

THE **BIG FINISH** MAGAZINE

# VORTEX



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**BIG FINISH**  
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# VAMPIRE WEEKEND

**ANOTHER 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY  
INCARNATION OF THE DOCTOR  
IS ARRIVING AT BIG FINISH...**

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## THE DISSOLUTION OF TIME

**IT'S TIME** to go with the flow this August as River returns for her next volume of adventures. Alex Kingston reprises her role in **The Death and Life of River Song: The Dissolution of Time** set during her incarceration in the Stormcage prison where she's been locked away for the assassination of her husband, the Doctor. However, something's wrong with history and she finds herself back in 1536...

In this four-hour epic by Rochana Patel, River must deal with the machinations surrounding the court of Henry VIII, all while finding a way to repair time.

Producer David Richardson says: "Everyone is fascinated by Henry VIII and his doomed wives; the story has been told in television dramas and films for decades – most recently in *Wolf Hall*. This is a very different take on his history: what might have happened if River was there, thrown unwillingly into Earth's past?"

"What if history doesn't play out as we thought... if the characters on the board game moved in different directions, made different choices? Rochana has delivered a belter of a script and one that really gives our actors something magical to play with."

Rochana adds: "This is a vast, sprawling, lavish historical drama – with a dose of science fiction thrown in. Normally, when you write a 'celebrity historical', you'll have just one famous character and only one episode to explore their story; but here we have multiple characters and multiple episodes so we can really delve into the complexities of Tudor England." **VORTEX**

### THE DEATH AND LIFE OF RIVER SONG THE DISSOLUTION OF TIME

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## EDITORIAL

**THIS YEAR** marks another significant arrival at Big Finish, as Jodie Whittaker makes her audio debut. There's always a lot of excitement when a screen Doctor first signs up to do new audio adventures.

I remember being gobsmacked back in 2001 when it was revealed that Paul McGann was going to play the Doctor again, and the wait for the release of *Storm Warning* was palpable – seven whole months from recording to release!

With the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century series, we all lived in hope that we'd hear a modern era Doctor performing on audio. Sir John Hurt was the first out of the traps in his **War Doctor** series, closely followed by David Tennant's **The Tenth Doctor Adventures**.

I don't think it was such a surprise that David was going to do Big Finish as the Doctor, given his numerous credits across several other ranges, but it was still the news we all wanted to hear. And then the announcement of Christopher Eccleston reprising his role came as a real shock – in a good way of course! – when it was revealed during the dark days of COVID-19 that he was ready to return to the TARDIS.

And now, here we have Jodie, who confirmed she'd reprise her role after speaking to chairman Jason Haigh-Ellery at the Gallifrey One convention in 2023.

*Vampire Weekend* begins the Thirteenth Doctor's adventures on audio with Mandip Gill as companion Yaz. I cannot wait for it to launch. There's a six-page preview of the range starting overleaf, including another exclusive chat with showrunner Chris Chibnall.

Just brilliant! **VORTEX**

*Kenny*





Another 21<sup>st</sup> century incarnation of the Doctor is arriving at Big Finish with Jodie Whittaker set to rematerialise...

# LUCKY THIRTEENTH

**IT'S BEEN** nearly three years since Jodie Whittaker handed over the key to the TARDIS, but fans of the Thirteenth Doctor can get ready for her return via audio this July. Jodie makes her Big Finish debut alongside Mandip Gill as companion Yasmin Khan in *Vampire Weekend*, an adventure written by Tim Foley.

The series is being produced by Noga Flaishon who says: "It was a massive surprise to be asked to produce this range.

John Ainsworth pitched it to me and asked whether I'd like to do it – and of course I said yes.

"It was particularly exciting because I had the opportunity to take a series from its very inception through to release. It's a huge honour and I've been having a great time with it.

"Matt Fitton was my first choice for script editor. I know him from working on *Missy*, chatting with him and hanging out; I think our brains work similarly. We went through the writing and creative

process together, and it's been wonderful working with him.

"It's not only good to have somebody who can say to you, 'Yes, and...', but it's really important to have somebody who can give you a 'No, but...' when discussing things. Matt is really capable in that department. When we were looking at my ideas for an overarching plotline for this series, he would hit me with a 'yes' and then we would develop ideas together. And on the rare occasion where I jumped off the

deep end, he would pull me back. You need to surround yourself with people who are excited about the creative process and who will check you when you need to be checked."

**VAMPIRE WEEKEND** is the first of 12 full-cast audio drama adventures being released every two months for the Thirteenth Doctor and Yaz, but their first outing is going to be no holiday. Having spent so much time on the run through time and space with the Doctor, it's time for Yaz to step back into reality and have an overdue catch-up with her friends back in Sheffield.

*It's Gina's hen-do and her Maid of Honour has booked a large manor in the Peak District. All her friends should be here – including Yasmin Khan, who's been mysteriously quiet whilst away on her travels.*

*But Yaz is bringing a guest. Someone who isn't invited. Someone who might prove a little disruptive.*

*The Doctor is joining the celebrations. Unfortunately, so is an ancient enemy...*

Noga says of the writer: "Tim is wonderful. I know his work for Big Finish and as a playwright – I really adore his work for theatre. He has a theatrical style, but it's also very 'modern TV'. His writing has that pace and energy, and there's plenty of character work.

"We needed something to reintroduce Yaz and the Doctor, acknowledging the fact there has been 'the fam' with Graham and Ryan, but also establishing very early that they're not in the picture for this one. We're reconnecting the Doctor and her companion, reintroducing them for a new era.

"Tim sent us a few pitches, and this one – which Matt and I both thought was really cool because it takes place in modern-day Sheffield – was the one we liked best. It begins at a very similar point to the series with Jodie, but it also has this very classic slasher quality, which I really like. And I love vampires! Any story with vampires is usually a good way to pitch something to me, so I was in from the start."

Writer Tim says: "I'm delighted to sink my teeth into a whole new era (vampire pun). I had a great time writing the first adventure for the Thirteenth Doctor and Yaz, and



Above: Jodie Whittaker as the Thirteenth Doctor



an even greater time listening to them record it in studio. Jodie and Mandip are so warm and funny together, and they leapt back into their characters like they'd never been away. We had a riot making this story – Jodie and Mandip could star in a sitcom as themselves as their chemistry is amazing.

