

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX



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FINISH OF STORIES

SNARE

**EXCITING NEW ADVENTURES
FOR THE DOCTOR AND ROSE...**

A SENSE OF HISTORY

River Song has some historical intrigue to solve in her latest box set, as she encounters King Henry VIII in Tudor England...





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Bernice SUMMERFIELD

THE DALEK ETERNITY

IF YOU enjoyed the exploits of Professor Bernice Summerfield at the Eternity Club last year, then get ready for her latest run of adventures being launched this September – **Doctor Who: The New Adventures of Bernice Summerfield – The Dalek Eternity**.

Benny (Lisa Bowerman) has settled into her home at the Eternity Club, an exclusive asteroid for the galaxy's explorers, but there's trouble ahead. In this brand-new series of full-cast audio drama adventures, the Daleks invade the Eternity Club before leading Benny on a quest across the cosmos.

A new Dalek masterplan threatens the galaxy. A deadly alliance is building. Can Bernice Summerfield save us?

Producer James Goss says: "I thought it was high time we did another epic adventure for Benny. The Daleks have devised a terrible new plan and of course Benny's trying to stop them."

"In a tribute to the scale of Big Finish's **Dalek Empire** series as well as the early Dalek stories of the classic **Doctor Who** television series, Benny goes to slave mines, ruined worlds, endless battlefields, crystal seas and underground arsenals. She has a lot of past trauma to confront – and meanwhile the Dalek alliance is getting bigger." **VORTEX**

The Dalek Eternity comprises eight episodes told across four releases:

September:

The Lonely Bomb by James Goss
Satrap by Felicia Barker

October:

The Winner's Tale by Alex Hewitt
Oversoul by Melissa F Olson

November:

Quisling by Sophia McDougall
We Don't Talk About Mavic Chen by Tim Foley

December:

Vizier by Patrick O'Connor
Emperor by Ash Darby.

THE NEW ADVENTURES OF BERNICE SUMMERFIELD THE DALEK ETERNITY 1

- RELEASED: SEPTEMBER 2025
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

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EDITORIAL

BACK IN 2005, who would have believed just how big **Doctor Who** was going to become? For many years, our beloved television show seemed a relic of the past with a general public perception of wobbly sets, daft aliens and over-the-top acting (all untrue, of course!).

And then along came Russell T Davies's 21st century reinvention and everyone was a **Doctor Who** fan and always had been, apparently, but just didn't want to admit it! The stars of this new-look show were Christopher Eccleston as the Ninth Doctor with Billie Piper as Rose, and they absolutely stole the hearts of everyone who watched. Their exceptional performances truly did make this new series 'the trip of a lifetime'.

And now, 20 years after we last saw them together on screen, the Doctor and Rose are back with Big Finish for a run of 12 exciting audio adventures taking them into brand-new territories of terror. Appropriately, it all kicks off where it started on TV in the Tyler Powell Estate in London, with the Tyler family at the heart of everything.

Prepare yourself for **The Ninth Doctor Adventures: Snare**, where there's something lurking in Kevin's dad's old flat... **VORTEX**

Kenny

Christopher Eccleston and Billie Piper are reunited on audio - exciting new adventures for the Doctor and Rose...



TRIPS OF A LIFETIME

EVER SINCE Christopher Eccleston agreed to reprise his role as the Ninth Doctor with Big Finish, listeners have hoped that he would have some adventures with Billie Piper as Rose Tyler. Billie – who recently made a shock return to **Doctor Who** at the end of television episode *The Reality War* – is back playing Rose, and where better for their new journeys to begin than the Powell Estate. But, of course, it wouldn't be the Powell Estate without its unofficial queen, as Camille Coduri returns to the part of the legendary Jackie Tyler.

The voyages begin with *Snare* by Tim Foley. *Kevin left the Powell Estate a long time ago. He wasn't going to be trapped there. But all these years later, he's back and clearing out his dad's old flat. At least his neighbours, the Tylers, are still here.*

But Rose has a strange new man in her life. And this Doctor's going to show Kevin a world he never knew existed. Unfortunately, something ancient is stirring on the Estate. Perhaps Kevin will be trapped here after all...

Matt Fitton, overseeing the range, says: "When I was asked to become producer for this set I was a bit surprised but delighted. When the

idea initially came about, David Richardson and I were both going to be producers as David had kindly said I could co-produce on some ranges with him to learn the ropes.

