ONE OF THEM
WILL WALK AWAY AT THE
END OF THE SERIES. ”

ROLAND MOORE

to work with. Carolyn and Lucy are brilliant and such lovely people – even when we challenged them with some quite unsettling storylines, they never blinked an eye. And from day one I've loved the post-production process. Benji Clifford and Nicholas Briggs put so much work into each episode, with such keen ears for detail and for dramatic potential. It's been a labour of love by everybody."

The final word goes to David Richardson. He concludes: "I'm so proud of this series. We've been able to work with brilliant scripts and fantastic actors – Carolyn, Lucy and Ian were all heroes from my childhood, and they've remained so. Lovely, kind people who I'm sure will be back at Big Finish. Maybe in more *Survivors* one day? Who knows...!" **VORTEX**



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WITH A host of new **Doctor Who** releases each month, Big Finish brings us stories in a selection of styles, full-cast and narrated. In the **Short Trips** range, a bite-sized story at a bargain price is released every month.

Alfie Shaw has been producing the range since

the January release this year, with stories related to new series **Doctor Who** now sitting alongside the classics.

Alfie told *Vortex* what we can look forward to in the next few months: "May's story, *Under ODIN's Eye*, sees the Doctor and Peri tackling an interplanetary shop called ODIN. Alice Cavender has done a brilliant takedown of corporations and how they can take over our lives to a dangerous degree. With lovely humorous touches thrown in here and there, it's a story that grabs you from the off and doesn't let go!

"June's release, *The Same Face*, tackles the issue of what happens when a Time Lord keeps regenerating

into the same body/persona. Regeneration is such a fascinating concept, I love it when the show explores the ramifications of it. Julian Richards has put together a story that's full of political intrigue and I can't wait for people to find out what happens when a Time Lord tries to keep the same face!

Battle Scars is the second story from Paul Spragg Opportunity winner Selim Ulug. He did a great character study of the Third Doctor in *Landbound*, and I knew I wanted a story with a similar focus but for the Ninth Doctor. While it's not the Ninth Doctor's first adventure, it does take place before the TV



Trips, we do two series at once for logistical reasons. So while the temptation is just to do a Doctor a month and get them all released in a year, that would preclude you from doing stories where the Doctor isn't really the focus, such as [previous producer] Ian Atkins did with the Master and Jago & Litefoot.

"I've tried to make sure that there is a story with each Doctor over the 2019–2020 run, but some Doctors feature more heavily in one year than the other. You do need to leave some leeway for approaches with other characters that people love. That's something the range is uniquely positioned to do with ease and I'm very keen to explore that going forward."

With a host of storytelling styles, what does Alfie think makes a good **Short Trip**?

He grins: "In a word, simplicity. It needs to keep the number of characters at a minimum, examining a single theme or setting. A lot of the great **Short Trips** have been character pieces, and that's the kind of story that the range excels at.

“A LOT OF THE GREAT **SHORT TRIPS** HAVE BEEN CHARACTER PIECES, AND THAT'S THE KIND OF STORY THAT THE RANGE EXCELS AT. ALFIE SHAW

episode, *Rose*, and we see the Doctor coming to terms with being the Doctor once again.

"#HarrySullivan is the first Big Finish Harry Sullivan story and I could not be more thrilled! Harry is a character I've loved for ages, and as soon as I took over I knew I wanted to do a story with Harry. And luckily, when we announced these four releases, it seemed that a lot of people agreed with

me! Eddie Robson has created a gem of a story, it's glorious fun from beginning to end."

Big Finish has the rights to use the first 12 incarnations of the Doctor, excluding the War Doctor, for the **Short Trips** range. How tough is it to get a mixture of all TV eras – and Big Finish ones too – when you've got just 12 slots each year?

Alfie explains: "When it comes to planning and making **Short**

"It's not the place to do massive sprawling stories, the intimacy of the audiobook format lends itself neatly to doing smaller scale stories. Of course, I say all this, but the range's other main strength is its flexibility and now I've committed this to print, someone is going to come along and pitch me the perfect half an hour epic. I'm open to being proven wrong!"

“THE RECEPTION TO THE ASTREA CONSPIRACY WAS FABULOUS.”

