THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

# THE WAR DOCTOR BEGINS STERS INC.

PREPARE FOR MORE BATTLES IN THE HEART OF THE TIME WAR

ISSUE 165 NOVEMBER 2022 OF STORIES

ALSO INSIDE

THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S 7 **ALLIES AND ENEMIES: ARLEN RETURNS** IN THE LATEST BLAKE'S 7 RELEASE ...



### BIG FOR THE LOVE EFINISH OF STORIES BIG FINISH WE MAKE GREAT FULL-CAST AUDIO DRAMAS AND AUDIOBOOKS

THAT ARE AVAILABLE TO BUY ON CD AND/OR DOWNLOAD

# FOR THE LOVE OF **STORIES**

Our audio productions are based on much-loved TV series like Doctor Who, Torchwood, Dark Shadows, Blake's 7, The Avengers, The Prisoner, The Omega Factor, Terrahawks, Captain Scarlet, Space: 1999, UFO and Survivors, as well as classics such as HG Wells, Shakespeare, Sherlock Holmes, The Phantom of the Opera and Dorian Gray.

We also produce original creations such as **Graceless**, **Charlotte Pollard** and **The Adventures of Bernice Summerfield**, plus the **Big Finish Originals** range featuring seven great new series: ATA Girl, Cicero, Jeremiah Bourne in Time, Shilling & Sixpence Investigate, Blind Terror, Transference and The Human Frontier.

Secure online ordering and details of all our products can be found at: **bgfn.sh/aboutBF** 



#### THE **BIG FINISH** APP

The majority of Big Finish releases can be accessed on-the-go via the Big Finish App, available for both Apple and Android devices.



## CLASS ACT

CLASS FANS rejoice! The Doctor

Who spin-off is back with a special new audio adventure, *Secret Diary of a Rhodian Prince*. The 2016 television series followed the students of Coal Hill Academy struggling with the stresses of adolescence – while fending off alien threats – over the course of eight episodes before being resurrected on audio.

Featuring original series stars Greg Austin and Jordan Renzo, *Secret Diary of a Rhodian Prince* is written and produced by the TV and audio series' original music composer and long-term fan, Blair Mowat.

In the compelling tale, Charlie Smith – the last surviving member and prince of humanoid species the Rhodians – candidly reveals the trauma of relocating to Earth and spills the tea on his romance with student Matteusz Andrzejewski.

Blair tells Vortex: "Class is back! Patrick Ness created the most wonderful characters in Charlie and Matteusz and I always wanted to know a little bit more about how they met, how they fell in love and what it was like for Charlie adjusting so suddenly to life on Earth.

"The format of a diary really allows us to hear his experiences through a very personal account and lets us jump quickly between different events. We dive into his past, his present and maybe even his future... In regard to what comes next, anything is possible!" VORTEX

**CLASS** THE SECRET DIARY OF A RHODIAN PRINCE

RELEASED: JANUARY 2023
 FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/diary





# **EDITORIAL**

**ONE OF** the (many) great things about Big Finish is its sensitivity in recasting roles. When the decision is made to bring someone new on board to play an iconic part, I know from chatting with the production teams that a lot of thought has gone into the process of finding just the right person.

Tim Treloar was the first major **Doctor Who** recasting, and now his Third Doctor is in my head as much as Jon Pertwee. I don't have a single moment of my brain adjusting to the 'other fella', to borrow a James Bondism, and Tim is doing an amazing job. More recently, we've had Michael Troughton succeeding his father Patrick as the Second Doctor, and Stephen Noonan has captured the spirit of the First Doctor superbly.

The same can be said of the wonderful Daisy Ashford as Liz Shaw and Sadie Miller as Sarah Jane Smith, both doing wonderful jobs reprising the roles of their mothers, Caroline John and Elisabeth Sladen.

And there's a real sense of joy in hearing Harry Sullivan restored to us through Christopher Naylor, capturing that gentlemanly bumbling along perfectly, while Brigadier Alistair Lethbridge-Stewart is beautifully played by Jon Culshaw.

But I really think that the most perfect vocal performance of all has been Jonathon Carley's portrayal of the War Doctor. Ever since I first heard him performing on Twitter, I have been blown away by his work recreating Sir John Hurt's role. And the wonderful thing is, Jonathon – as with all of our Big Finish regulars – is an absolute gent.

We're blessed to have such fine and dedicated actors in the Big Finish family – long may it continue. VORTEX

# MONSTER MASH

THE DOCTOR'S 'SECRET' incarnation returns for more battles in the heart of the time war...

THE WAR Doctor Begins has, to date, given us a tantalising look at the earliest days of the incarnation that his later selves wish to forget. Out for release this December, the Time Lord embarks on a new mission in *He Who*  Fights With Monsters, an epic three-part adventure that pushes the Doctor in a different direction which confronts his own nature.

Unlike the other box sets in this series, this fourth collection of adventures has been written by just one writer as Robert Valentine brings us *The Mission, The Abyss* and *The Horror.* The Doctor heads into the darkest heart of the Time War but wonders if he'll ever make it back.

Producer David Richardson says: "For this box set we've handed the reins to Rob and asked him to throw his ingenuity and creativity into three hours. You certainly won't be disappointed as the War Doctor steps along a dark path and encounters a new foe."

Jonathon Carley continues to perform in the lead role with his stunning impersonation of the late, great Sir John Hurt, mimicking the gravelly tones and bringing real energy, anger and heart to his performance.

Script editor Matt Fitton says: "Jonathon is amazing. I just listened to the *Battlegrounds* series and Jonathan gives a full performance of John Hurt, not an impression. The really lovely thing he does in *Battlegrounds* is that we get an idea of the War Doctor as he might have been with a companion in the first story, *The Keeper of Light*. There is a hint of hope and escape from the Time War there.

"But in the fourth series we are very much throwing the War Doctor in at the deep end – and it's going to get murky! It's very dangerous for the War Doctor, and he has to face up to the consequences of what he's become and what he's having to do.