"So we started the process of formulating what the series would be and how it would fit into the 2005 Ninth Doctor TV series, then chose our writers and asked for pitches. Once we'd got all the storylines in and they'd been approved by the BBC, the writers started on the scripts. David then handed over the full production reins to me for the rest of the process. But he stayed on hand for if I needed to ask questions on

I THINK HE WAS ALWAYS GOING TO COME BACK WITH BILLIE.

MATT FITTON

Above (l-r): Christopher Eccleston and Billie Piper

anything I wasn't familiar with.

"Creating these audios is a very collaborative, friendly, almost family environment, which feels quite fitting for the Ninth Doctor and Rose. We're slotting this run into the middle of the TV series and kicking things off with the Doctor and Rose firmly in the Powell Estate. We've got Jackie Tyler present as well. The first adventure starts right after TV episode *Father's Day*. Rose wants some time out just to process what she's seen and been through, although she can't actually tell her mum about it as yet because that doesn't happen until the end of the series.

"That gives us a chance to have a bit of an emotional journey within our stories – for the Doctor as well, for him to be willing to stop, take a breath and stay in one place for a while because Rose is worth it. That was a great dynamic to play with – and having him stuck with Jackie too is always fun."



Above (l-r): Billie Piper and Christopher Eccleston

MATT IS delighted to be working on the return of the 21st century's first Doctor and companion pairing. He reveals: "Chris is really involved with the character of his Doctor; I think he was always going to come back with Billie. She's recorded her own Rose series with us, *The Dimension*

Cannon, and Rose has been with the Tenth Doctor as well, so once Chris came on board, we always hoped that we'd be able to bring them together. Seeing interviews with both of them at conventions, you can tell they've really enjoyed finding each other again, and relished the idea of working together.

"It made perfect sense to ask Tim to write this first script. What we're trying to do is echo the unique feeling Russell T Davies created in his first series. It's very human, very emotional and very grounded. And also, it's brilliant, coming up with a sci-fi slant with a hint of strangeness and oddness to throw into the world. We have some very real and sympathetic characters which Tim has put into a fantastical situation. I thought he was definitely the person to go to, to kick things off."

Tim says: "I've written for both Chris and Billie separately, but there's an undeniable thrill about putting them together. They're Rose and the Doctor, they're rhubarb and custard, they're one of my favourite periods of telly **Doctor Who** and here they are together again!

THIS WAS SOMETHING THAT LOTS OF FANS HAD HOPED FOR...

HELEN GOLDWYN

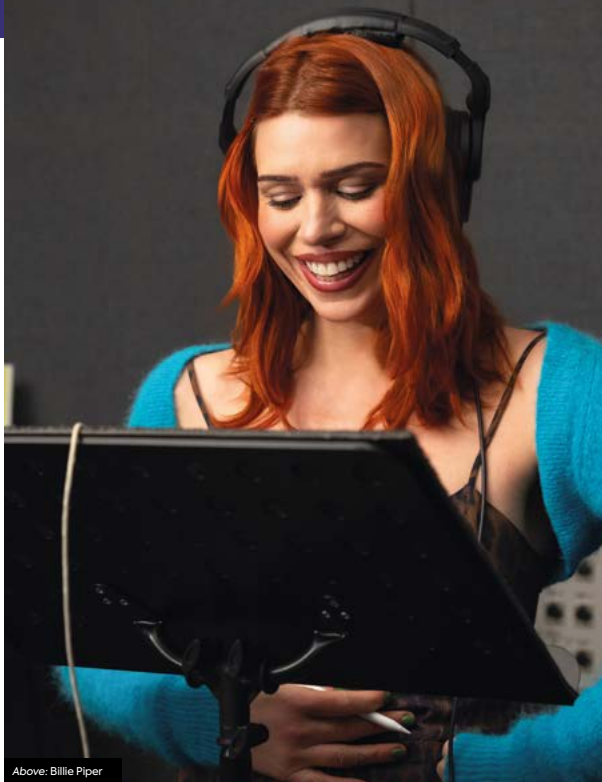
"I pitched a few stories for the new series and Matt zoned in on a story set on the Powell Estate. He had an arc bubbling away which involves this location and I was very pleased when he said he'd like me to write the first one.