"*Vampire Weekend* is a dark comic manor-house mystery – think *Bodies Bodies Bodies* – or a northern *Cluedo* smushed with a hen party you're trying to get out of! I hope this tale captures the Thirteenth Doctor's madcap, fast-paced energy – right before she's launched into a brand-new series like a technicolour pinball. Enjoy the jokes, the mini quiche and the paranoia. But watch out! There's a mysterious bloodsucker on the loose...

"This is the first story with Yaz as a solo companion so I decided to put the focus on her and her friends. What's it been like whilst she's been away? How does she feel now she's on her own with the Doctor?

"Oh, and there are two time travellers kicking about called Ian and Barbara – what's going on there?!"

Also featuring in *Vampire Weekend* are Daniel Walford as Daryl, Anna Crichlow as Zoya and Kat, Jeremy Ang Jones as Mason and Mandi Symonds as Gina's mum.

**ON WORKING** with his new leading actors, director Ken Bentley says: "It's really important to have a good working relationship with actors so they feel relaxed and free to explore the play. When I work with someone for the first time I make sure we have time in the schedule to all get to know each other first, rather than diving straight into the recording.

"Jodie and Mandip clearly both enjoy working with each other and love playing these characters, which was really exciting to see. They didn't hesitate, they just threw themselves into it which was great!

"They have so much energy and enthusiasm, it's infectious. If your leads are enjoying themselves then the joy filters down and gives everybody permission to have fun. And Thirteenth Doctor stories need that, they rocket along."



Above (l-r): Mandip Gill and Jodie Whittaker



Above: Chris Chibnall

## PRODUCING THE GOODS

SOMEONE WHO IS PARTICULARLY LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING WHAT BIG FINISH DO OVER THE COURSE OF THE THIRTEENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES RANGE IS FORMER SHOWRUNNER CHRIS CHIBNALL.

**HAVING A** gap between the end of Series 12 and *Flux* (Series 13) has created the perfect slot for the Doctor (Jodie Whittaker) and Yaz (Mandip Gill) to go off on more adventures together.

Chris tells *Vortex*: “Yes, that’s why I wanted them to come into their first scene in *Flux* like they do. It’s to say time has passed but you don’t know how long. I love the opening

of *Flux*, it’s one of my favourite sequences. We really shouldn’t have been able to do it on our budget, but we did! The Doctor and Yaz have obviously been having a lot of fun. There’s a huge, almost endless, period of time where you feel like Yaz has changed; you feel the dynamic between them has grown.

“So yes, absolutely, that gap between the two series was really deliberate to leave a sense of time having passed, both on screen and in our lives. There had been big events in the real world, what with the COVID-19 pandemic, and it felt like more time had passed than actually had.”

And now we’ve got audio adventures with Jodie and Mandip on the way. Chris says: “I don’t want to know what the ideas for these audio episodes are. I love not knowing as it’ll be the first adventures for the Doctor and Yaz that I haven’t had any input into or overseen – or any of that stuff. I’ve very deliberately absented myself from it, so it will be lovely to hear other people’s take on it, it’s very exciting.

“Everybody at Big Finish will get to experience what we did with Jodie and Mandip – they really are two of the greatest human beings. Both wonderful actors and delightful to work with, they bring so much energy and humour.”

Jodie’s audio debut comes less than three years since she regenerated in the TV episode *The Power of the Doctor* and it’s clear her love of the character took her right back into the part really easily.

Chris says: “Last week, I was at the *Duchess of Malfi* press night and saw Jodie and Mandip. My wife and Kate from BBC Studios were there too and it was just so lovely to be together again.

“Sometimes when you’re doing press, people don’t believe it when you say things such as, ‘We’re like a big family.’ But on our **Doctor Who**, that was a million per cent true. It genuinely was – we had the best time together.

“Mandip was telling us what a laugh she and Jodie had doing the audios with Big Finish and how much they’d enjoyed it. It’s such a gift and a gorgeous thing all round.” **VORTEX**

Looking at the story, Ken continues: “Tim’s written a fantastic first episode, it has such a lovely comedic quality as well as introducing a terrifying new monster. A good script gives me opportunities to cast people who I know will respond to what’s on the page. It’s sort of obvious to say out loud but actors respond to the writing, and the cast were all on really good form. There was such a lot of banter flying about, in the studio as well as in the play.”

Noga adds: “I remember being utterly shocked at the speed with which Mandip and Jodie took to the recordings on the first day. They were like ducks to water. One of my old acting teachers used to say there’s a quality about actors – the rising tide raises all boats. So, when you have somebody who is this energetic, exciting and giving with their performance, everybody else will

**I’VE TOLD OTHER DIRECTORS... YOU’RE GOING TO HAVE TO STOP THEM CHATTING OR THEY WILL GO ON FOREVER!**

**NOGA FLAISHON**

pick up their game to try and match them at their level. Jodie and Mandip in the recording booth are such a wonderful influence on everybody.

“Another thing that I learned for further recording days, and which I’ve told other directors, is that you’re going to have to stop them chatting or they will go on forever! Jodie and Mandip have such a rapport with each other, they’re clearly great mates.”

**WORKING ON** the music and sound design for this series is Joe Kraemer. He says: “I was thrilled to be invited to contribute to these stories, not only as composer but also as the sound designer. I don’t take on as much sound design now as I used to, but for these I made an exception.

“It’s been so much fun working on this. First off getting a chance as sound editor to peek behind the curtain on the recording sessions was such a delight. Additionally, since I’m doing both the effects and the music, I have been able



Above (l-r): Mandip Gill and Jodie Whittaker

to really coordinate the entire soundscape, so that everything works together especially well."

