

VORTEX



THE EIGHTH DOCTOR

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TIME WAR



**THE EIGHTH DOCTOR IS
BACK IN THE TIME WAR
WITH A FRIEND AT HIS SIDE...**
but probably not the one you were expecting

ALSO INSIDE

DOUBLE, DOUBLE, TOIL AND TROUBLE
THERE'S AN AUTON INVASION
OF TORCHWOOD!



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EIGHTH NINTH

THE NINTH Doctor is set to rematerialise in his eighth (yes, eighth already!) box set from Big Finish in February 2023. Alien threats come in many forms – and many different hues. A charity shop where customers vanish, a 1920s gentleman's club besieged by giant plants, and a distant colony planet where death hides in darkness. But wherever they manifest, the Doctor is on hand to fight every shade of fear.

Shades of Fear features three all-new adventures with *The Colour of Terror* by Lizzie Hopley, *The Blooming Menace* by James Kettle and *Red Darkness* by Roy Gill. Director Helen Goldwyn has assembled a fantastic cast including Susan Penhaligon (*A Fine Romance*, **Doctor Who**), Laura Rollins (*Doctors*), Clive Hayward (*Anything Goes*) and British television legend Frank Skinner.

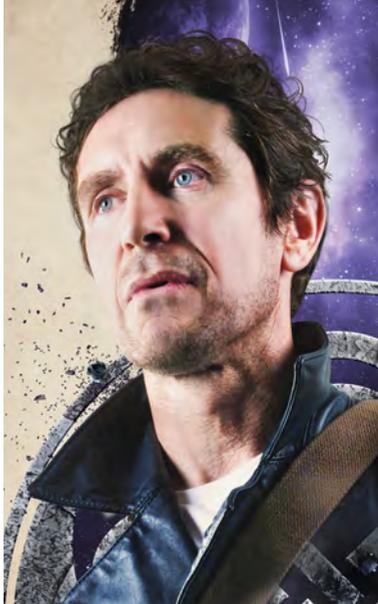
Frank guest stars in *The Colour of Terror* as Pete Snow, a nosy neighbour who gets roped into investigating a junk shop with the Doctor. Frank says: "Christopher Eccleston was brilliant on TV with his amazing energy and it was unlike any **Doctor Who** I'd seen before. I was very sad when he left but I'm glad we've got that one series as it's an absolute corker. Without him, I don't think we'd have everything we've had since."

"It's pretty exciting hearing Chris as the Ninth Doctor close up. I listen to Big Finish regularly and it's great because it can take you anywhere. No-one ever quite hears the same adventure – we've all got our own versions in our imagination and that makes it very intimate. I'm a big fan of audio." **VORTEX**

THE NINTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES SHADES OF FEAR

- RELEASED: FEBRUARY 2023
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EDITORIAL

I THINK it's pretty common knowledge that I am a huge fan of the Eighth Doctor (and especially his companion Lucie Miller!). I've followed his adventures through both the BBC Books and Big Finish, as well as his wonderful, brief and surprising returns to our television screens in *The Night of the Doctor* and *The Power of the Doctor*.

The past few months have been a real treat for me with the release of two new box sets featuring his adventures with Liv and Helen. (I've just finished listening to *Paradox of the Daleks* as I type.)

And this month there's something even more special as not only is the Doctor reunited with his great-grandson Alex (played by Paul McGann's own lad, Sonny), but also with the woman who ultimately led to the death of this incarnation, Cass...

But how? What's going on? Is everything going all wibbly-wobbly with the Time-y Wime-y War?

All will become clear, but until then sit back and enjoy interviews with Sonny and the wonderful Emma Campbell-Jones, back in the part of Cass. What you read in this issue is a mere fraction of the chat we had on life, the universe and everything. **VORTEX**

Kenny

"SITTING IN ON THE RECORDING AND LAUGHING MY HEAD OFF..."



SPECIAL O-CASS-ION

The Eighth Doctor's back in the Time War with a friend at his side – but probably not the one you were expecting...

ONE OF the (many) great things about Big Finish is the ability to do the unexpected. Just when you think one thing is happening, something else comes along and turns it on its head! And there are plenty more twists to be had on this new audio adventure.

In *The Eighth Doctor: Time War – Cass*, we find the Doctor with Cass

Fermazzi (Emma Campbell-Jones) and Alex Foreman (Sonny McGann). Yes, Cass, who the Doctor met in *The Night of the Doctor* mini-episode and Alex, the Doctor's great-grandson!

Producer David Richardson says: "The exciting thing about the *Time War* series is it can turn established rules on their head. When time itself goes wrong, there's all sorts of fun to be had.

"In a normal range the return of Cass alongside the Eighth Doctor shouldn't really happen – they met in *The Night of the Doctor* and she died then too.

So how can Cass arrive in the Doctor's life at an earlier stage? And where is Bliss? The Eighth

Doctor's time in the Time War is entering a whole new chapter."

Script editor John Dorney says: "It was great coming in to edit this release. I was sent the details and got very excited, particularly because I know actor Emma a little bit. She's a delight, I worked with her on *The Paradox Planet* a few years ago in **The Fourth Doctor Adventures** range and I've met her a few times since.

"For this, I emailed her at one point to ask, 'What are you interested in doing with Cass as a character?', just to see what grabbed her and what sort of areas she'd like to explore. She came back to me after a while, and said, 'Whatever you feel like.' Emma was happy to be led by the

writers and what we wanted to do.

"Cass is a fun character and there were lots of other interesting things to play with. I read the novelisation of *The Day of the Doctor* pretty much the second I knew I was working on this set. In these adventures, we're exploring some of that to a degree, but also, because it isn't quite part of that same history (as will be obvious from watching *The Night of the Doctor*) it became something to factor in. There were various discussions between me and the writing team about what we could and couldn't include."