"Rob has written a kind of a Time War concept album. It's good, in one way, having a sole writer as you don't have to explain what's happening between the episodes to different people. But having written a complete box set myself in *Dark Eyes 3*, it's also helpful to have another person to run things past.

"You might come up with a concept that seems completely crazy and worry whether or not it's going to work, so it's helpful to have someone else looking at the storyline to make suggestions now and again."

**ROB ADMITS** to being delighted when he was asked to write a whole box set of adventures for this most mysterious of Doctors. He tells Vortex: "When Matt told me he was giving me the fourth set to write all by myself, I rubbed my hands together and cackled. I'd script-edited his story, Light the Flame from the first **The War Doctor** box set, Forged in Fire, and suspected he might ask me to write something – but not something so long-form."

Vortex asks Rob if he finds writing a set on his own to be an advantage, rather than having to connect with other writers and swap ideas and details?

Rob explains: "It's easier not having to link with other writers in many ways – it's still the same task but you need fewer meetings about it! Joking aside, it meant I got to do one big epic character study across three chapters, which is harder when you're trying to manage two other writers at the same time.

"The brief was as loose as could be really; to write a threepart set. Beyond that, Matt and David seemed happy to let me do



whatever I wanted with it."

Rob was particularly delighted to have the chance to create a bigger world with ongoing overarching themes. He says: "Almost instantly I realised that with three hours to tell a **War Doctor** story, I could essentially do a **Doctor Who** take on *Apocalypse Now* and use the opportunity to really pull apart his character. The whole idea of the War Doctor has always raised a lot of questions for me and this was my chance to explore them dramatically through a quest structure."

Looking at each of the episodes, Rob tells Vortex: "The three scripts, The Mission, The Abyss and The Horror



chart the War Doctor's mission to hunt down and assassinate a rogue Time Lord combatant known as the Barber-Surgeon. It's a bit of an odyssey through the Time War, and also a bit of a journey into the War Doctor's soul. It's certainly an adventure he can't return from unchanged."

#### JONATHON CARLEY was

delighted to return to the part of the Time Lord who was forged in the fires of war, with his performance being encouraged by Louise Jameson in her directorial duties.

Jonathon says: "It's always a thrill when Big Finish get in touch and the details trickle through – the dates and then the story outline – and then the big doozy is the scripts. This one was no exception because of the big three-part epic story.

"It is a hefty, chunky piece which David and Matt described as a concept album, which is a really interesting way to explain it – it is very thematically dense.



time that he once was; now he has duties to perform in the Time War.

Jonathon says: "In the sets that we've done previously, there's not been one continuing storyline all the way through. *He Who Fights With Monsters* does pick up on a lot of things that we've tackled previously and brings them to a head. We wanted to pay off a lot of what we've done up to now in terms of how I've played the character so far, and thread it all together. And it's interesting to hint at where the character is going next before we ultimately get to John Hurt's sets.

"The character starts off at a point of questioning his position and asking, 'How long do we do this for?', and he's given this objective which really pushes him to the limit. Even after reading it through and having played it, I felt I'd been put through the wringer, never mind my character! There's just so much

#### I LISTEN TO ONE OF JOHN'S OR One of my own big finishes Just to retune myself in With the character.

JONATHON CARLEY

going on, and even though this is one big long story, each episode is its own separate chapter. There's a very clear beginning, middle and end.

"It's not all plain sailing, as is to be expected, and there are some very harrowing moments for the character, challenging stuff for him, and also for me as a performer which is great."

JONATHON HAS found himself settling into the part more and more with each passing set, particularly as he was a little nervous with the first two sets being recorded back-to-back, and was unsure what the Big Finish listeners would make of his performance. (He needn't have worried!).

Jonathon explains: "Since starting on this adventure playing the War Doctor – just in terms of myself, my growth and how we approached

Above: Jonathon Carley Below: Emily-Jane McNeill

"Going through the pages, it was one of the most daunting things I've read probably since the first one because it was so packed with ideas and things to touch upon. It's like being presented with a massive buffet and you don't know where to start! But of course you want to do it justice because Rob has done such incredible work crafting the storyline.

"The 60th anniversary of **Doctor Who** is coming and also the 10th anniversary of the War Doctor, so there are certain almost celebratory-like meta elements in there because it's quite reflective."

> JONATHON HAS been particularly interested in the development of the character to date. The Doctor has come to terms with no longer being the simple adventurer in space and





Above: Ken Bones

it – the situation is very different. I've been able to talk to more people, people like yourself, other colleagues, fans at Big Finish Day and elsewhere.

"I don't mean to sound narcissistic when I say this but just before I go into a recording, I listen to one of John's or one of my own Big Finishes just to retune myself in with the character. Going into set four, I was walking around London and listening to the first two sets. And I was thinking, 'This doesn't sound like me!, which isn't a bad thing at all, it's just a natural progression.

"The feedback and the support from inside and out has been

i KNEW THAT i COULD PUT THE CHARACTERS THROUGH HELL AND JONATHON AND LOUISE WOULD REALISE IT ALL.

incredible and helped boost my confidence as an actor and as a performer playing the War Doctor, which is not something to be taken lightly or taken for granted. I feel like I've earned my stripes through doing these, and I'm now ready to try different stuff and be confident in the choices that I'm making while performing the lines.

"It's always great working with other performers as well, actors at different points in their careers. It's been a privilege to work with so many people. For some it's their first audio role, bringing fresh talent and energy. One of my favourite parts of this series has always been Louise and David opening the door to talented, young people and giving them opportunities to show what they've got.

"Others, like Ken Bones, are properly seasoned pros. When you are surrounded by people of that ilk, you can feel a bit intimidated and a bit of an impostor. But now Ken and I just chat like old mates – it's lovely to have relaxed and belong there.

"And Louise and David have so much experience – I'm standing on the shoulders of giants for sure!"