"We're picking up after *Father's Day*, with Rose having asked the Doctor to spend a bit of time on Earth with her. Meanwhile, an old friend is back on the scene, and he's found something odd in his dad's old flat..."

Tim was delighted to add Rose's mum into the mix. He tells *Vortex*: "I love Jackie. It was important for me she get a good role in this, considering the familial themes of the story. Also I wanted to put her in a jungle in her pyjamas. Sorry Jackie!"

Tim adds: "I suggested an actor I knew – Alex Austin – from my theatre stuff and he got the role of Kevin. He'll break your heart, he's fabulous."

Matt continues: "Chris, Billie and Camille all said this felt like part of their TV series. They could detect the DNA of Russell's vision was there, which I'm really pleased



Above: Billie Piper



Above: Camille Coduri

about. That's what we wanted to do: to create something that felt connected but also be able to do something a bit different as well.

"We've got quite a small cast for *Snare* with just a couple of guest actors. We have Alex, who has an authentic London voice, and it turned out he'd worked with Billie on *I Hate Suzie* for an episode. He was great and fitted in really well. We also have

Hannah Brown, who was brought in by director Helen Goldwyn to voice Marlene. Her character is a little bit of an outsider in the same way you've got Rose and the Doctor as the outsiders. There's a kind of a parallel going on with Kevin and Marlene as well. It's a really character-centric story."

HELEN WAS delighted to be asked to helm this series, having established great working relationships with both Chris and Billie over the years. She tells *Vortex*: "I was thrilled for the listeners first and foremost as I knew this was something that lots of fans had hoped for, and it was wonderful to see the reaction when it was announced. For me, it's another super-fun project with added peril because we had to be so cautious about the news not leaking before the press announcement. Every actor that came in to record had to be reminded that 'no word of this must cross your lips!' When the announcement finally came out the whole production team breathed a huge sigh of relief that



Above: Christopher Eccleston

we'd managed to get there without anyone knowing in advance.

"I've had a great run directing **The Ninth Doctor Adventures**, as well as **Rose Tyler: The Dimension Cannon**. I'm a freelance director so I certainly don't take any of these projects for granted when they come along. I was really excited to work with Chris and Billie as a team, and to hear the chemistry of Rose and the Doctor again. It's always a privilege to be the first to experience something like that and hearing them together certainly didn't disappoint!"

Looking at *Snare*, Helen says: "It was interesting approaching the first episode for this set. Writer Tim and producer Matt had already set out to revive the tone and dynamic of the original Doctor and Rose series, but the rest of us then had a responsibility to continue that vibe into the performances and direction.

"There's a very particular energy between Rose and the Doctor which

is familial; kind of like you'd be with a sibling in some ways, in that the affection is often displayed through teasing or dead-pan humour.

"And of course there's the shared sense of adventure and fun they both have. Having Camille playing Jackie in the mix as well is just the icing on the cake. Her performances never fail to delight and surprise me. She's such an original, and her warmth and humour are a part of her as a person as well as her work."

LOOKING AFTER the sound design is Iain Meadows. Iain says: "I had a great time working on the first round of Ninth Doctor stories, so when the invite came for this new run I was thrilled – and knowing that these also have Rose is an extra treat. Some of my happiest times are when I'm sat in my studio putting together the dialogue and then building the effects around it so everything takes shape. It really

doesn't get better, and I feel very lucky to be doing these stories.

"*Snare* is a great opener – having the opportunity to try and make things seem real and every day. I know that might sound like an odd thing to say but present day, or at least things set around 2005-ish, are sometimes more of a challenge because the tech that we all took for granted, and some of the sounds that go with it, are not so commonplace anymore.

"To find those sounds or recreate them can present a moment where you need to be extra creative or do a deeper search to find what you're after. Everyone knows how certain ringtones sound or sounded, whereas a communicator from the future gives you more scope to invent – if that makes sense.

"My highlight on *Snare* (and all the episodes actually), is just getting to hear Chris, Camille and Billie interacting once again. It took me right back and there's a real thrill to be designing the world that this cast, who are absolutely at the top of their game, are working in. When you have stories so well written, a cast this good and wonderfully directed, then the work is a joy."

Matt concludes: "The job of producing has been made so much easier by virtue of working with Helen as director. She has a fantastic rapport with Chris and Billie. They're comfortable with her, so everything feels under control and rattles along very well. Everyone has a great day thanks to Helen." **VORTEX**

THE NINTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES SNARE



■ RELEASED: AUGUST 2025
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

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River Song has some historical intrigue to solve in her latest box set, as she encounters the King in Tudor England...