As a composer, did Joe establish his own themes for the regulars? He says: "Definitely. In fact, due to licensing issues, I can't actually use any pre-existing music in any of my scores unless it comes from the public domain. I have a little motif that I wrote years ago for a Peter Davison story that has become something of a 'theme-let' for the Doctor. I've developed it for the Thirteenth Doctor, after hinting at it in other Doctor-centric stories I've done with other incarnations. I will be making my own theme for Yaz as well, since she is the principal companion. And of course, on a per-episode basis, I will be creating

## I HAVE MADE SOME EFFORT TO REFLECT THE THINGS I LIKED ABOUT SEGUN'S MUSIC IN MY SCORE FOR VAMPIRE WEEKEND...

JOE KRAEMER

leitmotifs for any characters or monsters or such that need them."

The Jodie era has a very distinctive sound to it from Segun Akinola, and Joe says: "Whenever I am scoring a story with the Doctor in it, I try to begin the incidental music with the sound of the relevant period from

the TV show. So, for example, my underscore for **Philip Hinchcliffe Presents *The God of Phantoms*** bears some resemblance to the scores from the Hinchcliffe period.

"Then as the story develops and as the drama requires it, I will expand the sound palette of the music to be less like the music from that era and more like how I would score the show today. That being said, I have made some effort to reflect the things I liked about Segun's music in my score for *Vampire Weekend*, while at the same time bringing my own instincts and musical sensibilities to the table as the episode unfolds."

Does Joe have a particular highlight from *Vampire Weekend*? He tells *Vortex*: "One fun thing to do on this was to open the story with a bit of





Above (l-r): Mandip Gill, Nicholas Briggs and Jodie Whittaker

contemporary music coming from the radio in the car Yaz is driving, then bringing that back at the end of the story to bookend the show. I've not really had a chance to do that in one of my episodes for Big Finish yet. And, as I mentioned earlier, keep an ear out for my theme for the Doctor. It was also fun to try and balance some of the techniques from Segun's music with the way I approach things. Hopefully, I've made something that feels coherent to the listeners and not schizophrenic!"

**LOOKING AFTER** this series' cover art is Rafe Wallbank, who says getting the commission was: "Insanely exciting! I've had the opportunity to work on some fantastic stories for Big Finish, and to be entrusted with such a massively anticipated release is an honour. I was pinching myself!"

"With this series, there's a predesigned template to stick to that evokes the rainbow patterning of Jodie's costume and the *Flux*

promotional artwork. Alongside that, I was given access to a lot of the original elements from the series style guide. My aim is to make the covers vivid and colourful, with imagery that hopefully harkens back to the crystalline/liquid textures as seen in some of the TV posters.

"The main part of the brief concerned the design of the titular vampires – not too 'Lestat' pretty, but rather monstrous and canine-like. The final vampire you see on the cover is a blend of a couple of familiar **Who** monsters, namely Krillitanes and Weevils, with additional stock imagery to achieve a creepier and even more animalistic look. Aside from that, the main goal was to stick to the defined layout with my own 'Wallbank' embellishments.

"Admittedly, it took me a few tries to get a hang of how the series was going to look, but once the first story was finalised, I felt a lot more comfortable with the visual direction, and I've already got ideas in the works for the next covers. It's

an incredible privilege to be able to work on the audio adventures of one of the most important Doctors in the franchise, and I hope everyone enjoys the episodes when they come out – there are some cool and really 'out-there' ideas in them!"

Looking forward to the rest of

## TO BE ENTRUSTED WITH SUCH A MASSIVELY ANTICIPATED RELEASE IS AN HONOUR. I WAS PINCHING MYSELF!

RAFE WALLBANK

the series, Noga says: "As with my other ranges, I've tried to bring fresh blood (excuse the vampire pun) into the mix. I like to use established Big Finish writers like Tim and Rochana Patel, but also new writers for different voices and perspectives.

"The next episode is written by Rory Thomas-Howes and a later episode is written by Rafaela Marcus. Rory is brand-new to Big Finish, and Rafaela wrote a **Torchwood** episode a while back; both of them are incredible writers. Later we're also bringing in Hannah Kennedy, another phenomenal writer that I'm excited to work with. I get really hyped when they then get picked up for other ranges that have nothing to do with me!" **VORTEX**

### DOCTOR WHO VAMPIRE WEEKEND



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The Fugitive Doctor  
is a wanted woman  
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# YOU SPIN ME ROUND

**THE FUGITIVE** Doctor is still on the run, pursued across time and space by the dogged Cosmogon. Her flight from the Division is taking her into ever more deadly territory. From the skies of World War Two to a planet of junk and a world beset by a vampire queen, she's running out of places to hide. The Doctor and Cosmo are heading for a final confrontation... but can the chase be over?

Jo Martin, recently seen as the Fugitive Doctor in the **Doctor Who** TV episode *The Story & the Engine*,

stars in the role once more on audio, with Alice Krige returning as her relentless pursuer, Cosmogon in **The Fugitive Doctor: Dead or Alive**.

Producer David Richardson says: "Volume two of **The Fugitive Doctor** pushes deeper – the mystery from the Doctor's past gets ever more mysterious and a new character enters the fold, desperate to learn the truth. We are delighted to have Alice more involved in this set as Cosmogon, giving us an opportunity to explore the dynamic between our two leads; what makes them opponents

and what binds them together.

"It's a set of contrasts and change, and by the time the end credits roll on this volume it's clear the future for these characters is wide open."

*Flying Solo* by Tajinder Singh Hayer opens the set.

Pilot Officer Mohinder Singh Johal is an RAF pilot on a sortie during World War Two. Following a close encounter with a flying blue telephone box, his Spitfire vanishes! The Doctor, whose TARDIS is out of control following a blast from a time disruptor, should be keeping a low profile, but with



Above: Jo Martin

*Mohinder lost in time and space, she has to help bring him home.*

Taj says: "It was great to be invited to write for a 'new' Doctor (a bit of blank canvas, potentially). I was contacted by script editor Robert Valentine with an email titled, 'Top Secret Doctor Project'. A header like that and I was bound to be interested!

"The thing that stood out about this series brief was the central element; the Doctor is on the run. I think that the Doctor always has a sense of baggage in the adventures (the mythos, the tangled personal history), but it is often carried lightly (with sudden moments where you realise just how much stuff the Doctor has gone through).