With the Doctor having two companions in the form of Alex and Cass, John says: "I wouldn't necessarily say Alex is from a parallel universe. We've covered where he comes from, to a degree, in *Time War Volume Four*, so here we're looking at the ramifications of that but maybe

WHEN HIS SCRIPT ARRIVES, YOU BARELY HAVE TO TOUCH IT, WHICH IS ALWAYS GLORIOUS.

JOHN DORNEY

less in this box set than you might expect because we're also exploring Cass a bit. There's also a sense of

this set not necessarily following on directly from *Time War Volume Four*. It's very hard to explain!"

MEANWHILE, ELSEWHERE

by Tim Foley is the first story in this set. John says: "Tim is a great writer so getting him involved just feels like a no-brainer. If you are offered the opportunity to work with Tim, then grab it! When his script arrives, you barely have to touch it, which is always glorious."

"It feels like I've got one of the best seats in the house when I'm working with Tim because I don't know what's coming next, or where the next scene is going to be. And then I get to be one of the first people to hear his jokes again in studio, and one of the first people to feel the emotions. We have a thoroughly good time working together!"

SONNY MCGANN

SONNY MCGANN is no stranger to *Doctor Who* – he was on location in Canada when his father first stepped before the cameras as the Eighth Doctor! And then, after

featuring in a handful of Big Finish audio adventures, he was cast as Susan's son, Alex, and exterminated by Daleks in *To the Death*. So, in a wibbly-wobbly, timey-wimey way, the Doctor's son plays the Doctor's great-grandson!

Sonny – who was originally credited under the name Jake – says: "It was a huge surprise to be asked to reprise the role of Alex. I first heard about it a couple of years ago – there were whispers that Alex was coming back – but yes, it was a surprise, particularly given he was killed off something like 15 years ago!"

"This is actually the first thing I've recorded in a while and my first acting job in about five years so I did worry when I was coming back to record that I'd have some anxiety, but happily I didn't!"

Sonny has been employed by Big Finish for the past couple of



years as a production assistant, so he's used to being in studio.

How did he find working with his dad? Sonny tells *Vortex*: "I've worked with my dad several times before – last year we did a we did a string of Caryl Churchill plays at the Greenwich Theatre. I was associate director and he was a member of the cast. That involves lots of sitting

around, chatting, working on stuff, rehearsing and other things. We share an attitude, he and I, where as soon as we step into work, it's work mode. And I like that."

Sonny particularly enjoyed the dynamic this new TARDIS team have created. He reveals: "The interesting thing with these new adventures is that it's not just Alex with the Doctor but Cass is there as well. We quickly realised there was a strong chemistry between the three of us."

Sonny has really enjoyed playing Alex once more, and adds: "When a character is killed off at a young age, before they really get to develop and grow, it's really sad. So it's lovely being able to play Alex again, to give him the chance to be an adult, which strangely enough mirrors my own growth as well."

"I first played Alex when I was about 17, and at 18 he was killed off! It's great find out what happened to him over those lost years. Now he's had a chance to mature and become self-reliant, independent and strong-willed. He's useful, interesting, opinionated and charming." **VORTEX**



Above (l-r): Emma Campbell-Jones and Paul McGann | Below: Greig Johnson

Tim was delighted to get the chance to write an Eighth Doctor Time War era story, having previously written one for the **War Master** range.

Tim says his brief was: "To meet Cass, re-meet Alex, hit the ground running and set up things to come! It was one of those briefs that could get a little overwhelming but I love this kind of challenge.

"I've written for the Eighth Doctor a few times now and every story seems to have gotten closer and closer to this pivotal time in his life...

"It's Cass's first day at work. And it's all going to go horribly wrong, of course! The Captain's sick. And a passenger doesn't exist. And all of space and time seems to have appeared inside their ship!

"I'm delighted that Alex has come back – and under such unusual circumstances. I approached him as a little older and cheekier than when we first met him – trying to show off





Above: Nadia Albina
Below: Homer Todiwala

to Cass and out-do his 'old man'..."

And bringing back Cass was a surprise? "Oh, totally. A bonkers idea! But I'm excited to see what the actors do with it. Listening to Emma and Sonny recording together was delightful, such instant chemistry."

VESPERTINE BY Lou Morgan continues the adventures of this new trio in the TARDIS. John reveals: "Lou and I worked together on the *Doctor of War* box set where she wrote

Aftershocks, and it was immediately obvious when I was going through the script that I wanted to work with her again – and as often as possible.

"This story is utterly glorious and beautiful, and I could not be more delighted with the script."



Lou – like Tim, also a **War Master** veteran – says: "It was so good writing for the Eighth Doctor, especially against the backdrop of the Time War. A Time War story generally means that the rules are bending even more than usual, and pushing against time itself is always going to make things interesting! Add that to one of the most complicated, layered Doctors and it's seriously exciting."

"My brief was essentially that the Doctor has a new companion – now what? Any companion's first trip with the Doctor is a bit of an iconic moment, someone seeing the universe in a whole new way for the first time, for good and for bad. In this case it was Cass, so that meant taking what we already know about her and asking how that fits in with the journey she starts here. What

MY BRIEF WAS ESSENTIALLY THAT THE DOCTOR HAS A NEW COMPANION – NOW WHAT?

LOU MORGAN

kind of person is she? And how is she going to react to what life with the Doctor can throw at her?

"The Doctor and Alex are determined that Cass's first trip in the TARDIS is going to be a memorable one but when they end up at a frozen research base that shouldn't exist, built over the remains of a lost ship that should never have been found, it starts to look as though this trip will be memorable in ways the Doctor couldn't possibly have predicted!"