A SENSE OF HISTORY

BETWEEN 1536 and 1540, on the orders of King Henry VIII, every Catholic monastery, priory, convent and friary in England, Wales and Ireland was forcibly closed. This was known as the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Alex Kingston reprises her role as the Doctor's erstwhile other half as River Song steps back into Earth's history to the court of Henry VIII in **The Death and Life of River Song: The**

Dissolution of Time.

River Song has been imprisoned in the Stormcage, facing multiple life sentences for the Doctor's assassination... or, at least, she was. Now, time is collapsing, and River is unexpectedly marooned in Tudor England, 1536 – with a mysterious alien companion, Dust.

Someone, or something, has broken history: the distortions centring on the court of King Henry VIII. River must

find the culprit, and fix the damage, before it's too late. But some players, for whom established history does not end happily, may have other ideas...

Producer David Richardson is overseeing this latest set, written by Rochana Patel. David says: "I've been following Rochana's work for Big Finish and am very much a fan of her writing. She delivers great characters and strong dialogue, so of course she's always very busy, but



Above: Alex Kingston

we were lucky to be able to secure her for this **River Song** box set. It's a big ask – four hours of drama, which is 40,000 words for the script.

"We gave Rochana an open brief. We wanted these stories to be written, and this adventure was one of several excellent pitches that Rochana proposed. I particularly liked this one because it felt so different to anything else we've planned for River. It is one of a kind."

ROCHANA ADMITS it was very exciting to be asked to create a **River Song** box set, all of her own. She tells *Vortex*: "It's tremendously thrilling to be asked to write for a project of this scale. Excitement, however, by its very nature, always comes with a side-order of fear. And I can assure you, sitting down to a blank page, knowing you have to write long scripts, working to a tight deadline, is incredibly daunting!



Above: Charithra Chandran

"I had a completely free hand on this one; four episodes, one story, that was it. I was thinking it would suit something historical, so my early pitches were heavily skewed in that direction. For a four-episode box set you need a huge idea, and in terms of British history, 1536 is

about as big as it gets. And, oddly, this period has never been done by the television series. So, I set out to write the biggest, longest, pseudo-historical story in the Whoniverse!

"This is, unreservedly, the type of story where we're purposely dropping our lead character into well-known historical events... and letting them run riot! Don't worry though, if you don't know the history, no pre-knowledge is required."

Rochana carried out a lot of research into the period to bring it to life through the audio medium.

She says: "River Song is imprisoned in the Stormcage when all of time and space suddenly starts collapsing around her, and she finds herself thrown back to England 1536... Someone or something has broken history and she needs to put things right, meaning she must plunge herself into the intrigue of the royal court..."

I'M A HUGE HISTORY GEEK SO I ALREADY KNEW ALL THE BASICS BEFORE GOING IN.

ROCHANA PATEL

"I'm a huge history geek so I already knew all the basics before going in. When writing something like this, you really need to immerse yourself in the period, and this era is so well recorded that the deeper you dive, the more there is to uncover!

"I was particularly interested in telling the story of 1536 from a slightly different angle; the version we often get is heavily skewed by centuries of bias, almost mythologised from its frequent retellings. I wanted to explore some of the lesser-known elements, show how they're just as important, and how if you start to include them, things actually start to make more sense and begin to look very different..."

THE DEATH and Life of River Song box sets have each been assigned to individual writers, giving them the chance to build their own worlds. How did Rochana find writing the whole

set, without needing to liaise with other writers to tie up plotlines and share characters?

She explains: "For me it's much easier, and probably gives a more consistent narrative overall. The main advantage is the scope and scale of the story it enables each writer to tell. In a one-hour story, it's really difficult to build complex worlds, unique characters, tell a compelling tale and have everything neatly wrapped up by the end without over-running! Things can sometimes feel rushed or unexplored... but with these longer narratives, the scripts really have room to breathe."

Rochana also explains where the title came from: "Henry VIII is famous for the Dissolution of the Monasteries. His split from Rome, to make himself the head of the Church of England, is a cornerstone of English history. And **Doctor Who** titles do lean towards things like *The End of Time*. The title *The Dissolution of Time* was right there for the taking... so I took it!"