WRITER ROB shares his thoughts of the production: "The twin highlights were getting to write a story for the brilliant Jonathon Carley and for it to be directed by the also-brilliant Louise Jameson. "After hearing Jonathon's performance in the first set, Forged in Fire, I knew that I could put the

characters through hell and Jonathon and Louise would realise it all. He's such a good actor and Louise is such a great director that I knew I was free to take the War Doctor to some very extreme places indeed." VORTEX

#### THE WAR DOCTOR BEGINS HE WHO FIGHTS WITH MONSTERS



ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/fights

#### THE DOCTOR, HELEN AND LIV FACE MORE TERRORS Across space and time... And then there's drax...

# **ONLY CONNECT**

THE EIGHTH Doctor, Helen and Liv are revelling in their new-found freedom. With the TARDIS back in full working order, they continue their adventures through space and time. The release of the next trio of tales, *Connections*, follows hot on the heels of *What Lies Inside*? (previewed in last month's *Vortex*).

Script editor Matt Fitton reveals: "For Connections we've got three great writers I've worked with before – John Dorney, James Kettle and Roy Gill. In What Lies Inside? we had the return of the Daleks, and we've got another returnee in *Connections* in the shape of Drax.

"As is often the case with Drax, it's never straight-forward when the Doctor meets his old Time Lord Academy friend. Liv and Helen have their own thoughts about someone they see as a completely untrustworthy, slippery conman. The Doctor might be inclined to give him the benefit of the doubt but Liv and Helen, less so.

"It's another typical twisty, turny Drax scheme that they get caught up in here."

*Here Lies Drax* by John Dorney is

a sequel to *The Trouble With Drax*, the hugely-popular **Fourth Doctor Adventure** [which *Vortex* highly recommends you listen to before you hear this new tale] featuring British TV legend Shane Richie – best known as Cockney rogue Alfie Moon in **EastEnders** – playing Drax.

John says: "I've always fancied the idea of doing a sequel to *The Trouble With Drax.* 

"I had various ideas on how to approach the first one and there were a few things left over once I'd figured out what *The Trouble With Drax* was going to be. I thought

go into it with an expectation of nothing at all, and then just go with it and see where it takes you.

"It's worth noting that, given the twist in the original *The Trouble With Drax*, a lot of the script of this one is playing on the notion that the audience is already familiar with it, and the Doctor is wondering if the same thing might be happening again."

#### JOHN REVEALED the

casting of the new Drax to a pair of **EastEnders** writers who also happen to have written for Big Finish. He explains: "I saw a couple of a Big Finish writers the other day at a party, Philip Lawrence and Lisa McMullin. And I said to them, 'Can you guess who's playing Drax?', and they said no. I said, 'No, no, no, you can because it's so perfect.

### MY SUGGESTION ISTHAT LISTENERS GO INTO IT WITH AN EXPECTATION OF NOTHING AT ALL...

JOHN DORNEY

You'll get it if you think about it!'

"Lisa initially said, 'Maybe Danny Dyer?', and I told her she was in the right ballpark. And then she thought about it, and the moment she got it, she just said, 'Well of course! It's Shane Richie, isn't it?'

"It was fascinating to listen in during the recording. I described it to people afterwards, saying, 'Shane Richie is the most Shane Richie person imaginable. Listening to him, you think, 'Wow, he is the full Shane Richie and he's exactly what you would expect.' He's turned up to eleven!"

John adds: "This is actually a bit of an achievement for me, this script. If you look at the **Doctor Who** Wiki where they have a list of **Doctor Who** writers and their work – and including **Short Trips** and adaptations – *Here Lies Drax* is my 100th story. I think I might be the first person ever to have 100 stories out in the **Doctor Who** universe!"

Above: Paul McGann Below: Nicola Walker

I could potentially use them for something else at some point, and then put it to the back of my mind.

"I can't quite remember the circumstances, it might even have initially been a discussion for a **Fourth Doctor Adventure** where I suggested I would be tempted to do a Drax sequel – and everyone agreed and got on board with it."

With the reaction to *The Trouble With Drax* being so positive, does that add pressure with people expecting this to have even more twists?

John agrees: "I think there is a sense of that. If you're doing a sequel, for me it has to be the same but different – if you want to do a good sequel!

"So I wouldn't suggest listeners go in expecting the same trick, but I did think it should have some of the flavour in it of *The Trouble With Drax* and something of a similar vibe. The original was very much a caper so I wanted to have this be a clever caper as well, and hopefully it riffs on some



of the same ideas but without being repetitive. It's a tricky thing to talk about without giving it all away! "My suggestion is that listeners



Above: Nina Wadia

**THE LOVE** Vampires by James Kettle is the second adventure in the set. Matt tells Vortex: "The Love Vampires is a spooky space horror story – imagine a Hammer Horror film on a space station – with a particular take on the vampire myth. Those who are infected with the vampiric parasite see visions of their beloved and that's what draws them in, to turn them into another of the vampires.

"It's an interesting premise to see who might appear for Helen, Liv and the Doctor..."

Writer James says: "The brief on this was being given this TARDIS crew and asked where I'd like to take them. I was very keen to build on what I'd written for the trio in my previous script Snow in the third Stranded series, not in the sense of creating a sequel (because it IT'S ATRULY PULPYTITLE! I RESISTED IT FOR A While because I Worried IT Might Betootacky.

isn't) but through writing another story that is driven as much by the emotional lives of the characters as by the monsters they're battling.

"It's a truly pulpy title! I resisted it for a while because I worried it might be too tacky. But then it is a story about love vampires, so what else could you call it? The idea, essentially, came from wanting to write something about first big loves – the first person that stirs those incredible passionate emotions in you, that you don't know what to do with – where it feels like this is the most important thing in the world. And then I started thinking about a parasitical creature that feeds on those emotions like a vampire drinking blood. Vampires are always tied up with burgeoning sexual maturity – I guess this lot are a bit more direct."

James had a lot of freedom with this Eighth Doctor tale.

He explains: "With Snow I had the benefit of not having to do too much heavy lifting in terms of the ongoing story. In some ways The Love Vampires is not too different. Where it does fit into an arc is in the sense that it tells part of the ongoing journey of these three characters, showing how they continually expand their understanding of themselves and each other. This is a team that are being shown living lives and learning in a way that few other Doctors and companions have been, even in the new TV series."

James adds: "You don't want to bring too much clarity to the Doctor's mysterious past, but what a treat to create his first all-important love. I hope people find it satisfying."