ALFIE SHAW

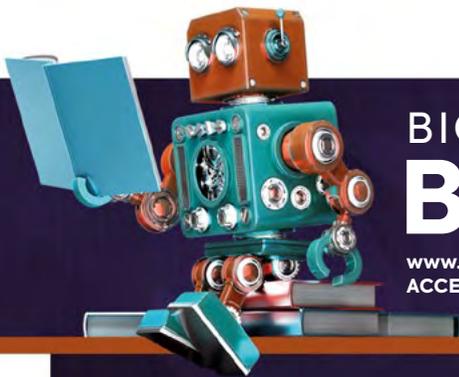
WITH ALFIE having been in the job for just a few months, he has been delighted by the response to the first few releases, especially as he got to oversee Big Finish's first story in the world of the Twelfth Doctor, *The Astrea Conspiracy*.

He adds: “It’s been great! Since you’ve singled it out, the reception to *The Astrea Conspiracy* was fabulous. It being the first Capaldi story Big Finish has ever released, there was a lot of pressure to get it right, but Lizbeth Myles wrote a magnificent story, Neve McIntosh gave a superb reading and Nicholas Briggs did a fabulous job directing. It came together beautifully and the fans seem to have responded really well to it.”

VORTEX ASKS Alfie to tell us more about what’s still to come. He reveals: “For the rest of this series, or the rest of the 2019–2020 run? Hmm, let’s see... For the rest of this series we have another adventure for a classic Big Finish companion and Doctor pairing and we dip back into the new series era. Other than that, well, time will tell!

“As for the rest of the run I should probably save something to tell you next time, but one of the stories is a new format for the range. It’s completely different to anything we’ve done with **Short Trips** before and I’m very excited by it. But naturally, I can’t tell you who is in it, when it’s set or who is reading it. Not yet anyway. Is that vague enough as a tease for you?!” **VORTEX**





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DOCTOR WHO

DEATH AND THE QUEEN

THE DOCTOR and Donna. Donna and the Doctor. The Doctor/don/Donnadoc. However you think of them, David Tennant and Catherine Tate's characters are a tremendous double act. The duo were first reunited for new audio adventures in 2016 in a series of three stories, the third of which is *Death and the Queen*. Unlucky in love Donna is getting hitched again, this time to royalty after meeting her prince.

But Donna being Donna it doesn't go to plan, with a skeleton army marching on her future castle home...

Written by James Goss, he succinctly sums the play up as: "Donna Noble is getting married again. The Tenth Doctor's trying to help. What could possibly go wrong?"

James wrote the script months before it was recorded and adds: "So often these things are done in a tearing hurry but this one was able to sit on a shelf, gently maturing. I re-read it the night before the recording and sweated fear!"

Looking at the finished release now, James grins

that his outstanding thought when he thinks of the play comes from the sound designer. He explains: "Howard Carter's sheep. They're award winning. The placement of them, the sheer comedy value of them, is a thing which delights me every time I hear it. And I've listened to *Death and the Queen* a lot.

"Although I've not heard the German version. Big Finish sent me a copy of it and I stared at it in amused delight, but have never dared to play it. How does it sound? Is it weird? Are the jokes in German funny? How does Donna's love of Jackie Collins translate into German? And can German Donna really equal Catherine's delivery of 'Lucky pants?!'"

Director Nicholas Briggs was delighted with the first three Tenth Doctor plays, and explains: "I think my personal highlight was when Catherine found so many poignant moments in *Death and the Queen*. I had, rather unfairly, pigeon-holed it as pure knockabout comedy. But Catherine saw past that and at one point brought a tear to my eye."



Producer David Richardson was the one who cast Donna's nemesis in this tale – the Queen Mother – with Borg Queen Alice Krige taking on the part.

He adds: "Nick let me cast all three plays and I was very careful to hire people that we knew were accomplished actors and fun to be around, but also to have some people who David and Catherine would know and feel comfortable working with. "I cast Alice Krige because she really is one of my favourite actors, and one of my favourite people to be with in studio. I've worked with Alice three times now and we have the most extraordinary conversations about life. She's wonderful. *Death and the Queen* is bonkers and touching and brilliant." **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO DEATH AND THE QUEEN IS AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD NOW AT THE SPECIAL PRICE OF £2.99.



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ACT OF GOD

THERE'S MORE **TROUBLE** THAN EVER
IN SOUTH WALES IN THE THIRD VOLUME
OF **TORCHWOOD** SERIES SIX...