"You could say that Doctor is always running, but here, with *Cosmogon* on her tail, it's even more apparent and urgent. That was the key element that I wanted to go with in *Flying Solo*; one hour of the Doctor trying to get away but also trying to do the right thing.

"The Doctor, in her flight from *Cosmogon*, accidentally sends

Mohinder Johal (an RAF pilot in the Second World War) spiralling through time in his Spitfire. She has to find a way of bringing him back while not disrupting the continuum and being captured herself. The two central characters talk only through radio transmissions but are united by a similar disregard for authority and joy in flying their respective crafts."

Taj adds: "I don't want to give away any spoilers so I'll just say it was great to imagine flying a Spitfire through time and space."

### THE JUNKYARD LOOP by Aaron Douglas is the second adventure.

*The Doctor, pursued as ever by Cosmogon, crash-lands the TARDIS on an off-grid junk planet littered with the remains of time machines from a thousand civilisations. After being saved from the indigenous Time-Frost Parasites by Sodalit, an old companion long-marooned, the Doctor must come up with a plan to save them both. But a sinister Division commander has tracked our heroes, and not even Cosmo can stand between him and his desire to unlock the Doctor's memory and obtain the secrets within.*

Aaron says: "This is my second time writing for Big Finish, and I

**I'll just say it was great to imagine flying a Spitfire through time and space.**

TAJINDER SINGH HAYER



Above: Alexander Vlahos

get to step into a new world; I feel like a kid in a Time Lord candy shop. Jo Martin's Doctor is bold, uncompromising and mysterious, which opens up such rich storytelling potential. Being asked to write again felt like a real vote of confidence and I couldn't wait to dive back into the **Doctor Who** universe.

"The brief was a beautiful balance of action and atmosphere. Something high-stakes and emotional but still mysterious and very Fugitive Doctor in tone. My core idea revolved around memory,



manipulation and the tension between truth and perception – how a Doctor like hers, operating in the shadows, might be vulnerable to a trap built entirely from her past.

“It’s a psychological survival tale disguised as a sci-fi action romp. The Doctor crash-lands

Concluding the set is *Hereafter* by Tim Foley.

*Cosmogon has finally captured the Doctor! But they’re stranded together on a planet thanks to an unusual psychic forcefield grounding her ship. Tracing its source, they find a settlement that’s preparing for a*

vampire story that’d been bubbling away in the back of my brain.

“I wanted to focus on the relationship between the pursuer and the pursued, and to dive into Cosmogon’s backstory. And as this is the end of a six-story run, there had to be a suitable climax. This isn’t the Doctor we know and love so when a Great Vampire rears its head, whose side is she going to take?”

“Observant listeners may have spotted I’m having a vampire-themed year. I love these immortal characters, and I’ve used them in two very different stories that hopefully showcase the breadth of this master race.”

How did the writers find scripting a very different Doctor?

Taj admits: “Initially, I did wonder about how much to incorporate details of the Doctor’s past (details of which were still up for grabs). However, Jo had created such a strong personality for her Doctor that it meant I could just focus on her reacting in the moment.”

And Aaron adds: “Jo’s Doctor is so different and that’s what makes her a joy to write. She’s not burdened by the same assumptions or mythos as the others; she’s raw, tactical, sometimes unknowable and fiercely independent. That said, the challenge was in threading emotional beats without softening her edge. She doesn’t always show vulnerability in the same way as a lot of the later Doctors tend to, so it was about finding those cracks in the armour – especially in scenes with Sodalis – that reveal the weight she carries beneath the surface.” **VORTEX**



Above (l-r): Abbie Andrews, Dominic G. Martin, Jo Martin and Clare Perkins

on a junkyard planet – a sort of graveyard for lost Gallifreyan tech – giving me a very visual, haunting sandbox to play in. She reconnects with Sodalis, a mysterious figure from her past, only to find herself trapped in a time loop constructed from her own trauma. There’s betrayal and parasitic time-creatures (it’s always fun to create a new monster!), and a classic Doctor bluff at the end.”

Aaron adds: “Honestly, writing the scenes where the Doctor confronts echoes of lost Time Lords in the junkyard maze was a huge highlight. And any chance to write a sonic-screwdriver-Gallifreyan tech-powered weapons montage is always a win! As I mentioned, writing a new monster in the Time-Frost Parasites is a personal treat. And getting to hear the brilliant Alexander Vlahos so wonderfully bring the big bad of the episode, the Division Commander, to life.”

## Jo’s Doctor is so different and that’s what makes her a joy to write.

AARON DOUGLAS

*festival in honour of their ‘queen’ in the mountain. When Cosmo is captured, the Doctor must decide whether to help her captor... especially now she’s discovered, thanks to local woman Herma, that the queen and her minions are vampires!*

Tim says: “This episode almost didn’t happen! We submitted a treatment for a story with the Celestial Toymaker back in 2022 but the BBC got back with a, ‘Mmm, maybe don’t do that!’ So with very little time left, Rob asked me to come up with something else and I jumped on the chance to tell a gothic

### THE FUGITIVE DOCTOR DEAD OR ALIVE



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## DALEK UNIVERSE THE DALEK PROTOCOL



**WHEN DAVID** Tennant returned as the Tenth Doctor in **Dalek Universe** teaming up with Anya Kingdom and Mark Seven of the Space Security Service, it wasn't the Doctor's first encounter with the pair.

A prologue to the series – *The Dalek Protocol* – features Tom Baker as the Fourth Doctor with Leela (Louise Jameson) and K-9 (John Leeson).

Producer David Richardson explains: “**Dalek Universe** begins with *The Dalek Protocol* in which the Fourth Doctor and Leela encounter Mark Seven and the Space Security Service. Or actually it starts with **The Diary of River Song Volume 8** in which River Song first meets Anya and Mark. Actually, no, it begins with **The Fourth Doctor Adventures – Series 8 – The Syndicate Master Plan**, which first introduces Anya.”