ALBIE'S ANGELS by Roy Gill is the final tale in this set – and there are Weeping Angels along the way. Producer David Richardson tells Vortex: "Helen's backstory has grown organically as we've travelled through The Eighth Doctor Adventures. I remember that when Rov wrote UNIT Dating for Stranded 2, I loved it but had one thought at the end - I wanted a moment for Helen, for her to reflect on how society had changed for the better since her time in 1963. So Roy ran with that and created the unseen character of Albie, Helen's brother who had been arrested for being a gay man in a time when homosexuality was illegal. It's such a powerful moment, and as soon as I read Roy's revised script I knew we had to tell Albie's story at some point.

"I told Roy about a conversation I'd had with Trevor Baxter who was reminiscing about a friend of his who was put away in the 1960s for writing a love letter to another man. He was

centre, you absolutely don't need to have heard *Stranded* to follow this episode – it's all included here." This is Roy's second time

writing for the Weeping Angels.

He concludes: "Carnival of Angels (the episode I wrote for **The Diary of River Song**) was a great way for me to discover how to make the Weeping Angels work on audio. They're such a visual concept but you can do so much with sound: you can suggest their sudden leaps forward, do a bit of a jump scare, keep them moving and implacable!

"If you can dream up a good strong image for them – like an Angel in the heart of a funfair ride or stalking across a deserted

### THEY'RE SUCH A VISUAL CONCEPT But you can do so much with Sound: you can suggest their Sudden leaps forward, do A bit of a jump scare...

ROY GILL

beach – you can build that image in your listeners' minds. It's always good to keep their motives and needs a bit unpredictable and unknowable, that's part of this story too..." YONEX

#### THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES CONNECTIONS



arrested, imprisoned and his life was destroyed. Roy has taken inspiration from that for Albie's story. There's a final scene that I do wish Trevor was able to hear. It's really sad that Trevor isn't with us any longer, as the final scene is just so touching. I told Hattie Morahan who plays Helen about the context when we were recording, and she had to take a moment because she was so moved. Needless to say, *Albie's Angels* is a stunning episode."

Above: Shane Richie

**ROY AGREES:** "There was a big response to the scene that first mentioned Albie in my *Stranded* episode *UNIT Dating*, and I definitely felt there was more story to tell. I very

deliberately dropped another Albie moment into *The Keys of Baker Street* in *Stranded 4* — so you can see this story has been in progress for a while.

"Albie is Helen's big brother. He's a gay man at a time when that was an illegal and dangerous thing to be. He disappeared from Helen's life completely and she's always felt that loss. She never forgot him and the events of *Stranded* made her think about what might've happened more than ever before...

"I think it's important to add that while *Albie's Angels* takes this background, off-screen character and puts him and Helen's relationship with him front and

AS THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY DRAWS TO A CLOSE, BRIGADIER WINIFRED BAMBERA AND HER UNIT TEAM ARE READY FOR NEW <u>THREATS.</u>

#### **BRIGADIER WINIFRED**

Bambera is enjoying a resurgence thanks to Big Finish as she heads up **UNIT: Brave** New World.

Earlier this year we were introduced to Bambera's team – Sergeant Jean-Paul Savarin and Doctor Louise Rix – as they faced new dangers in *Seabird One*; some man-made, some 'woo woo' (to use Bambera's own words) and some from beyond this world. And this December the team are back in *Visitants*, a second box set of three tales.

Producer Emily Cook admits she was pleased with the way volume one was received by fans.

She tells Vortex: "We were delighted by the response to **UNIT: Brave New World** – Seabird One. This was the first Big Finish project for which I was creating a brand-new range, with a new set-up and premise, and there was a great deal of responsibility to get it right because Bambera is such a beloved and brilliant character.

"I am really excited by the world we've created for her and couldn't wait to share it with listeners. Although I had every confidence in the set, you never quite know how

Above (1–r): Yemisi Oyinloye, Jason Forbes, Angela Bruce and Nathaniel Curtis

something is going to go down until it's out there. Thankfully there's been a lot of lovely, positive feedback from Bambera fans. It's been very much liked and that makes me very happy."

Script editor Robert Valentine adds: "Everybody involved in the first set has been delighted with the positive reaction. Emily and I were really keen to make it a series worthy of the wonderful actor Angela Bruce, and what we wanted most of all was to come up with a set of stories that would do Bambera justice."

> LISTENERS TO the first set were left on tenterhooks from a huge cliffhanger (but *Vortex* isn't going to tell you what it is - if you haven't heard it yet, listen now and then come back!).

Emily explains: "One thing I was really keen to do with this range was have a big cliffhanger at the end of

# IN VISITANTS WE RAMP UP THE STAKES IN TERMS OF EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL TERRORS.

*Seabird One* – a massive teaser of the threat that's to come in *Visitants*!

"I can say that much of the jeopardy in the first set is terrestrial and human, but in *Visitants* we ramp up the stakes in terms of extra-terrestrial terrors.

"With the second set our UNIT trio are now very well established. Bambera, Sergeant Jean-Paul Savarin and Dr Louise Rix bounce off each other brilliantly and their dynamic gets better by the episode. "We have three very different stories in this set; episode two, *Haunt*, is particularly spooky!"

Rob continues: "Without giving too much away, our new UNIT team of Bambera, Savarin, Rix and their boss, Dame Lydia, is fully established and ready to face a world of new adventures together."

#### THE FREQUENCY by

Tajinder Singh Hayer is the first story in the set, and his first script for Big Finish.

Tajinder says: "I was contacted by Emily as I had been recommended to her by Ian Potter (writer of many Big Finish scripts). I knew Ian from when I lived in Bradford. I saw a lovely short play of his at a scratch night at the Theatre in the Mill, and I sent him an email saying how much I enjoyed the piece and we've kept in touch ever



since. That was nearly 20 years ago, and then Emily rocked up in 2021 asking if I'd be interested in writing for **UNIT: Brave New World**."

The brief for this story was American air bases, secret projects and woo-woo. All the vitamins a growing writer needs!