How did Lou find writing for Alex and Cass? "Alex is huge fun, particularly because of his relationship to the Doctor. They're a lot alike in some ways but very different in others, and it creates a nice bit of tension between the

EMMA CAMPBELL-JONES

EMMA CAMPBELL-Jones couldn't be more delighted to be back playing Cass. The Edinburgh-born actress had always hoped that there may be more stories to tell with the spaceship pilot from *The Night of the Doctor* mini-episode but feared that the time had passed. Little did she know! Emma says: "I hoped that soon after *The Night of the Doctor* aired there might be something else, within a year or two, but when it didn't happen, I thought, 'Oh well, she had a lovely story.' Cass was there to serve a purpose, really, as a part of Paul McGann's Eighth Doctor regeneration – she was just as much a key part of that as Ohila was.

"I've got so much gratitude for being cast as Cass; what a blessing that job was. I've been invited to American **Doctor Who**-related conventions on the back of it, which has been great.

"I didn't ever imagine that I'd be given anything else to do as Cass, and to be honest when I found out they wanted me on audio at Big Finish, I had a little cry. I was so happy!"

There are some great moments ahead for Cass on her journey in the TARDIS. Emma explains: "You can see her growth – she gets a lot more cocky and confident as time passes. It's as



if the pattern of her lingo slightly changes – it becomes more playful and like **Doctor Who** on television. It's like what we had with Matt Smith's Doctor and Clara, that sort of backwards and forwards banter. It had more of that feel. It's very funny as well – but then terribly sad, too.

"In a short period of time the Doctor and Cass go on some crazy adventures and they meet some fascinating people. What I love about these stories is that the baddies are never just baddies! With some of the **Doctor Who** monsters, they're just bad through and through, which makes them easy to hate. But, in these scripts, it hits you in the gut that actually they're not just bad – they could be being, for example, blackmailed to act in a particular way by someone else. There are high stakes for them personally so there are reasons why they've done certain things.

"You care about all of characters in these adventures, even the baddies. Well, maybe not the Daleks! Most monsters have moments where they are slightly touched by humanity and you can see flickers of it every now and again. But the Daleks... they're all psychopaths! They're just evil in a tin can!" **VORTEX**

two of them. I especially enjoyed writing his scenes with Cass, though. There's quite a bit of banter back and forth between them; we're getting a glimpse into how they relate to each other.

"Cass was definitely a surprise returnee but a lovely one – I have a soft spot for *The Night of the Doctor*. We only see her for a short time there but she's immediately memorable – and here we have the chance to explore the character a bit more and find out what makes her tick. It's lovely to look at a character we've already met but haven't had a chance to get to know all that well and add more to their story."

PREVIOUSLY, NEXT Time written by James Moran (who wrote *The Fires of Pompeii* for the Tenth Doctor on television) is a two-part story which brings the set to a close.

John continues: "We have the mighty James Moran writing the last two episodes. This is James's first full-cast audio drama for a Big Finish Doctor Who range, although he has written a Short Trip and a Torchwood monthly adventure before. I'm always delighted to see his name because the scripts are guaranteed to be incredibly interesting, fun (usually with too many jokes!) and a very enjoyable

read. James is always very much at the top of my list of people to work with – an all-round good egg.

"James came up with the idea of doing a two-part end to the box set and he suggested some very interesting ideas that we thought could make a good, strong Time War plot."

James says: "I love time twisty, complex, plotty, weird stuff, and the Time War is tailor-made for that kind of intricate fun. Although I do this to myself every time, I think 'Aha, I'll come up with something really clever so I can show off'. And then I start writing and remember I'm not actually



Above (l-r): Paul McGann and Sonny McGann

that clever, and I have to figure out what is going on in my own plot!

"The brief was pretty open. Because it's the Time War there is tons of scope for self-contained, time twisting stories that can live in their own mini-tangent just off to the side; not part of the main Time War, just occurring off in the distance. I was so focused on that

aspect I forgot that I could actually have Daleks in there until I was plotting it out and asked, 'Er, I think I need a couple of Dalek scenes, am I allowed?' Once I got my head around that, I went on a Dalek frenzy! I was giddy with excitement at getting to write shouty Dalek dialogue.

"The gang arrive on an uninhabited planet, only to find a secret factory

built in the middle of nowhere. As they investigate they're caught up in a huge explosion and find themselves on a suddenly very inhabited planet, with a whole civilisation of people who have been there for thousands of years. The TARDIS has vanished and nobody here has even heard

**I LOVE
TIME
TWISTY,
COMPLEX,
PLOTTY,
WEIRD
STUFF...**

JAMES MORAN

of the Time War or Daleks..."

James says his highlight of the set was: "Sitting in on the recording and laughing my head off at the cast's brilliant performance of the funny parts – then being stunned into silence at how amazing they were at the serious parts too. There were a couple of scenes that were crammed with tricky technobabble dialogue sequences, like a verbal 100m hurdle race, which led Paul to retitle the story *Tongue Twisters in Space...*" **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO
TIME WAR: CASS



■ RELEASED: JANUARY 2023
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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PROFESSOR RIVER SONG RETURNS IN A SERIES OF COMPLEX AND EMOTIONAL STORIES...

FAMILY FORTUNES

RIVER SONG knows a thing or two about family. After all, her parents had a long relationship with the Doctor. And then there are her own complex encounters with his various incarnations over the years.

This January, River's back in *Friend of the Family*, a new, epic, four-hour, multi-generational family saga written by Tim Foley. Alex Kingston stars as the time-travelling archaeologist involved in a haunting in an unusual house.

River Song decides to investigate a temporal anomaly after a Luna University expedition makes some odd discoveries in an old Earth house – pages of her own diary with an

inscrutable riddle written across them.

However, her investigation goes badly wrong when she is transported back into the past of the house and gets trapped within its grounds.

The house is the home of the Mortimers and with a limited ability to travel back and forth in time across eighty years and multiple generations, River finds herself witnessing key moments in their family history.

If she wants to escape, the words in her diary are not the only riddle she has to solve. But not everyone in the house will survive what's coming. And not everyone is on her side.