**TORCHWOOD:
GOD AMONG US 3**

- Released: **June 2019**
- Format: **CD and download**

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CARDIFF IS in trouble. Not just the *usual* trouble that the Torchwood team have to protect it from, but *BIG* trouble. Not only are the alien Committee on Earth in an old folks' home and a god is walking the streets of Cardiff, but a huge tidal wave is heading towards the Welsh capital. Yes, things are bad.

A new Torchwood team has been assembled, killed and... well, I shall say no more for fear of spoilers – but things are not looking good in *God Among Us 3!*

Producer James Goss says: "There's been a massive catastrophe in Cardiff and it's just a prelude to the planet being wiped out and taken over by an alien life form. You can find out more in these four amazing single stories."

Director Scott Handcock adds: "*God Among Us 3* has been an enormous undertaking, especially as our cast are so spread out, but it's also hugely exciting. Whether it's a more emotional episode or action-based, every script presents its own challenges, and Cardiff has been becoming a more

and more dangerous city to live in! We up the stakes but never just move on. The fallout from *God Among Us 2* casts a long shadow over this box set and affects how Torchwood operate – when they're able to – so it's lovely to build those elements up and give our cast something different to play. It's never just business as usual."

WHILE JOHN Barrowman and Gareth David Lloyd have both written **Torchwood** stories in audio, novel and comic strip form, one of the new **Torchwood** team contributes the first story of this set.

A Mother's Son is by Alexandria Riley, better known as **Torchwood's** Ng. Scott reveals: "I love that we were able to get Alexandria onto the writing team. We're always on the lookout for new talent, and I was lucky enough to be invited to a read through of a piece she'd written in Cardiff. She has such a brilliant sense of character, and such emotional intelligence too, so I knew she'd be a perfect fit for our opening storyline, and she really delivered."

James adds: "*A Mother's Son* is a companion to an episode called *Adrift*. Torchwood used to be able to do terrible things and get away with it, but now with everyone live streaming everything, how easy is it to cover stuff up? It's about what

“IT'S ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN TORCHWOOD COMES UP AGAINST A GRIEVING MOTHER WHO **ISN'T GOING TO STOP**... JAMES GOSS

happens when Torchwood comes up against a grieving mother who isn't going to stop until she has all the answers."

Alexandria admits: "I used to write quite a lot – scriptwriting was actually part of my course at university. I mentioned to Scott Handcock that I wanted to get back into the writing side of things and he told me they were after more writers for the new block of **Torchwood**. He was helping me out on a radio play I'd written for the Royal Welsh College at the time and he really liked my writing. So he asked if I'd be interested in

tackling a **Torchwood** episode and I jumped at the chance!

"I found it extremely nerve-wracking to write for **Torchwood** in general, let alone writing an episode after such a huge disaster. I wanted it to be truthful and respectful. It was quite a heartbreaking thing actually.

"Ng doesn't really appear in the episode I wrote, which was a little easier. However, I think it would have been alright to write for her. I'd like to think I've got to know her pretty well so could present her in an accurate way!"

Vortex asks Alexandria to explain what happens in *A Mother's Son*. She pauses: "Hmm, how would I sum it up... there's never a simple explanation when it comes to **Torchwood**! So many twists and turns! All very complex, and this one is no different. However, it is a unique episode in the sense that it's more of a personal account of someone's heartbreaking journey. Someone taking a very different look at **Torchwood** (duh duh duuuuuuh!)."

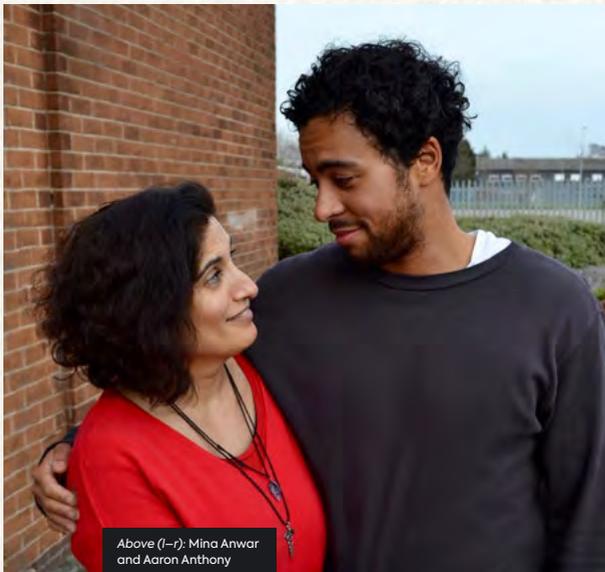
S **TORY TWO** is *ScrapeJane* by Robin Bell, another newcomer to writing **Torchwood**. James

says: "*ScrapeJane* was inspired by a talk I went to about the Slender Man phenomenon. Slender Man is a made-up monster, but researchers discovered that the more people read about Slender Man the more they believed in it, even though they knew it was fictional. It was a short step from that to **Torchwood** having to deal with a fictional monster

that can't stop altering the power of belief."