Tajinder continues: "The UNIT team have been invited to test themselves at a training facility run by a US Air Force Colonel, Alexander Hagen. He's a surprisingly mildmannered figure who genuinely wants to share information on the technology that he has been working on; amazing experimental 'learning' robots that he tests in a vast maze.

"But his real pride and joy is a more human development – the Hoplite Frequency. Piped in through special earpieces, the Frequency triggers a type of sympathetic thinking between all those who hear it and has the potential to revolutionise teamworking in emergency THE BRIEF FOR THIS STORY WAS AMERICAN AIR BASES, SECRET PROJECTS AND WOO-WOO. ALL THE VITAMINS A GROWING WRITER NEEDS! MAJINDERSINGHERAYER

scenarios. Needless to say, things go a little awry and the UNIT team have to make difficult choices about being part of a team and conformity."

And the writer had a personal highlight. He explains: "I wrote for my first ever robots! That and delving back into an alternate version of the 1990s; there was something really interesting in prodding at my memories of the era with the benefit of hindsight."

WE GO from a newcomer to an experienced Big Finish writer with *Haunt* by Lizzie Hopley. Lizzie previously wrote *The War Factory* which featured Bambera's encounter with 21<sup>st</sup> century UNIT, and was delighted to return to the character.

She says: "Haunt was certainly an easier story to write as there were fewer characters to deal with. It was also massively in my wheelhouse as I love the horror genre. Rob introduced me to the horror drama film *The Stone Tape* for which I am forever grateful.

"I've said before that Bambera is one of my favourite characters in **Doctor Who** and Angela Bruce one of my acting heroines, so getting to write for her twice is an honour, especially



as in this one I got to spend more time with her and explore her demons."

What was in Lizzie's brief for this tale? She explains: "It was the first time I'd worked with amazing producer Emily who approached me to write a standalone folk/supernatural horror story. The references she gave were stories that invoke folk horror and urban myth such as *Ghostwatch* and *The Blair Witch Project*, in the same way *The Daemons* invoked the satanic panic of the late 1960s/ early 1970s. Worked for me!

"It was great to return to a time with dial up internet and library searches. The build up of horror and slow gathering of information helped the tone of the story. Having Bambera and Rix together was a joy-fest. I can't wait to hear the audio, and then I want to make the movie!"

Lizzie has some advice for listeners for when they get the story, and with a malevolent grin tells *Vortex*: "Don't listen with the lights off."

THE LAST Line of Defence by Robert Valentine concludes this set. Rob says: "As script editor of the whole series, getting to write the finale was great. It's the story where all the loose threads come together, and it's the big rousing climax that tests our new UNIT team to their limit.

"There's a top-secret peace conference taking place in London to deal with the worsening situation in the republic of Valge Maja. Bambera and her team are put in charge of security, but little do they know that the fate of the world is hanging in the balance."

#### **EMILY CONCLUDES:**

"Working with Angela has been a particular highlight – an experience I'll never forget. Actually, working with everyone on this set has been a complete joy. One of my personal favourite elements of this series is the music. I worked with composer

### ROB INTRODUCED ME TO THE Horror drama film the Stone tape for which I Am forever grateful.

LIZZIE HOPELY

Borna Matosic on a project during lockdown and wanted to bring him on board. This series is his first work for Big Finish and he's completely smashed it out of the park. I think his compositions are truly incredible – vast, thrilling, cinematic – and such a key part of creating Bambera's **Brave New World**." **VORTR** 

#### UNIT: BRAVE NEW WORLD VISITANTS



### SPARE HIM HIS LIFE FROM THIS

IS THIS THE REAL LIFE? IS THIS JUST FANTASY? THE WAR MASTER IS ABOUT TO FIND OUT...

**THE WAR** Master is in trouble. Big trouble. *Pursued* by a squadron of Dalek assault ships, his only hope of escape is in an altogether different reality: a realm of fiction. And here, there are new possibilities to discover as the Master bids to scavenge a universe of impossible artefacts for use against his enemies. Along the way he encounters mythical creatures and fictional characters including Dorian Gray and a certain Sherlock Holmes...

MONSTROSITY

We join him in *Escape From Reality* to find out more. Producer and director Scott Handcock tells *Vortex:* "Years ago, we mooted a potential **Doctor Who** and **Dorian Gray** crossover where the Master became preoccupied with the idea of a portrait that could rejuvenate someone's life force. It's lovely to return to that idea as **The Confessions of Dorian Gray** marks its tenth anniversary with Big Finish.

"And it's an extra pleasure to unite Sir Derek Jacobi and Alexander Vlahos together on audio — probably the two leads I've worked most closely with over the years — and they have produced a lovely clash of charmingly amoral characters in Victorian London!"

**THE WRATH** of Medusa by Rochana Patel opens the set. Crashing into a universe of fiction, the Master finds himself lost in a world of Greek mythology... with a Dalek assault squad close behind.

Rochana tells Vortex: "The Wrath of Medusa evolved a lot during the pitching process. Scott originally asked for standalone tales interacting with different fictional worlds,



so we kicked around a few ideas from Jane Austin to Jules Verne, but nothing quite came together. And then in a flurry of additional pitches, I suggested doing a Medusa tale. I'd avoided suggesting it in the first round of pitches simply because it felt too obvious, given her scene stealing appearance in the television episode *The Mind Robber*.

"In hindsight, I should have suggested it sooner as it ticks so many boxes... a familiar monster with a famous legend worthy of exploration, completely untapped by the original TV series. And of course, her tale is intertwined with numerous other mythological figures giving us a huge range of source material to explore."

How would Rochana sum up the script? She says: "Let's not mess about! This is the ultimate crossover story. The greatest villain from **Doctor Who** versus the gods, heroes and monsters of Greek mythology. Plus Daleks!



"I did extensive research for this script. It was essential! Greek mythology is complex. It's also fascinating. I ended up reading quite a lot of Ovid, the Roman poet who retold the ancient Greek tales, purely for pleasure – because his writing is genuinely enthralling even after two thousand years. And it's intriguing to compare how he adapted these stories – which were already ancient – for his Roman audience, against how many writers (including myself) continue to adapt them today."