Writer Nicholas Briggs says: “Initially, the idea for *The Dalek Protocol* was just one of those lovely suggestions from David. He asked

for a proper sequel to the TV episode *Death to the Daleks* with the Doctor returning to Exxilon. And then he said, ‘Oh, and what about putting Mark Seven in it?’ I was very excited. Then he said, ‘Oooh, and Anya Kingdom too.’ I was even more excited, but then rather concerned about breaking the integrity of the Doctor’s timeline. But we soon thought of a way out of that!

“*The Dalek Protocol* essentially sets up the relationship between Anya and Mark. And they work really well together. There’s a nice vibe.

“It’s a story that’s very much in two parts, even though it’s a four-parter! Some of the story is on a spaceship, heading into danger. The rest is on Exxilon with an old friend of the Doctor’s and a new enemy for him too. And there are plenty of Daleks as well.”

Jane Slavin was delighted to return as Anya, even though the Doctor was at a point in his timeline before he had met her.

She tells Vortex: “I was determined that Anya was going to appear again.

The **Doctor Who** world is such that even if you are killed and your head is chopped off, they will find a way to bring you back! I was previously really upset at the end of *Anne Kelso* as I loved that character, but Anya turned out to be just as interesting, especially in the Dalek stories with David. They are just wonderful adventures, Anya has many areas to explore.

“I’ve worked with Joe Sims who plays Mark loads – he’s the best human being you could ever meet. He’s funny and he’s political, he’s kind and he’s a very good actor. It’s always a joy working with him.”

Joe says: “Jane and I got on so well from the first moment we met, so recording the first stories, then **Dalek Universe** and now **Space Security Service** with her has been one of the real joys of my life in recent years. She’s a great mate, and it was good to be recording in studio again for **Space Security Service** after having had to record from home with **Dalek Universe**.”

Jane adds: “I’m always excited when there’s any kind of Dalek in an adventure. They are still special, aren’t they? Even someone who wasn’t brought up on **Doctor Who** would find them a thrill, hearing their particular voice over the headphones...” **VORTEX**

### DALEK UNIVERSE THE DALEK PROTOCOL



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ANOTHER  
INCARNATION OF  
THE MASTER IS  
EXPLORING DARK  
GALLIFREY...

# SCHOOL MASTER

**EARLIER THIS** year, the **Dark Gallifrey** range returned to Big Finish with the Missy incarnation of the Master front and centre. But she's not the only Master to feature as Eric

Roberts's incarnation, seen in the 1996 TV movie with Paul McGann, takes the stage in a trinity of scripts from Lizzie Hopley, starting with **Dark Gallifrey: Master! Part One**.

Several years ago the Master, disguised as a tutor, took a group of Time Lord Academy students with promising futures on a field trip that

went disastrously wrong. Now, in the present, they all turn up dead. Gamara is the last survivor – but to save herself she will need to reveal the truth about the monstrous experiment the Master made them conduct all those years ago.

Producer Noga Flaishon says: "The script is heavy, we put the 'dark' in **Dark Gallifrey** on this one. Lizzie didn't pull any punches with the script. It's about a group of Time Lords, essentially teenagers, who are kidnapped by the Master and stranded on a strange and unfamiliar planet – almost like Gallifrey, but not quite.

"He toys with them and slowly breaks their characters – not just their minds but their boundaries, their moral backbone and everything they are – all as part of his nefarious plan. Eric has been playing this character for quite a while now and he needs minimal direction when playing iconic villains."

Vortex asks Lizzie what her reaction was on being asked to write for this Master. She says: "Writing for Eric? I melted into a heap of goo and lay there for a long while! I fancied him terribly in **Doctor Who: The**





Above (l-r): Jason Haigh-Ellery and Eric Roberts

*Movie.* I was kinda glad he recorded this in Los Angeles or I'd have been a right idiot around him!

*"Master!"* is an investigation into the abduction of six missing student Time Lords, kidnapped by the Master and initiated into a twisted game of torture and survival. It's not nice. I was heavily influenced by the TV series *Yellowjackets* and an unbelievably shocking four-page story called *Graveyard Shift* by the horror genius, Richard Matheson. Read it and never sleep again.

*"Part One"* concentrates on a surviving student, Gamara, now a high-ranking Time Lady. The others are being picked off by an unknown enemy and she learns she's next. We flashback to the abduction on a mysterious unknown planet and meet the Master who appears helpful – at first.

*"In Part Two,* the Master begins to destroy the bonds between his victims. We also meet the

## HE TOYS WITH THEM AND SLOWLY BREAKS THEIR CHARACTERS... ALL AS PART OF HIS NEFARIOUS PLAN.

**LIZZIE HOPELY**

Eighth Doctor who seems to be trying to kill everyone off, and we discover that Gamara is not the innocent victim she claims to be.

"In the concluding part we discover the truth behind the Master's plan and the terrible entity behind the deaths. We also have a magnificent showdown between him and the Eighth Doctor – let's face it, we were waiting for this!"

Script editor John Dorney has previously described each **Dark Gallifrey** release as being like a

concept album for writers.

Lizzie says: "John is a never-ending well of genius ideas. He doesn't know the word 'can't'! I adored this idea from the start – a concept album makes the best sense – it's audio! Aren't we writers lucky to have Big Finish, where else would you get these amazing opportunities?"

And Lizzie reveals her starting point for this release was: "Deciding on the 12 x 15 min structure. It basically became a 12-step recovery programme – gone wrong."

### **PRODUCER NOGA** tells

*Vortex:* "This **Dark Gallifrey** was the most challenging recording I've ever had because Eric was recorded in LA directed by executive producer Jason

Haigh-Ellery, and the rest of the cast recorded here in the UK with Steven Kavuma directing.

"Steven was my first choice of director for the local recordings. Because this script is so dark, I knew I needed good vibes behind the scenes so we could have bad vibes in the recording! Steven works in theatre, and does a lot of ensemble work and teaching, so I knew I could trust him to facilitate a great environment in the green room."

Steven says: "I've had the thrill of working on several Big Finish adventures and when the offer to direct **Dark Gallifrey** landed, I was hooked instantly. The sheer scale of the production, its ambition, its boldness – it was electric. This wasn't just another project; it was a chance to dive into something truly epic, and I couldn't wait to be part of it.