Director Ken Bentley thoroughly enjoyed working with his leading lady, Alex. He tells *Vortex*: "It's a lot of fun recording with Alex. She clearly enjoys the process and that sort of energy is infectious. This series includes a lot of light comedy and it's much easier for us all to stay in the zone if we're having fun."

"The thing I admire most is how much Alex has taken ownership of the role. She doesn't just parachute in, say the lines and go. She clearly loves playing River and she properly invests in the script. She's very much part of the team, which is amazing when you think how busy she is; she doesn't leave a stone unturned, and I love that."

THE BOX set also stars Charithra Chandran as Anne Boleyn with Joseph Capp as Dust, Harry Myers as Henry VIII, Emily Woodward as Mary Tudor, James Joyce as the Duke of Richmond and Andrew Wincott as Thomas Cromwell.

With a small cast, Ken knew there was even more pressure than usual to ensure that every one of his actors was the ideal fit for their role, and he's succeeded with aplomb.

"Dust was a particularly tricky role to cast. You hope an actor will see the chance to play a seven-foot tall



Above (l-r): Alex Kingston and Joseph Capp



Above: Andrew Wincott

talking panther as an opportunity, but you never know what they're going to do until they do it. Joe's performance is astonishing; you can clearly hear him speaking through his canines. It was such a joy to listen to!

"The thing I most enjoyed about this series was working with a proper ensemble. Not everybody was recording for all four days but most were, and that gave us the chance to settle in. When you spend more time with people you get past the usual formalities and start to learn a bit more about each other. For a few days we became a little community. I loved it."

Rochana adds: "I didn't attend the recording; I find the idea terrifying! I think the actors and director should be free to do their job, without some neurotic writer lurking in the shadows! In the modern world, we've become accustomed to having confident extroverts strutting their stuff on every available



Above (l-r): David Richardson, Ken Bentley, Emily Woodward, Alex Kingston, Charithra Chandran, James Joyce and Joseph Capp

platform, but there's still plenty of us shy introverts around who just want to quietly get on with our work in peace and solitude.

"My highlight? I'm a massive *Dungeons & Dragons* geek, so when I found out Andrew had been cast as Thomas Cromwell, I was over the moon! I'd actually had him in mind when writing it but hadn't told anyone. He plays the devil, Raphael, in *Baldur's Gate 3*, and I'm currently on about my eighth playthrough... and he's simply brilliant! (And it's not just me that thinks so – he won a BAFTA for it!)"

David adds: "We had a fairly small cast for these episodes so there were lots of two- or three-handed scenes for them to play. In the best sense it was like sitting in on a theatrical play. I'm just listening to the edits now, actually, and the performances really are superb.

"Alex is simply one of my favourite people to work with, and Ken and I

THE THING I MOST ENJOYED ABOUT THIS SERIES WAS WORKING WITH A PROPER ENSEMBLE.

KEN BENTLEY

have been working with Alex for 10 years now so we know each other pretty well, we like spending time together and working together, turning up to have fun. I say 'fun' but of course Alex works like a trouper and is in most scenes in every script; the whole thing is driven by her impressive energy.

"I think my highlight was listening to Alex and Joe working together. The relationship between River and Dust is a big part of the story, so it

was wonderful to hear them fire off each other in those scenes. Joe is playing a Pantheron – a huge cat-like creature that assumes human guise – and he shifts brilliantly between the feline and human." **VORTEX**