THE SECOND adventure is The Shadow Master by Lizzie Hopley. As the Master plunders inconceivable artefacts from an impossible universe, he encounters a figure that may prove his greatest threat: his own shadow.

Lizzie recalls: "Scott remembered that I'd written a play based on a work by Hans Christian Andersen a while back and asked if there were any of his works that could act as a backdrop for the Master fleeing to the Land of Fiction: the premise of the series being that the Master is fleeing the Daleks and plundering fiction for things he can utilise in the Time War. There was never any doubt that I should use *The Shadow* as inspiration. It's one of the most chilling short stories I've ever read so it suited Jacobi's Master perfectly.

"I used a tiny bit of the story in my play as a framing device but then to explore the Shadow as a character and have him come up against the Master was thrilling. Fiction as reality is always spooky, it's like your nightmares becoming real. There's a reason why so many children's tales become horror films! The idea that the Master is living in this world where there are no rules and none of the inhabitants know who he is and what he's capable of is very menacing."

Lizzie takes real pleasure in writing for an anti-hero like the Master. She adds: "It's an absolute joy. The Shadow has a naivety about him and yet is so ambitious. To have him come up against the intelligence and cruelty of the Master was truly horrible."

FOR THE third story we join The Adventure of the Deceased Doctor by Alfie Shaw. When Dr John Watson is informed of his own murder, only the world's greatest consulting detective can assist. He just happens to come from a different world.



Alfie, who describes this tale as 'a mad murder mystery', says: "The brief was a fairly open one. It laid out the premise – the Master in the Land of Fiction – and that was it really. When deciding which fictional world to let the Master loose in I remembered the – possibly apocryphal – origin of the Master as being like the Doctor's Moriarty.

"So with the Master as a Moriartytype figure, pitching him against Holmes and Watson was the obvious route but it was a bit too similar to putting him up against the Doctor. So that's when I let go of the criminal angle and decided to have him *be* Holmes, solving crimes with Watson. It opened the story up to go in more interesting directions."

Alfie was familiar enough with the characters from Sherlock's world but concedes: "I can't admit to being the world's biggest Holmes fan. I've read a fair few of the stories, and grew up enjoying the various TV and radio iterations that have popped up over the years. So I went back and re-immersed myself in the world while writing the script, which was great fun."

When *Vortex* asks Alfie for his personal highlight, he says: "I mean,

A MAN OBSESSED WITH AND CORRUPTED BY HIS OWN BEAUTY, DRIVEN WILDLY OFF COURSE BY AN EVIL TIME LORD.

have you seen the cast list?! Hearing Derek play Sherlock Holmes was joyous, especially when he was paired up with Richard Earl."

THE MASTER of Dorian Gray by David Llewellyn completes this quartet of adventures. Seeking the power of immortality, the Master works himself into the life of Dorian Gray. But can he change how the story ends? David reveals what happened when Scott gave him his brief of putting the Master and Dorian Gray together: "I jumped at the chance. *The Confessions of Dorian Gray* and the adaptation of the novel for **Big Finish Classics** were both joyful, and I've always enjoyed writing for Derek Jacobi's War Master, so this was a great gig on both counts."

Both the Master and Dorian are characters with a dark and malevolent side – was it fun to contrast them? "Oh, absolutely. The Master's role in this is as a kind of puppet master figure who nudges Dorian even further into moral turpitude while being the Dirk Bogarde to Dorian's Edward Fox.

"It's Oscar Wilde's story of a man obsessed with and corrupted by his own beauty, driven wildly off course by an evil Time Lord."

Alexander Vlahos adds: "It's been great to rekindle my love for Dorian and to work alongside Derek Jacobi was an absolute honour. Hearing his voice in my headset gave me super chills. And the fact that he's playing the Master and I get to play Dorian in a version of the **Doctor Who** world is my bucket-list ticked off. I'm sure it's going to be one of the best **War Master** episodes ever!"

David reveals his high point in writing the script was: "Realising that the Master would adopt different personalities in response to different characters. When you've got an actor with Derek Jacobi's range, it's fun giving him multiple personalities to work with whether it's the sleazy theatre manager or Dorian's butler!" **VORTEX** 

#### THE WAR MASTER ESCAPE FROM REALITY



#### SEND LETTERS TO: FEEDBACK@BIGFINISH.COM AND USE VORTEX MAIL AS THE SUBJECT

# VORTEX MAIL



#### **KEEP ON SURVIVING**

Just wanted to say I finished listening to Survivors: New Dawn and am hoping that you continue with more. I first started listening to Survivors at the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020. I was the sole person left in the office to handle people's terminals while they worked remotely, and dealing with delivery and send-outs of original documents. I downloaded all nine seasons on an MP3 player and would listen while walking my dog through the deserted streets of San Francisco's financial district, North Beach and Embarcadero. I felt it was very apropos for the situation. Now that I have finished filling up that MP3 player with adding New Dawn, I'm wondering if I am going to need a new MP3 player for upcoming episodes? EDWARD MITTELSTAEDT

Nick: Very chilling listening during such a terrible time, Edward. Glad you enjoyed it though. And I reckon you just might need another MP3 player.



#### **TAMSIN TIME?**

With Big Finish revisiting the Classic era of the Eighth Doctor with The Further Adventures of Lucie Miller and Charlotte Pollard: The Further Adventuress, would Big Finish consider bringing back the Eighth Doctor's companion Tasmin Drew played by Niky Wardley for a one-off box set?

Nick: We loved working with Niky, and I feel a pang of guilt for killing off Tamsin! We did a lot of killing back then, didn't we – the stakes were high... But yes, I'd certainly be open to finding a way of revisiting the wonderful Tamsin.