Producer David Richardson tells Vortex: “*Friend of the Family* is unlike any **River Song** box set we’ve done

before. It’s one four-hour story by a single writer giving listeners the chance to fully immerse themselves.

“Tim has written some of Big Finish’s finest hours and *Friend of the Family* follows that trend, placing River within a complex family drama that weaves between the generations. It’s emotionally intelligent – a story through history that’s also a story for our time. By turns, it will warm and break your heart.”

Script editor John Dorney says: “The idea of having the one writer came from David. A lot of the thinking behind that was something he’d been tinkering with for a while, having been inspired by the US television series, *This is Us*.”



Above (l-r): Mark Elstob
and Alex Kingston
Below: Phyllida Nash

There's a narration framework at the top of the first episode that I insisted on coming back to a bit more regularly than it initially did, just to remind everyone what was what. This is a long adventure and you need to keep all the pieces in place. Tim does an amazing job of that.

"Just before we started working on this story I'd been listening to what was the most recent series of *John Finnemore's Souvenir Programme* on Radio 4. It followed six individual characters, with each episode going backwards through their lives and the way their lives interacted and intertwined, which I thought was potentially a great reference point for

I KNEW I'D HAVE TO COME UP WITH SOMETHING CHUNKY TO JUSTIFY THE RUNTIME.

TIM FOLEY

"It's a show following different people in different times and different generations. That's tricky to achieve over a single hour on television because of the complexity of it, but something that's absolutely up Tim's street as an audio writer.

"What we had to do was find a story – actually, multiple stories – which could sustain that idea for a four-hour time period, involving River in the back and forth of it."

Tim admits he was delighted to get the chance to write a *River Song* box set all by himself. He tells *Vortex*: "Oh, it was amazing! I was flattered to be asked and I knew I'd have to come up with something chunky to justify the runtime. I also knew there'd be no returning elements so it had to be conceptually very strong. And maybe just a little odd."

JOHN KNEW a challenge lay ahead, explaining: "It's a little bit complicated but I think my job as script editor on this is mainly assisting the listener to figure out where they are.



Tim. Tim gave that a listen as well, and all these things melded together into the story he came up with."

Tim confirms: "David gave me the provocation of one big four-hour story, inspired by *This is Us* and its sprawling timelines. Then talking over ideas with John, we were further drawn to the likes of *The Forsythe Saga* and, my absolute fave, series nine of *John Finnemore's Souvenir Programme*.

"We knew this was going to be quite intricate – it's not as though River spends an hour in one time period and moves onto the next – she is constantly zipping around and about."

Comparing this to his previous collaborative Big Finish box set contributions, Tim says: "Writing this alone is an even bigger rabbit hole to fall down! Luckily I had John at the top of it with a lot of rope to help me navigate its depths and not scare all the rabbits. The thing is, it's not just unusual in size, it's also a very experimental story. It needed lots of flowcharts! So the



Above (l-r): Vineeta Rishi, James Camp, Wendy Craig, Phyllida Nash and Isla Blair

mission is not to let the complexity overwhelm the tale and still make it a story with tonnes of heart.”

It also offered the writer more freedom. Tim agrees: “Freedom in scale, definitely. There’s a cast limit per recording session, and each session usually equates to a disc, but our approach here was to record each time period in isolation. Those are then diced and sliced through the whole four hours. It means the discs are bulging with characters and activity, and River has to solve lots of different elements at once. I’ve described it as a puzzle box of a story – it really does feel like that. A key in one time releases a lock in another, stuff like that.”

Vortex asks Tim to sum up the story, without spoilers! “At its very core, it’s a story about River getting stuck with a family, the Mortimers, at different periods in

ALEX HAS SUCH A LOT OF LOVE AND ENTHUSIASM FOR PLAYING RIVER – AND IT’S INFECTIOUS.

KEN BENTLEY

their life. But I don’t want to say any more than that. I want people bewildered by the end of Disc 01 and blubbing by the end of Disc 04.”

DIRECTOR KEN Bentley assembled a top-notch cast with the team including Isla Blair (Mary Mortimer), Wendy Craig (Maddie Mortimer), Mark Elstob (Hugo), Jack Holden (Harry Mortimer), Phyllida Nash (Cook), Ronak Patani (Vinay Siddiqui) and one time Rose Tyler auditionee,

Jemima Rooper (Mary Mortimer).

Ken admits he really enjoys working with Alex. He tells *Vortex*: “Alex has such a lot of love and enthusiasm for playing River – and it’s infectious.

“As soon as we’re all on-mic the energy she brings to the role is like a lightning bolt and it’s fantastic to hear that current surge through the rest of the cast. They really are some of the liveliest and most enjoyable recording days and that’s all down to Alex being brilliant.”



Above (l-r): Ronak Patani and Alex Kingston

What does Ken recall about casting this latest set?

He continues: "It was a tricky play to cast because of all the different periods. The only way you can tell one period from another on audio is by the voices. A particular accent or way of speaking and phrasing a sentence can very specifically evoke a particular era. It was important that the cast in each period created the right sound to clue the listener into exactly 'when' we are in the story.

"We recorded each time setting in its own session so the script was carved up quite a bit. It made it very easy for most of the cast but particularly tricky for Alex as she had to bounce back and forth in the story each day. But Alex does her prep and is totally on the ball when it comes to recording so I knew she wouldn't be phased by it."

With this being a bigger story

SIMPLY SURVIVING THE FIRST DRAFT FELT LIKE ACHIEVEMENT ENOUGH!

TIM FOLEY

with regular characters, did this create a bit of a company atmosphere from the recurring cast?

Ken replies: "Ordinarily a big ensemble cast like this would help to create a company atmosphere but we actually only had a small number of people each day.

"But the atmosphere is always great anyway, which is partly down to making sure we have time to enjoy the performances, and mostly down to the fact that Alex is such a joy to work with that everybody else is quickly made to feel welcome.