D **AY ZERO** by Tim Foley continues the ongoing story in which the population of Cardiff have to cope without water.

Tim says: "Normally for a *God Among Us* story we're given a theme and asked to



Above (l-r): Mina Anwar and Aaron Anthony



Above (l-r): Paul Clayton, Samantha Béart and Ramon Tikaram



Above (l-r): Taj Atwal, Tom Price, Jacqueline King, Jonny Green, Tracy-Ann Oberman and Timothy Blore

“IT’S EXCESSIVE, EVEN FOR THEM! BUT THERE’S A REASON WHY THEY’RE EXPERIENCING EVERY CALAMITY EVER!” TOM FOLEY

pitch around it, but we were all handed a completely plotted outline this time. This is the final box set, this is the endgame, so we’re all singing from the same hymn sheet. I’m sure the gods would approve of that.

“The joy of research is always seeing how much you have to jettison for the final product! I had great fun scouring Cardiff council and water company websites and working out the freshwater routes. You find yourself discussing alternative sources, and what the consequences are beyond the expected ‘people get thirsty’. Comparing it to other similar real world crises is useful in showing you how people react.

“An episode premise like this could’ve filled a whole **Torchwood** mini series. I went into it thinking I wanted to write a *Miracle Day* (the final TV episode of **Torchwood**) in an hour... and of course that was far too ambitious but you’ve got to have that mindset. This is huge.”

Given this box set starts with a flood, there’s definitely an irony in this situation – which Tim admits he enjoyed playing with.

He grins: “Absolutely. It’s particularly cruel because of how damaged the whole of Cardiff is post-floods. Every disaster ever is being thrown at what’s left of the team. It’s excessive, even for them! But there’s a reason why they’re experiencing EVERY CALAMITY

EVER. And some of them will survive long enough for answers!”

James adds: “*Day Zero* took its cue from Cape Town’s countdown to ‘Day Zero’ – the day when the city ran out of clean drinking water. We’ve been saying that there’s something wrong with the city’s water supply for a while – and this sees the city trapped in a drought and the madness that comes from that.”

God Among Us 3 reaches its climax with *Thoughts and Prayers* by James Goss.

Vortex asked James to sum up the events of the story – without giving too much away! James gives an enigmatic smile: “*Thoughts and Prayers* sees Jack Harkness going on a date with god as the world ends. There!”



ONE OF the real treats of working on the production of the new **Torchwood** series is getting to see how the stories are brought to life.



Above (l-r): Paul Clayton and Alexandria Riley

James explains a highlight for him is: "The cast – the cast are so good and work so hard, and really love the characters.

"It's been an utter joy hearing them say this year, 'Would my character say that?' They all adore working on **Torchwood**, and they love the response from fans. Especially the fan art.

"The days we spend recording down in Cardiff



“ I CAN'T REALLY SAY MUCH ABOUT THE **FINAL EPISODE**, OTHER THAN IT IS A **FINAL EPISODE**. ”

SCOTT HANDCOCK

Bay are the most fun we can have. The studio is behind Splott Meat Market, so if it's a Thursday you can get an absolute steal on sausages!"

Scott continues: "The funny thing about these **Torchwood** box sets is, because we have such a large ensemble cast, we never get to record a story straight through as we would on other ranges. So I don't think of stories so much as recording days, at least until we reach post production. But we've been really lucky with these new box sets that each script delivers a very different kind of story, which makes it



interesting for me, as a director, and for the actors. In this one, we get a very personal, human take on the fallout from *God Among Us 2*; a modern kind of ghost story; an exploration of how much Western

society takes certain basics for granted; and a climactic finale. I can't really say much about the final episode, other than it is a final episode.