#### **RANI'S RETURN**

As a huge childhood The Sarah Jane Adventures fan, I was ecstatic to hear about Rani Takes on the World. Not only do we get back the magnificent Anjli Mohindra as Rani, but also Daniel Anthony as Clyde and Mina Anwar as Gita. It's been worth waiting 11 years for this! Looking bevond volume one, will Rani also reunite with Luke and Mr Smith? Will she encounter more characters from the wider Whoniverse – more UNIT personnel, former companions or even past Doctors? Most importantly of all, will she ever come face-toface with her Time Lady namesake? Come on, Big Finish. The Two Ranis. You know you want to! RSLADE

Nick: Steady there! No spoilers.

#### **MONK-Y BUSINESS**

We have had two TV Movie Masters box sets, eight War Master box sets, at least three Missy box sets, an Eleven box set... but no Meddling Monk. Yes, he has appeared in a lot of other stories, but I would love to see them in their own box set. Is this a possibility? JASON

Nick: We've currently no plans for that, Jason, but I do love the Monk. I've just been rewatching The Time Meddler on television and it really is a great watch. VONTER

There's a familiar face in the next The Worlds of Blake's 7 release...

# FRIENDORFOE?

THE WORLDS of Blake's 7 range continues to expand as we delve deeper into the situations introduced in the television series. Big Finish has been exploring both the lives of the regular characters and also several of the characters they've met along the way. We've encountered Bayban, Shrinker, Avalon and Dorian – to name but a few – and now we're about to meet Arlen in December's release, Allies and Enemies.

Producer Peter Anghelides reveals: "These stories are inspired by the character Arlen from the final (season D) TV episode of **Blake's 7**, the unforgettable *Blake* by Chris Boucher.

"This new box set was prompted, in part, by seeing a recent interview with Sasha Mitchell about her experience playing Arlen all those years ago, and how she'd be happy to revisit the character today in a Big Finish audio story.

"We know from *Blake* that Arlen was a Federation officer who infiltrated Blake's operation on Gauda Prime, masquerading as someone fleeing bounty hunters and almost giving herself away by using a Federation weapon. The last we see of her is when Vila strikes her down in the finale.

"Our three new stories, set earlier in Arlen's life, are about how she gets to that point and how her search brought her to find Blake."

The box set opens with an adventure which features Jan Chappell as Cally. Peter says: "Lizbeth Myles has written *Saurian Major*  which also explores another question from the TV series – what was Cally doing on that planet before Blake and the *Liberator* crew met her?

"The second story is No Name by Simon Guerrier which sees Arlen learning some brutal truths about the way Space Commander Travis and the Federation get things done when they think no-one is watching."

Simon was delighted to write the middle adventure of the set.

He tells Vortex: "Peter sent round a detailed brief for this run of stories about Arlen and asked me to pitch for the Travis episode. He wanted to see a different side of Travis and suggested putting him outside his usual situation. Peter cited the mentor relationship that Travis had with the mutoid in the Season A TV episode *Duel*. I rewatched that and also Season D's *Blake* as it featured Arlen, and started thinking about ways to play against expectations."

Asked to sum up his script, without spoilers, Simon hints: "What if Arlen isn't quite the cold, vicious character that we see on TV? What if Travis – just once – was a hero...?"

And Simon adds: "The main thing is how much fun it's been to return to **Blake's 7** after quite a time away. I script edited an episode Peter wrote last year – *The Offer in The Terra Nostra* set – but otherwise haven't done anything in this line since *The Liberator Chronicles: Remnants* which was recorded in 2013."

**SEDITION BY** Jonathan Morris concludes this trio of tales. Peter says: *"Sedition* cunningly brings together Jenna, Arlen and Travis after the events of the Galactic War."

Jonny says his outline from the producer was: "To explore the character of Arlen and show how she got to the point where she was on Gauda Prime searching for Blake in the final TV episode of **Blake's 7**. As I'd just rewatched all of **Blake's 7**. THIS WOULD BE A STORY IN THE DYSTOPIAN MOULD OF THE FIRST TWO SERIES.

for the first time in about 20 years, I was up to speed on the continuity and Peter kindly asked me to write the third episode in the series: a Jenna episode, set during her pre-Liberator smuggling career.

"I was also given the option of including Travis and, of course, if you give me the option of including something I will! But, while I'm a big fan of the fourth series of **Blake's 7**, where it went a bit disco, I was very conscious that this would be a story in the dystopian mould of the first two series.

"The premise of the story is that Jenna is recruited by Arlen to deliver arms to the former Federation colony world of Solta-Minor; it has declared independence but the resurgent Federation is attempting to regain control. Why? Because Solta-Minor is the source of a pacification drug, Sopor Four, which can be used to subdue restless populations. This ties it in with things that were established right at the beginning on TV in *The Way Back* and sets up stuff in TV season D episodes *Traitor* and *Warlord*. I told you I was up-to-speed with the continuity!

"So the fate of the whole Federation hinges on the outcome of this rebellion. Jenna agrees to help run the Federation blockade only to discover that the rebels are being led by none other than her old foe Travis. What a coincidence that Jenna should bump into him, you may cry. But, of course, it's not a coincidence at all..."

Jonny concludes: "Once I'd worked out a plot with lots of dramatic confrontations, twists and turns, shoot-outs and running up and down corridors, the main delight was writing the dialogue.

"Blake's 7 is quite hard-bitten and macho with everyone keeping their cards close to their chest, trying to get the measure of their opponents, trying to psych them out. It's more like a war movie or a Western. That's not to say there isn't humour, but it's more the black comedy of a revenge tragedy. So that was all great fun.

"In particular the first scene with Travis, which is a little reference to *Apocalypse Now*, I couldn't resist!" **VORTEX** 

#### THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S 7 Allies and enemies



RELEASED: DECEMBER 2022
 FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD
 ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/foe

#### VISIT: BIGFINISH.COM/OFFERS/V/BOOKCLUB USE THE ACCESS CODE: STORIES

# BOOK CLUB



# TORCHWOOD MORE THAN THIS

ON TELEVISION, we saw the Torchwood Hub destroyed at the end of episode one of *Children of Earth* (with a bomb inside Captain Jack Harkness). Big Finish has been continuing the **Torchwood** story on audio since 2015, and one of

the adventures picking up on the aftermath of the explosion is *More Than This* written by Guy Adams.