Honestly, recording a **River Song** play is a highlight of the year for everybody who works on it."

TIM REVEALS his highlight from the set was: "Simply surviving the first draft felt like achievement enough! I will not rest until Wendy Craig is in every one of my audios!

Seriously, there are some gorgeous names and performances here. Big Finish always go above and beyond.

"I truly love that we get to plunge River into a very different kind of story. It's domestic. At one point of the story she just sits down and binge-watches the 1995 adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. I hope people do something similar for *Friend of the Family!*"

John concludes: "It's always a delight to work with Tim and with this script he's truly excelled himself. It really is one of his best ever. It's a vast, sweeping family history and an elegant tapestry that has everything including, I think, a kitchen sink.

"There's an amazing cast in addition to the fantastic script. Overall, it's a really amazing piece of work. I read a good chunk of it in different places around the country when I was on tour, and it's a jaw droppingly expansive piece. I was just amazed by the breadth of Tim's imagination and his ability to control these big epic storylines. It'll make you laugh and cry in equal measure. I think listeners are going to adore it. It's absolutely astonishing." **VORTEX**

THE DIARY OF RIVER SONG FRIEND OF THE FAMILY



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- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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THE SECOND DOCTOR IS BACK IN
BIG FINISH'S LATEST AUDIO NOVEL...

STAR TURN

THERE'S SOMETHING rather glorious about the Big Finish Audio Novels range – not only are you getting an all-new adventure played directly into your mind but it's enhanced by top-notch sound design!

Previous releases – *Watchers* by Matthew Waterhouse, *Scourge of the Cybermen* by Simon Guerrier, *Emancipation of the Daleks* by Jonathan Morris and not forgetting Trevor Baxendale's *Terror of the Master* which came with the deluxe edition of *Masterful* – have all received praise and critical acclaim.

This January, Big Finish's new voice of the Second Doctor, Michael Troughton, narrates *The Dead Star* by Kate Orman, a brand-new adventure which bridges the gap between the 1966 *Doctor Who*

television stories, *The Power of the Daleks* and *The Highlanders*.

It's 1968, and the Earth has one month to live. The Doctor, Ben and Polly race to escape a frightening lifeless London. But as the city folds in on itself, it is a warning of a far greater danger. Someone has misused terrifyingly advanced technology to make Earth the target of a primordial black hole – a tiny, invisible world-killer. Struggling to avert the catastrophe, the Doctor must send his companions on dangerous undercover missions.

The top secret Chicxulub Club wants to hide the Earth's death sentence from the human race – at any price – so Ben and the Doctor try to infiltrate it to discover their true connection to the black hole. Meanwhile Polly works to befriend an intriguing scientist who seems decades ahead of her time.

In their search for a solution, the Doctor and his friends leap forward in time, into an ultra-modern future of space travel, robots and talking computers – and an alien machine that promises control of the black hole's powers. But who on space station Montu is friend, and who is foe? And can the Doctor and his friends prevent the planet Earth from being erased from space and time?

THE DEAD *Star* marks a welcome return to writing *Doctor Who* for Kate, a fan favourite author of the Virgin **New Adventures** in the 1990s, as well as being a popular writer for BBC Books' **Eighth Doctor Adventures** novels (often with her husband, Jonathan Blum as co-writer).

Producer David Richardson said: "It's been some years since we've



Above: Michael Troughton

I'VE BECOME ADDICTED TO SCIENCE VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE, SO I KNEW IT HAD TO BE ABOUT A BLACK HOLE!

KATE ORMAN

had the pleasure of Kate's name on a **Doctor Who** audio drama script.

"Kate has been away from **Doctor Who** for far too long and I was determined to correct that! For those who don't know, Kate wrote seven of Virgin's **New Adventures** novels, four of the BBC's Eighth Doctor novels and also one of their Past Doctor novels – among numerous short stories and other projects.

"In fact, the last was a **Short Trips** box set in 2009 so it seems to me that not only is she eminently qualified to be writing for our audio adventures, but also the range is lucky to have her.

"Kate's initial pitch was superb and the script is equally delightful. *The Dead Star* is just a glorious entry in the series – a rich, huge story for the Second Doctor told in six parts.

"I hope I will get to work with Kate again soon. It's great to have her back, and Michael Troughton has brought the words to life impeccably."

A DELIGHTED

Kate tells *Vortex*: "Big Finish emailed me out of the blue asking if I'd like to pen an audio novel for them. You could have knocked me down with a feather! I think I went and looked at the Big Finish website to check if the email was real!"

"I hadn't written a **Doctor Who** novel in 20 years! Big Finish suggested a Second Doctor book with Ben and Polly – Jon (my husband) and I have been watching loads of Patrick Troughton's TV episodes and hugely enjoying them; and I'm a big fan of Polly in particular.

"A lot of companions (and that means a lot of female companions) are introduced as brave, smart and

active, just the sort of character you want to watch – then they lose that story-driving edge and just need to be rescued a lot. This happened to poor Polly on TV so I knew it would be fun to write the original *The War Machines* version.

"Other than the Doctor and companions, and a request to make it six chapters with cliffhangers, I wasn't given too much direction. In the last couple of years I've become addicted to science videos on YouTube, so I knew it had to be about a black hole!

"The first part is set on Earth in the late 1960s. For that, I drew on *The Avengers* and similar shows: the second part is set in outer space. I had a huge amount of fun writing it. There's a lot of action, a lot of science and quite a lot of weird stuff – I'll be interested to see how listeners respond to that!"

Kate admits that finding the right tone for the audio novel was a challenge. She tells *Vortex*: "It's tricky trying to strike a balance between 'it's a book, do something they could never have done on television, show the reader something new' and 'make it as authentic as possible, capture that delicious black and white feeling, like it's a lost episode'.