"I couldn't single out any of our leads because they're all utterly, utterly brilliant to work with. You can throw anything at them, and not one of them is fazed, even when we're leaping through random scenes from episode to episode. And every one of them brings their A-game. We've been hugely lucky with our guest casts in these too. Jacqueline King returns as the alien god, as you'd probably expect, but we also have the brilliant Mina Anwar in the opening episode offering up a really sensitive, considered performance. It's great when actors really care about the work, whether they're a regular or recurring character, or just coming in for a guest part."

As Scott mentioned, due to cast availability, the stories are usually recorded at different times in different studios, but he was able to bring some of them together for the first time this series.

He says: "From a personal point of view, it's just nice to see actors whose characters have known each other for so long finally meet. So on this box set, Tracy-Ann Oberman finally got to meet Jonny Green, and Samantha Béart met Ramon Tikaram... things like that are particularly satisfying because they all feel like a family, especially having heard each other, so it was great to cement that."

Alexandria Riley concludes: "I am absolutely loving being a part of the **Torchwood** team. It's a complete blast! Great people. Like a little family! I'm ecstatic and petrified at the same time! The fans are phenomenal and the stories are incredible. It's been an honour to be part of the creating side." **VORTEX**



NEON VINYL OF DEATH!

THE BIG Finish invasion of the UK's leading retailers will continue in 2019 in the form of an exclusive vinyl release in supermarket ASDA. A limited edition run of 1,000 copies of the new Tenth Doctor story *The Creeping Death*, starring David Tennant and Catherine Tate, will be released on Friday 24th May (available only in the UK).

Writer Roy Gill said: "Being asked to write for David Tennant and Catherine Tate was already a huge thrill, but how awesome to hear *The Creeping Death* will be getting a vinyl release too! I think this 1950's tale of a band of London misfits against whatever-it-is that lurks in the smog will work beautifully on a neon green LP!

"I'm a big vinyl fan already – I share my flat with three record decks, goodness knows how many records and one long-suffering partner – so I'm super-eager to get my hands on a copy myself!"

Released this month on CD and download too, *The Creeping Death* sees a deadly smog envelop the streets of London in 1952. The Doctor and Donna find that there's something lurking within its mists – and not everyone will make it out alive. Following on from previous Tenth Doctor record releases, *Infamy of the Zaross* and *Cold Vengeance* featuring Billie Piper as Rose Tyler, this is the first Tenth Doctor and Donna story to be released on vinyl. **VORTEX**

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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:** Under Odin's Eye (9.05) **DLO**
- **Torchwood:** Sync (27)
- **Dark Shadows:** Bloodline: Volume 2
- **Big Finish Audiobooks:** After the Breakup **DLO**

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:** The Same Face (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:**

Battle Scars (9.07) **DLO**

- **Torchwood:** Serenity (29)
- **Blake's 7:** Restoration Part 2 (Box Set)
- **The Omega Factor:** Festival of Darkness (Audiobook) **DLO**

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:** #HarrySullivan (9.08) **DLO**
- **Big Finish Originals:** Transference **DLO**
- **Torchwood:** The Hope (30)
- **The Prisoner:** Volume 3 (Box Set)
- **The Confessions of Dorian Gray:** The Lost Confessions **DLO**

SEPTEMBER 2019

- **DW - The Monthly Adventures:** TBA (255, Sixth Doctor and Peri)
- **DW - The Monthly Adventures:** Tartarus (256, Fifth Doctor, Nyssa and Tegan)
- **DW - Rose Tyler:** The Dimension Cannon (Box Set)
- **DW - Short Trips:** TBA (9.09) **DLO**
- **Torchwood:** The Vigil (31)

OCTOBER 2019

- **DW - The Monthly Adventures:** TBA (257, TBA)
- **DW - The Eighth Doctor Adventures:** Ravenous 4 (Box Set)
- **DW - The Paternoster Gang:** Heritage 2 (Box Set)
- **DW - Short Trips:** TBA (9.10) **DLO**
- **Torchwood:** Smashed (32)
- **Bernice Summerfield:** The Squire's Crystal (Audiobook) **DLO**
- **Dark Shadows:** The Tony & Cassandra Mysteries (Volume 3)

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VORTEX

DOCTOR WHO

SHORT TRIPS

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DOCTOR WHO

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DEUS EX TORCHWOOD

WILL THE **TORCHWOOD** TEAM BE FACING
A **REVELATION** IN **GOD AMONG US 3**?