Gwen Cooper is trying to rebuild the organisation, and in *More Than This* she faces an obstacle unlike Weevils, Daleks or the 456 – Roger Pugh, planning officer for Cardiff City Council. Mr Pugh doesn't believe the world needs Torchwood, so Gwen sets out to prove him wrong.

Guy recalls: "I was with James Goss the producer and Steve Tribe the script editor, and the line I was given was, 'Gwen's going to have to meet Mr Pugh from the council, and he's effectively the one person who can say no to Torchwood,' and that was my starting point.

"What I really didn't want to do was end up with an inherently comic character of 'Mr Pugh from the council' as that would have been a really lazy, obvious way into it – and a little bit annoying! I wanted Pugh to be richer than that, and hopefully he is."

A core of this script came from a discussion between Guy and his partner. He explains: "The idea of *More Than This* has been something that weighs on me. When my partner and I first met, I was working on a story that I'd called *More Than This*. What's weird is that I'm actually a rationalist – I don't believe there's anything 'more than this'. I am very much the 'this is all we have' sort, and that's why it's brilliant to focus on the fact that this is fine. We don't need more than this. "However, my partner is a great believer that there is 'more than this' and she sees my view as narrow-minded. She thinks about the whole contradiction between the hugeness of the universe and if we are insignificant. When we look into the night sky and it seems so big, does that make us feel small or truly amazing?

"That, to me, is really interesting. Ilike uncertainty so I just wanted to bring that into it because you are dealing with big sci-fi stuff, and it's nice if there's an emotional response, rather than just a 'wow, that's big and spooky', or 'that's big and scary'."

Eve Myles, playing Gwen Cooper once more says: "It was lovely for me to have a 'rogue' story. I particularly enjoyed it as this time I didn't have any of my team mates to fall back on."

Guy concludes: "What Eve is able to with Gwen is find the strong, action character in there. But Gwen has such a warmth to her as well, a real soul. When you have both of those elements, strength but a softness as well as warmth, it's an ideal character to play with."

#### TORCHWOOD MORE THAN THIS



FORMAT: DOWNLOAD
ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/more

#### CREDITS

Managing Editor: Jason Haigh-Ellery Executive Producer: Nicholas Briggs Senior Producer: John Ainsworth

Editor: **Kenny Smith** The Big Finish Team: **Chris Allen** 

Cheryl Bryant Heather Challands Sue Cowley Emily Davis Jackie Emery Jade James Sufyan Javaid Karen Parks Hannah Peel Alfie Shaw Paul Spragg

Graphic Design: Mark Plastow

Copy Editor: Stephanie Hornett Marketing & Publicity: Steve Berry Sophie Shipley Chrissie Wood

BFP Administration: Reanne Hawkins Brenda Smith Alison Taylor

Publisher: Big Finish Productions Ltd.

#### SOCIAL

- **BIGFINISH**.COM
- 🕑 @BIGFINISH
- THEBIGFINISH
- ( BIGFINISHPROD
- BIG-FINISH
- BIGFINISHPROD

"All I can see is black and white and white and pink with blades of blue, that lay between the words I think"

# **BIG FINISH** RELEASE SCHEDULE

Please note that due to factors beyond our control, Big Finish is currently operating a digital-first release schedule. Our warehouse remains open but the mail-out of collector's edition CDs and vinyls may be delayed. However, all physical purchases of new releases will unlock a digital version that can be immediately downloaded, or played on the Big Finish app, from the release date.

#### FOR FULL DETAILS AND UPDATES VISIT: bgfn.sh/whatsnew

#### NOVEMBER 2022

DW | THE NINTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES 2.3 Hidden Depths (BOX SET)

DW | THE NINTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES 2.3 Hidden Depths (LIMITED VINYL EDITION)

DW | THE SEVENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES Sullivan and Cross – AWOL (BOX SET)

DW | THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES What Lies Inside? (BOX SET)

DW | UNIT - NEMESIS Objective: Earth (BOX SET)

THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S 7 After the War (BOX SET)

STAR COPS The High Frontier: Volume 1 (BOX SET)

BIG FINISH ORIGINALS

Shilling and Sixpence Investigate 2: In Loving Memory DLo

THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S 7 Bayban Ascending (HARDBACK, EBOOK)

TORCHWOOD The Lincolnshire Poacher (67)

#### DECEMBER 2022

DW | THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES Connections (BOX SET)

DW | THE WAR DOCTOR BEGINS He Who Fights Monsters (BOX SET)

DW | THE WAR MASTER Escape From Reality (BOX SET)

DW | UNIT — BRAVE NEW WORLD Visitants (BOX SET) THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S 7 Allies and Enemies (BOX SET)

THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S 7 The Terra Nostra: Zero Point (HARDBACK, EBOOK)

TORCHWOOD The Empire Man (68)

#### JANUARY 2023

DW | THE AUDIO NOVELS The Dead Star (SECOND DOCTOR) DLO

DW | THE DIARY OF RIVER SONG Friend of the Family (BOX SET)

DW | CLASS Secret Diary of a Rhodian Prince (BOXSET)

THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S 7 Zero Point (Hardback, Ebook)

TORCHWOOD TBA (69)

#### FEBRUARY 2023

DW | THE NINTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES 2.4 TBA (BOX SET)

DW | THE NINTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES 2.4 TBA (LIMITED VINYL EDITION)

DW | THE FIRST DOCTOR ADVENTURES TBA (BOX SET)

DW | THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES TBA (BOX SET)

DW | THE DOCTOR CHRONICLES The Eleventh Doctor: All of Time and Space (BOX SET)

TORCHWOOD TBA (70)

DLO = DOWNLOAD ONLY • DW = DOCTOR WHO DATES CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS.

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE



# UNIT: BRAVE NEW WORLD DDDDDDDDDDDDDDDC BAMBERA AND HER UNIT TEAM

BAMBERA AND HER UNIT TEAM ARE READY FOR NEW THREATS...

ALSO INSIDE

THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S 7 ALLIES AND ENEMIES: ARLEN RETURNS IN THE LATEST BLAKE'S 7 RELEASE...