"Working on **Doctor Who** is always a thrill, every single time. As a fan myself I know just how much this world means to us, and that makes it even more special. There's a real magic to being part of something that holds such a deep place in people's hearts, including mine."

The cast features the writer as the Mind Shield, Claire Huckle (Gamara), Chris Odulele (Torliss), Nathan Griffiths (Borin), Nadia Violet Johnson (Tabreen), Millie Hikasa (Soolinda) and Francesca Gilbert (Olzel).

Steven says: "Casting this was a no-brainer. For me, it always starts with finding genuinely good people – talented, quick on their feet,



Above: Nadia Violet Johnson

adaptable and above all full of heart and laughs. I want a cast that brings great energy into the studio and this team absolutely delivered. They were everything I hoped for and more.

"It's all coming together so well! I'm seriously excited for listeners



Above: Chris Odulele

## THERE ARE A LOT OF PHYSICAL PERFORMANCES IN THIS SCRIPT — PEOPLE FIGHTING, PEOPLE GETTING HURT AND PEOPLE GOING THROUGH GENUINE HELL...

**NOGA FLAISHON**

to hear what we've got in store, this one's going to be an absolute treat."

Noga continues: "We have a really exciting team of actors on this one. Because the characters are very young I was keen to get fresh voices – which is part of why I brought in Steven to direct. He works a lot with young actors, with people at drama school and on foundation courses.

"I gave him free rein to bring in the actors he thought were best for the job – and he did. They were fantastic. Recording with the team in studio was exhausting, but I'm very happy with what we created. I think people are really going to like it.

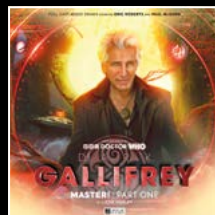
"There are a lot of physical performances in this script – people fighting, people getting hurt and

people going through genuine hell – so the actors had to come in with some strong offers. It's been a lot of fun to see Steven direct a physical performance out of an actor who may never have had to give a physical performance from the waist up before! They can move their hands about, but they can't move their feet, and it was fun to see those actors just jump straight in. There was no hesitation or playing it halfway. They gave us 100 per cent on every take, which I think is why we were all so shattered by the end of it.

"One of the stand out performances for me is Chris Odulele. He is just terrifying, with a smooth voice, lots of range – what a talented man he is. I'm not going to spoil it, but later on in the script when he has to go into very dark places, he's incredible. Chris also had to do some heavy physical voice acting and nailed it. I have a few pictures of him working from the waist up – he's like one of those inflatable figures you see at car washes!"

Lizzie concludes: "As well as writing this, I play the Mind Shield who comes to interrogate Gamara. Being present in the recording studio for this one was fantastic. What an excellent cast. Aside from the obvious supergods, Paul and Eric, our young cast made a fantastic team. They put their hearts and souls into this story and took the stakes massively seriously whilst creating believable relationships. It's horrific and heartbreaking. Oh, and fun!" **VORTEX**

### DARK GALLIFREY MASTER! PART ONE



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# VORTEX MAIL



## GENESIS OF GREATNESS

I have just finished *Genesis of the Cybermen* and I felt compelled to let you know that was the best Big Finish production I have had the pleasure of listening to. The dialogue was superb and David K. Barnes did a marvellous job capturing the dynamics of the Season 19 TARDIS team. Peter Davison, Janet Fielding, Sarah Sutton and Matthew Waterhouse were on top form and the supporting cast were wonderful. Keep up the wonderful work!

**Michelle L. Hamilton**

**Nick:** *It's a production we've wanted to do for a long time, Michelle. And yes, David K. Barnes always delivers a wonderful script. Congratulations to director David O'Mahony and the team!*

## VICTORIAN VALUE

I love all of the **Torchwood** ranges that Big Finish has produced, especially **Torchwood: Soho**, and I was wondering, because of the

success of **Jago & Litefoot** and **The Paternoster Gang** series, if there have been any discussions about a potential **Torchwood** spinoff set in Victorian London? In a recent **Torchwood Monthly Range** release we explored some of **Torchwood One** during this time period and I think it would be a shame to not explore this era further.

**Robert White**

**Nick:** *It's a lovely idea, Robert, but no plans for this at the moment.*

## LET IT RAINE

Much positive feedback is given regarding the writing, acting and technical production on your **Doctor Who** releases, and quite rightly so, but I think a kudos is overdue for the wonderful covers we get release after release. The current retro logo suits these very well. When you compare the recent cover art with that from the early entries in **The Monthly**

**Adventures** range, it just goes to show how both talent and technology have progressed since those heady days. As a second point, is there any chance of extending the adventures of the Seventh and Raine beyond the few lost stories from years back? I would love to see an **Andrew Cartmel Presents** range of stories with this duo.

**David Canfield**

**Nick:** *No plans for more Raine adventures, David. Glad you like the covers. I agree that they just get better and better, which I believe is the right direction of travel.*

## LOVE FOR THE THEMES

I would like to echo the expressed sentiments of Colin Francis in your recent *Vortex* letters page; I think that **Doomwatch** would be a great addition to the Big Finish family. Now, I want to talk about theme tunes. You have some simply amazing themes for your ranges. I particularly love the themes for **Jago & Litefoot**, **The Omega Factor** and **Sarah Jane Smith** series two. I'm wondering if you could bring out on vinyl a collection of the Big Finish themes? Those that I've mentioned and others. I'm imagining a cool cover logo and illustration reminiscent of those 1970s Geoff Love & His Orchestra budget albums of TV themes and Sci-Fi themes, etc. Remember them?

**Dennis Cattell**

**Nick:** *Oooh, I'd love us to have that Geoff Love & His Orchestra style artwork on the cover of a vinyl, Dennis. I have a great love for **Doomwatch**, but, perhaps controversially, I feel there's nothing really unique about its format. It's also not a particularly well remembered show, so I'm not sure there'd be a groundswell of support for it. Also, as I often mention in connection with the series, the sexism is absolutely gobsmacking. My jaw kind of hits the floor every time I watch an episode.*

**VORTEX**



Fourth Doctor companions  
reunited in a new series...