Kate was overjoyed when she found out who would be narrating her work: "What an honour to have Michael Troughton read it! I had no idea who it was going to be when I was writing – I am delighted." **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO THE DEAD STAR



- RELEASED: JANUARY 2023
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/anise 



CLASS MATES REJOICE – THE **DOCTOR WHO** SPIN-OFF IS RETURNING IN A SPECIAL AUDIO RELEASE...

DEAR DIARY

ON 22 OCTOBER 2016, the fourth official television **Doctor Who** spin-off aired on BBC Three. **Class**, created by Patrick Ness, followed the students of Coal Hill Academy struggling with the stresses of adolescence while fending off alien threats over the course of eight episodes.

Sadly, the show was never renewed for a follow-up run but **Class** has instead had a second, hugely successful life on audio with the lead TV cast reprising their roles in Big Finish's drama series.

This January, a special audio adventure is being released featuring Greg Austin and Jordan Renzo, written and produced by

the TV and audio series' original music composer and long-term **Doctor Who** fan, Blair Mowat.

In *Secret Diary of a Rhodian Prince*, Charlie Smith – the last surviving member and prince of the humanoid species, the Rhodians – candidly reveals the trauma of relocating to Earth and spills the tea on his romance with student Matheus Andrzejewski.

Blair spoke to *Vortex* from a plane flying between New York and LA at 34,332ft!

He explains: "How did *Secret Diary* come about? That's a long story but in essence it was through a desire to have more **Class** and wanting to give listeners some hope

and good news on the anniversary. Everyone who worked on the show still loves that world and wants to keep telling stories in it.

"We'd previously come to a natural end in *Class Volume Four* but then I stepped forward and said, 'Okay, if I'm up for producing and writing again, is there a chance we can make more?'

"I felt there were gaps in the backstory of Matheus and Charlie, and Jordan and Greg are the most wonderful pair – so it was a soft-landing for a first time producer to be working with actors of that kind of calibre. Matheus and Charlie didn't feature in my previous script, *Queen of Rhodia*, very much so it was great to use them in this one."



Greg is delighted to be back in the **Class** universe with Big Finish.

He says it feels: "Like coming home. **Class** could be in no safer hands than those I am lucky enough to collaborate with at Big Finish. Their work ethic, atmosphere and complete knowledge of the universe and its wider context are second to none. I have nothing but glowing things to say about my time with them, and I am always happy to work with Big Finish whenever I get the opportunity."

HOW DID Blair find his first Big Finish script writing assignment, and what did he learn from that which he took into this?

He tells *Vortex*: "It was often quite hard because writing music

takes up most of my waking hours so *Secret Diary* was mainly written on trains and international flights wherever I could grab time and I wasn't thinking about scores!

"For *Queen of Rhodia*, despite the high concept, I was using some quite tried and tested techniques to propel the story along. With *Secret Diary* the format is far weirder – which I guess makes it more original. There are no books or courses on how to write an hour-long script in diary format, so I sort of threw out the rule book which is fun – and terrifying!

"The most frustrating thing about writing something is you'll never experience how someone else will hear it for the first time. My hope is it's both exciting and familiar, full of heart, with a surprise or two hidden away. I know what it's like

to be a fan. I've been one my whole life, so hopefully I understand what it is a **Class** listener would want from a one-off release like this."

IN SUMMING up the script, Blair says: "*Secret Diary of a Rhodian Prince* fills in the bits we never got to see about Charlie arriving on Earth and meeting Mattheusz for the first time, as well as understanding the events of season one through Charlie's very personal lens.

"Diary writers are not always reliable narrators especially when they're used to being royalty on an alien planet! On top of the diary entries there are also scenes between Charlie and Mattheusz – moments we'd never really have time to feature in an episode where aliens are



Above (l-r): Jordan Renzo and Greg Austin

attacking the school in real-time.

“Matteusz became part of season one as the writing process developed, so his backstory was never properly delved into.”

How does Greg feel about having a story effectively named after his character? He tells *Vortex*: “Extremely validating. To have a character you’ve portrayed resonate with enough different people to warrant further exploration is every actor’s dream, especially when that character is front and centre. I obviously can’t take anywhere near full credit for

TO HAVE A CHARACTER YOU’VE
PORTRAYED RESONATE WITH ENOUGH
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EXPLORATION IS EVERY ACTOR’S DREAM...

GREG AUSTIN

that – I am but a cog in the machine of complexity and effort that must conspire to produce an interesting character! All the same, it gives me great joy to revisit and flesh Charlie out with people I admire.

“When I refer to this show being in safe hands, that is in a large

part due to Blair. Beyond being incredibly warm, funny, curious and intelligent, his commitment to the work and his breadth of expertise and knowledge are so extensive as to be somewhat intimidating.

“So being tasked with bringing his script to life and trying to sum it up

to you is... scary? And ultimately will feel inadequate. However, to give it my best attempt – it is an ode to what was and what could have been. Blair has lovingly created a narrative that harkens back to key moments within the series, and fleshes out complexities and nuances the show didn't have time to delve into.

"It captures the heart of **Class** whilst driving towards new and exciting territory. That's all I'll say for fear of spoiling any surprises we may have in store for our listeners."

BLAIR ADMITS to feeling close to these characters: "Being hired to compose for **Class** was such a magical time so I do feel very close to the characters, and it's a joy to get the chance to write in their voices. I loved how Patrick handled Charlie and Matteusz's relationship on screen and I've tried to honour that as much as possible.

"I'm producing my own film and TV scores all the time which involves booking studios and performers, so it wasn't a big stretch to get into the swing of producing an audio drama. It was more out of necessity than anything else and also perhaps a subliminal desire to be in control – ha!"

Blair has written the music for this adventure too: "I'd write the music into the script as I went along and I knew roughly what I was going to do in advance. I always imagined the diary entries without anything behind them and just the dialogue having music – but in the end there was more music in it than I was expecting."

"Greg and Jordan's performances are so full of life – suddenly you have to wear your composer hat instead of your writer's one and look at it as fresh as you can once the edit comes through."

THE BEAUTIFUL cover has been created by Sean Longmore. He says: "There's still a world of potential to explore with **Class** and Blair is such a champion of that.

"Blair's original brief was to feature Charlie writing in his diary in uniform and a crown, and the pose was his suggestion too. We

IT WASN'T A BIG STRETCH TO GET INTO THE SWING OF PRODUCING AN AUDIO DRAMA. IT WAS MORE OUT OF NECESSITY THAN ANYTHING ELSE AND ALSO PERHAPS A SUBLIMINAL DESIRE TO BE IN CONTROL – HA!

BLAIR MOWAT

then had a few chats back and forth about including elements from the series that are mentioned within the script. I was really keen to include Corakinus because the Shadow Kin are just such a cool and striking design. We also said very early on that the design needed to match Tom Webster's stunning covers for the earlier volumes but not in a way that was just replicating them."

Sean talks *Vortex* through his creative process: "The first thing I did was think about colours: it had to match the neon-esque colour scheme of the previous release and hot pink and blue seemed like a natural choice. I then assembled Charlie's body; the story was recorded after the cover needed to be finished and we couldn't accommodate a new photoshoot so I had to assemble him using stock images.

"The comp for Charlie ended up being around 12 different pieces. His hand positions and shoulders had to be just right. Then we did some work looking back at the production shots from the series to make sure his uniform matched, even though I believe we only see it in the flashback scenes.

"After that I added in a wonderful shot of Matteusz, which was one of

the press shots from the series, and Corakinus – having him peeking through seemed like a no brainer.

"The cabinet of the souls and the lockers in the backdrop are actually grabs from the show's title sequence which were fun to play with. Then I added the floating elements.

"The floating diary pages were the last to be added. It was an idea I recycled from my cover for **The War Master: Escape from Reality**, ripping myself off slightly but it seemed to fit so naturally for this release. We featured April and Miss Quill because they're characters that are both very close to Charlie in the series. They'd be the people he'd want to include in his diary. And then the dragon is something Charlie, as a budding illustrator, actually draws in episode two so it felt natural that would end up in there too."

GREG CONCLUDES:

"Having a project dedicated in a large part to Matteusz and Charlie's relationship was big for both Jordan and I. Getting to revisit our dynamic and explore new ground together never feels like work, and as usual I was enriched by the experience. Deepening the lore and setting up consequential possibilities for our characters gave me a real sense of excitement and anticipation, and I cannot wait to see what people think of it when it reaches them."

VORTEX

CLASS
SECRET DIARY OF A RHODIAN PRINCE



■ RELEASED: JANUARY 2023
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/diary 



A PAIR OF **TORCHWOOD** RELEASES ARE ON THE WAY, IT'S...

DOUBLE TROUBLE

WE DISCOVERED the genesis of **Torchwood** when Queen Victoria founded it in the 19th century. We've been to the distant future where the Torchwood Archive is still investigating a mysterious planet that won't fall into a black hole. We've seen how everything changes with Torchwood Three in Cardiff and the Torchwood One team in London, as well as Torchwood Soho.

And now it's time to enter a new era as we find out how the organisation existed in the 1970s. Two new releases are coming our way in January in **Torchwood: Double** as we meet Torchwood leader, Roberta Craven, played by Louise Jameson. In this political thriller, Roberta is joined by ambitious journalist Neal Hart played by *It's a Sin* actor and BAFTA-nominee Omari Douglas, in a tale of greed, manipulation, murder... and Autons! If anyone can be duplicated, who can be trusted?

Written by Guy Adams and directed by Barnaby Edwards, we find

ourselves in 1970s London – a place of suspicion and murder where the assassination of an entire embassy comes to the attention of Torchwood.

There's a global energy crisis. There's an alien invasion. Petrochemical companies are subject to hostile take overs by the mysterious Nessoil. Extremely hostile take overs.

Roberta Craven was once a spy. Now she's broken. But she can still see the patterns in the world. And they're closing in around her.

Producer James Goss says: "A world energy crisis, doing deals for scarce resources with unspeakable entities. An espionage thriller in the spirit of John le Carré as spies and governments work against each other, unaware they're caught up in a trap by the Autons for control of the world's oil. Because you can never have enough plastic. Welcome to 1970s Torchwood! Guy has written a fantastic script and Barnaby has assembled a phenomenal cast headed by Louise and Omari."

Louise tells *Vortex* that Roberta Craven is a part: "that gets you

actor's juices going! She's anxious, driven, very funny, and has a lost love.

"Roberta is surrounded by politics and threats, and she's saving the world. It looks like she's dropping a pebble in a pond whereas in actual fact she's constantly in the middle of a tsunami."

Omari adds: "Neal has come across what he thinks is a game-changing project which spins off into a life that he doesn't expect. He's led down this spiral into a world of corruption, governance and violence.

"In Roberta, Neal has met someone who is equally as tenacious but with an air of mystery, and he embarks on an adventure with her." **VORTEX**

TORCHWOOD DOUBLE 1 | DOUBLE 2

■ RELEASED: JANUARY 2023
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/1970s 

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AND USE VORTEX MAIL AS THE SUBJECT

VORTEX MAIL



Above (l-r): Alan Cox, Nicholas Briggs and Richard East

PROFESSOR MORE-IARTY?

I recently returned from a trip to the Reichenbach falls in Switzerland and stepped in the feet of Holmes vs Moriarty. I've also relistened to Big Finish's *The Final Problem* – just brilliant. With this in mind – as I'm a huge fan of your **Sherlock Holmes** range – could you please consider the return of Alan Cox who played Moriarty (so brilliantly!) back in a box set of original adventures?

Steve Wallace

Nick: We love working with Alan so I certainly would never rule this out, Steve!