# SARAH JANE & COMPANY

**A FEW YEARS** after leaving the TARDIS, Sarah Jane Smith and Harry Sullivan team up again on new investigations. Sadie Miller and Christopher Naylor feature in the roles of the Fourth Doctor's companions – as originally played on television by Elisabeth Sladen (Sadie's mother) and Ian Marter – in **Smith and Sullivan: Reunited**, a brand new full-cast audio adventure.

They are joined by K9 (John Leeson) and Sarah's Aunt Lavinia (Annette Badland, taking over the role first portrayed by Mary Wimbush in **K9 and Company**) in the chaos

of 1980s London, where they're going to find danger and darkness lurking beneath the metropolitan veneer of wealth and technology.

Mark Wright says: "I took over as producer on this series from David Richardson who had already done a lot of development work with script editor Peter Anghelides. As possibly **K9 and Company's** biggest fan (I rewatch it every year at Christmas), I couldn't resist this one. The scripts from Tim Foley, Roland Moore and Simon Guerrier were already in a very advanced stage so it was a case of getting everybody together and booking the studio."

Talking of our leads, Mark describes their dynamic as: "Joyous, funny, playful. Emotional. Something very special happened on the first day when we had Sadie, Chris, John and Annette together for the first time. Chris and Sadie already have such a good bond after playing Sarah and Harry over the last few years, and that just extended naturally with the addition of John as K9 and Annette as Aunt Lavinia. Sometimes in studio you can have *too* much fun, and that can affect performances, but the dynamic between our leads behind the scenes really helped bring the performances to an extra level."



Above (l-r): Sadie Miller and Christopher Naylor

"Working with them all was such a highlight. I've known Annette for a few years, one of the most delightful souls to have in studio. Annette had worked with Mary Wimbush (the original Aunt Lavinia) in the past, so there was that extra dimension."

The series begins with *The Caller* by Tim Foley. Tim says: "I love writing for Sadie and the idea of a Sarah after her TV adventures appealed greatly. And I'm thrilled to have written some acerbic lines for one of the best Whoniverse characters ever – Aunt Lavinia. Let's hear more of her please! This series has been in development for a long time and its plans have changed a lot since I first came on board – I'm excited to see where it goes next."

Mark adds: "In *The Caller* we also have Graham Seed as a guest star. Mary played Graham's mother in *The Archers*, so it was quite emotional to sit with both Annette and Graham and watch Mary's scenes in *K9 and Company*."

*Union of the Snake* by Roland Moore is the next adventure. Roland says:

**I knew I wanted the snake in it. Is it the Mara? I'm not going to spoil that one...**

ROLAND MOORE

"Peter asked if I'd like to write for a new Big Finish series and when I said yes, he sent me the proposal which was all very well thought out and exciting. In terms of my specific brief, I had free rein, but it had to be 'the sort of story that TV episode *Robot* would have been if the Doctor wasn't around.'"

When *Doctor Who* fans see the word 'snake' attached to anything, they think of the Mara. Roland agrees: "*Union of the Snake* is a very 1980s reference (for those that don't know, it's the title of a song by Duran Duran) and it seemed the natural title for the story, once I knew I wanted the snake in it. Is it the Mara? I'm not going to spoil that one..."

"The adventure concerns a man who has made a vast fortune very quickly. Sarah is suspicious as it seems to involve the theft of alien tech. It's full of action, but at its heart it has a tragedy that motivates the story. The scope is pretty epic."

*Blood Type* by Simon Guerrier concludes the set. Simon tells *Vortex*: "I'm a big fan of Sarah, Harry and K9, what fun to put them all together. I'm ancient enough to have watched *K9 and Company* when it was broadcast. I remember as I wrote my storyline I wasn't sure how much to make it *K9 and Company*, how much *Sarah Jane Adventures* or whether it should be something else. That got settled later down the line and we adjusted my story to fit."

"My starting point was to do an adventure about Sarah Jane as a working journalist. My own freelance life is pretty wide-ranging – I'm a journalist and parliamentary reporter as well as writing sci-fi drama for Big Finish. So I was interested in what is actually involved in Sarah's day job and how does she balance it with her unpaid work poking into odd stuff involving aliens. She can't let on to the public that aliens exist, so she must have to frame what she writes around cover stories while also trying to give them enough spark and human interest to ensure she keeps getting work."

"But what if she gets found out? Or, worse, one of her innocuous stories leads to an alien being exposed?" **VORTEX**

## SMITH AND SULLIVAN REUNITED



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THE ACCLAIMED BIG FINISH  
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WITH A NEW ADVENTURE  
FOR THE THIRD DOCTOR...



# STRANGE MATTER

**DOCTOR WHO** fans who read the original novels in the 1990s will need no introduction to Kate Orman's work. She wrote some of the most popular and beloved **New Adventures**, before helping shape and define the Eighth Doctor at BBC Books with husband Jonathan Blum.

Now, Kate's written her second Big Finish audio novel, and this time she's travelling back to the era of Jon Pertwee's Doctor in *The Mirror Matter*.

Producer David Richardson says: "As I speak, I'm halfway through listening to the edits of this one and I feel like I'm in 1970. Kate's

work is detailed and pitch perfect, so well researched and characterful that it feels like essential Season Seven **Doctor Who**. The blend of an action thriller and real science makes for compelling listening, and the seven-part structure really ensures this is a fully authentic package. *The Mirror Matter* is definitely one of the highlights of a range that I love producing."

And Kate tells *Vortex*: "It's really exciting to be writing **Doctor Who** again. There was a gap of about 20 years between my last novel and my first audio novel, which is amazing to think about. But you just sort of

slide right back into it. **Doctor Who** is still the familiar thing that it always was. And the joy of being able to write **Doctor Who** hasn't changed in the slightest, as I quickly discovered.

"I had an absolute blast writing my first audio novel *The Dead Star* in 2023, and I really had fun writing *The Mirror Matter* – I'm a big fan of Season Seven. I love the emphasis on the science of the time. There are scientific factors in every story – we're not in space and it's a little bit more fantastical – but we're talking about nuclear power, for example, and issues of the time. I was able to put a lot of science, or science as





Above: Jon Culshaw

best I understand it, into *The Mirror Matter*. I'm sure there'll be scientists who listen to the audio novel and think, 'What on Earth is she talking about?' But I had a lot fun researching it and trying to get the science right!