SCRIPT REQUEST

I'm a listener to whom English is a foreign language. While Big Finish stories are very understandable and excellent, of course, sometimes I miss some words or don't understand some actor's accents



– I found scripts very helpful in solving that. Would it be possible for Big Finish to release more scripts in the future, especially for Big Finish's original ranges?

Elad Paniker

Nick: Hi Elad, this keeps coming up but unfortunately it's outside of our licence agreement as it could be considered to constitute 'publishing'.

MONSTERS IN REVERSE

I'm a big fan of the **Classic Doctors**, **New Monsters** series and I think they are a really great starting point for someone new to Big Finish, giving a good sampling of the various Doctors. I was wondering if you would ever consider doing the reverse of this series, something like **New Doctors**, **Classic Monsters**? I think it would be really fun to see some of the modern Doctors go up against enemies that normally wouldn't be brought back for the new series, villains like the Krotons, Dominators or Sensorites.

Avery Spencer

Nick: Lovely idea, Avery. No plans at the moment but I seem to remember someone on the team mentioning this a while ago.

A GOOD WOMAN GOES TO WAR

Are there any further plans to continue Susan's involvement in the Time War, or will we see her in the **Gallifrey: War Room** range?

Alex Butts

Nick: We certainly do have plans for Susan. Watch this space, Alex...

FINDING MORE LOST

I'm a big fan of the **Lost Stories** range and recently I was looking through an old copy of the fanzine *DWB* which featured in depth a lost Second Doctor story, *Operation Werewolf* by Robert Kitts and Douglas Camfield, which reads really well. Is this a story on your radar for possible adaptation in the future?

Ben James

Nick: Hi Ben, this has been brought to our attention and the last I heard the matter was under consideration.

VORTEX

BOOK CLUB



DOCTOR WHO THE MEMORY BANK AND OTHER STORIES

PETER DAVISON'S Fifth Doctor and companion Vislor Turlough (Mark Strickson) began their audio adventures in the second-ever Big Finish **Doctor Who** release, *Phantasmagoria*.

The pair continued to travel together until the 2005 release, *Singularity*, after which an 11-year gap saw the release of *The Memory Bank and Other Stories*, prompting a very happy reaction from listeners.

This 2016 anthology features *The Memory Bank* by Chris Chapman, *The Last Fairy Tale* by Paul Magrs, *Repeat Offender* by Eddie Robson and *The Becoming* by Ian Potter.

Chris's involvement began in 2011 when chatting with Big Finish executive producer Nicholas Briggs about *Death to the Daleks* for a **Doctor Who** DVD extra. Five years later in January 2016 he sent in three concepts, one of which

– *The Memory Bank* – caught the eye of script editor Alan Barnes.

Chris says: "For me, the core theme of *The Memory Bank* is that memories are very fragile. My father passed away in 2009 and I quickly became supremely paranoid that I would forget some aspect of him: what he sounded like, how he moved, moments we'd shared. I'd find myself trying to recall his voice and sometimes, momentarily, failing – and that really scared me. So, in classic **Doctor Who** style, I thought: what if there was a place where memory is so fragile that if you're forgotten, you cease to exist?"

Talking about *Repeat Offender*, writer Eddie tells *Vortex*: "Alan and I went through several ideas before we hit on the final version.

"I started with the idea of someone finding the Doctor and Turlough in their home and then calling the police.

At one point it was going to take place in the present day but Alan felt it was a bit too 'small' so we went for a **Judge Dredd**-type future where the trial takes place at the crime scene, and that worked really nicely with the real-time idea.

"It was also Alan's idea for it to be set in Reykjavik – originally it was going to be London.

"I liked the idea of the Doctor turning up to discover he's stumbled across his own death, but the cops don't realise he's the same man.

"My only real regret about it is that, having committed to the real-time thing, I ended up with Turlough bailing and not coming back for ages! It worked for the story but it meant I couldn't cut away to him. But I got another chance for that when I wrote *Power Game*."

Writer Ian says of *The Becoming*:

I LIKED THE IDEA OF THE DOCTOR TURNING UP TO DISCOVER HE'S STUMBLED ACROSS HIS OWN DEATH...

CHRIS CHAPMAN

"I thought with the short running time it was best to make it as much about the two actors interacting as I could get away with and not showcase too much else.

"I originally pitched a slightly farcey 'escaping from custody' idea with Kamelion impersonating Turlough and the Doctor in turn, then I moved onto something a bit more conservation-based tying in with actor Mark's work with wildlife, but an element of that was a bit too like the upcoming *Order of the Daleks* so we ended up with a simpler, evolution-based idea." **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO THE MEMORY BANK AND OTHER STORIES



■ RELEASED: OCTOBER 2016
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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VORTEX ISSUE 166

"I gotta admit that I'm a little bit confused..."

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.

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DECEMBER 2022

DW | THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES
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He Who Fights Monsters (BOX SET)

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Allies and Enemies (BOX SET)

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

TORCHWOOD *The Empire Man* (68)

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

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Friend of the Family (BOX SET)

DW | CLASS
Secret Diary of a Rhodian Prince
(BOX SET)

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MARCH 2023

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(FOURTH DOCTOR)

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Daleks! Genesis of Terror
(FOURTH DOCTOR)

THE AVENGERS: THE COMIC
STRIP ADAPTATIONS
Volume 7: Steed and Tara King (BOX SET)

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TORCHWOOD *TBA* (72)

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VORTEX

ISSUE 166
DECEMBER 2022
BIG FOR THE LOVE
FINISH OF STORIES

CLASS

ACTION

WE RETURN TO **CLASS** IN
A SPECIAL AUDIO RELEASE...

ALSO INSIDE

DOUBLE, DOUBLE, TOIL AND TROUBLE

THERE'S AN AUTON INVASION
OF **TORCHWOOD!**