"I wanted everything to be as accurate as possible because Liz Shaw is in it, and that gives you a terrific excuse to have loads of scientists running around doing various things using a lot of scientific language and just generally trying to place it as a science fiction story. I think that's very Season Seven."

Kate explains what was in her original brief: "I was asked to write for Jon Pertwee's Doctor and could I make it as much like a Season Seven story as possible. I came up with this crazy idea about setting it on a remote island in the Atlantic, but was asked if I could set it in England because that's the familiar territory of all of those stories; that's where it really belongs. Fair enough!

"Liz is perhaps the first truly grown-up companion in a long time. Even though the companions have been adults at times before that point, they're quite young and they're almost childlike figures. Liz is very firmly a grown up, and she

## I GOT QUITE ADDICTED TO WATCHING PEOPLE PLAYING GAMES WHERE THEY ARE CHASED AROUND BY AN NPC (NON-PLAYABLE CHARACTER) CALLED THE NEXTBOT.

KATE ORMAN

and the Doctor have a relationship that's less of a parent/child or an uncle/niece kind of relationship. They respect each other a lot. They get on extremely well and the Doctor can explain things to her without having to massively simplify them. She can do the same to him and so they make a very natural pair.

"I think you can tell that the characters are having a terrific time. I mean, they're up against it in terms of danger of death and destruction, but for Liz there's all of this incredible science which she would have been able to do back at Cambridge. So yes, that makes it a pleasure."

Of the story, Kate explains: "It's about a special, unusual form of matter that comes from outer space and causes terrible trouble for UNIT. It's an enormous challenge for the Doctor and Liz – it's unlike anything they've ever dealt with before. The Doctor knows very little about it, though he knows enough to be getting along with so they're not completely at a loss; Liz has to bring in an old scientific friend of hers to assist them.

"The story was partly inspired by my sitting around in front of YouTube far too much and watching videos. I'm not much of a video gamer myself – I haven't played a lot of them – but I got quite addicted to watching people playing games where they are chased around by an NPC (non-playable character) called the Nextbot. You might be running around in a maze, which could be in a building or a town, and all the Nextbot does is chase you and make a terrifying sound. You have to run away and if it catches you that's the end of the game.

"There's something incredible creepy about it. I watched heaps of those videos and then thought, 'I've got to get that into a *Doctor Who* story somewhere.' It's perfect for *Doctor Who*. These are the ultimate monster. All they do is be frightening and chase you, so there's a part of this story that's inspired by that. And when people listen to it, I'm sure they'll think, 'Aha, this must have been inspired by the Nextbot!'"

VORTEX

### DOCTOR WHO – THE AUDIO NOVELS THE MIRROR MATTER



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Torchwood's errant member is in for the shock of her life as she takes a...

# PREGNANT PAUSE

**POOR OLD** Suzie Costello. She never had an easy time of it at Torchwood. Although she loved her job, she never truly bonded with her colleagues in Cardiff.

She had a difficult relationship with her father and her work always came first, especially with her interest in the resurrection gauntlet.

And now Suzie faces her biggest – and most unexpected – challenge to date.

*Looking for a mysterious energy signal, Suzie bumps into Hywel who is having doubts about getting married tomorrow.*

*The next morning, they wake up with a baby and a whole lot of problems.*

*Child Free* is written by Holly Robinson and George Fletcher. Indira Varma plays Suzie, Hywel is played by Arthur Hughes – best known as Ryan McDaniel in the Netflix series *The Innocents* and as Matthew Shardlake in *Shardlake*

– with Rhys Jennings as Chester and Bharti Patel as Emily.

Producer James Goss says: “Holly and George have come up with a fab script. On one level it works as pure comedy – Suzie’s the least suitable member of Torchwood to have to look after a baby. But, like the best **Torchwood**, it’s also a sad, serious story about two people not ready for responsibility but having it thrust upon them and trying their best.

“It helps that Indira and Arthur can play a phenomenally awkward couple; you do end up rooting for them. What I love about what we’ve done for Suzie is we’ve given her lots of off-ramps... she didn’t have to be a serial killer, she just decides to be one!”

What inspired the writers to land Suzie with a magical baby?

Holly answers: “Well, it’s probably something to do with getting into our 30s and feeling like overnight there are babies everywhere – so

they are definitely on our minds.”

George adds: “And there’s something about the world of Torchwood which is so sleek and urban, to see what it’s like when you land all of the mess and sprawl of a new baby into that.

“Yes,” Holly agrees, “and the very literal mess as well. It was really exciting to write for a character like Suzie. Indira is brilliant, and Suzie has this real advantage for writers where there’s a clarity to her character – cold, calculating and pragmatic. But there’s also so much room to explore and imagine around her, which is great fun.”

Is this a play about becoming an adult and letting go of childhood?

George nods: “Yes. We wanted to explore the strange moment where suddenly, all of your mates are making this massive life choice and sometimes with a lot of ease, and you start to look at them and go, ‘Wow! You really think that you’re able to do this? Why?’”

Holly adds: “The received wisdom about parenthood is that you only become ready to be a parent by becoming a parent. There’s no one book fits all, of course, just this decision to walk blindly into a new stage of life. But in this episode, we got to kind of ask, ‘Oh, what would it be like if you got the maddest taster class in parenthood?’ Would it make you more scared or more ready, or both?”

George: “And what happens if it’s also an alien baby?!” **VORTEX**

**TORCHWOOD  
CHILD FREE**



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THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

# VORTEX

ISSUE 196  
JUNE 2025  
**BIG FOR THE LOVE**  
FINISH OF STORIES

ALL I KNOW IS THAT TO ME...

# YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE LOTS OF FUN

**THE FUGITIVE DOCTOR IS  
WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE...**

**VAMPIRE WEEKEND**

**THE THIRTEENTH DOCTOR  
ARRIVES AT BIG FINISH...**