THE DEATH AND LIFE OF RIVER SONG THE DISSOLUTION OF TIME

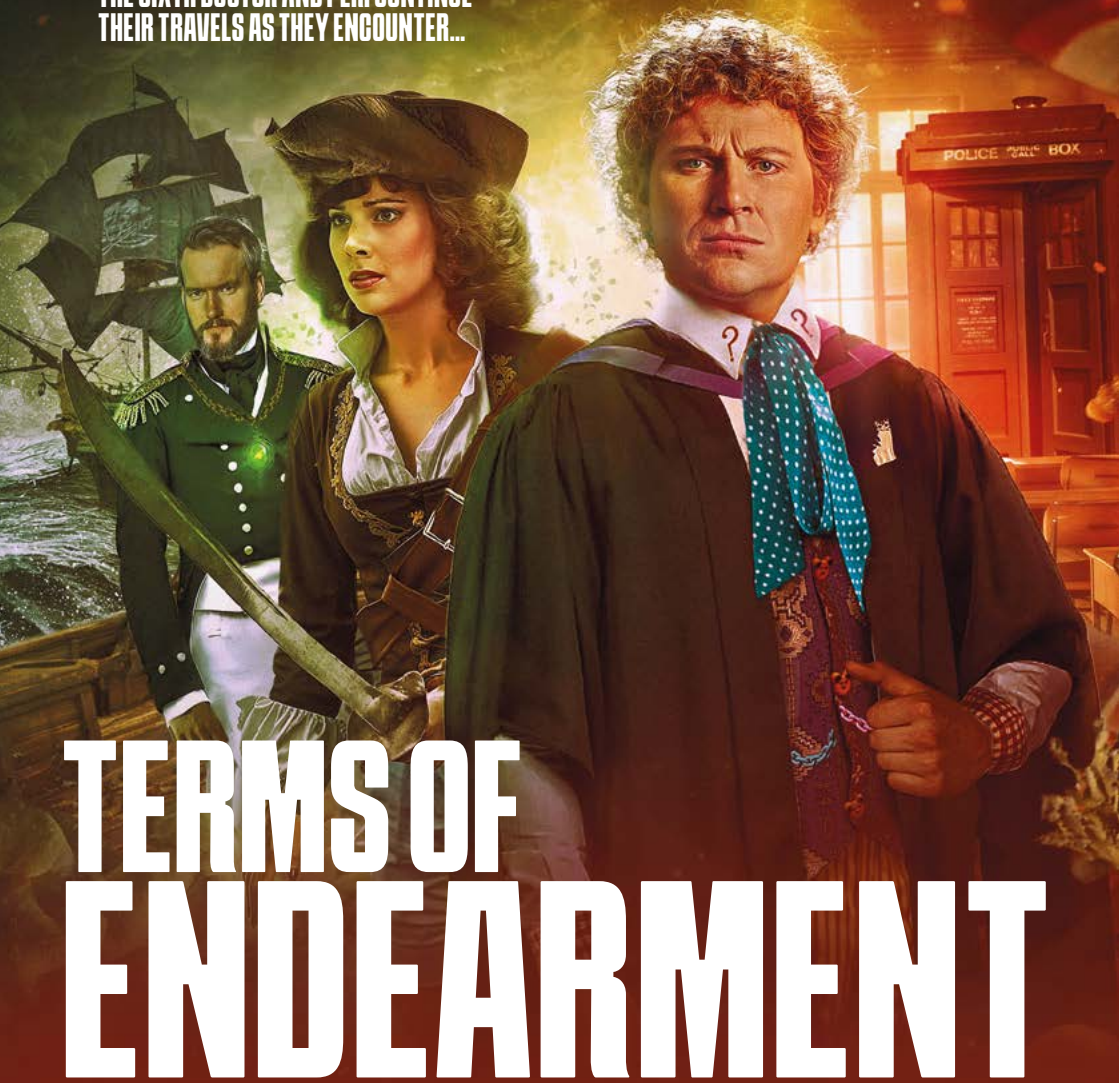


■ RELEASED: AUGUST 2025
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

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THE SIXTH DOCTOR AND PERI CONTINUE
THEIR TRAVELS AS THEY ENCOUNTER...



TERMS OF ENDEARMENT

ONE OF the Sixth Doctor's most memorable Big Finish adventures saw him on song as he battled a group of swashbucklers led by Red Jasper in *Doctor Who and the Pirates*. The Doctor is set to face more buccaners this August in **The Sixth Doctor Adventures: Bad Terms**. And this time it won't be with Dr Evelyn Smythe at his side but the older Peri after being

reunited in *The Widow's Assassin*.

Script editor Robert Valentine says: "The Sixth Doctor and Peri are the original pairing, so to speak, and their relationship inherently had a bit of spikiness to it, even when they'd warmed to each other. But now they're very good friends enjoying their travels together – and that's when the adventures always start."

Opening the set is *Saoirse of the Seven Seas* by Nina Millns who

previously wrote *The Turn of the Tides* featuring Jo Jones and Rani Chandra for **The Eighth of March: Protectors of Time**.

Saoirse O'Grady, Queen of the Irish Sea, teams up with the brave Captain Peri (and her lowly second-in-command, the Doctor) to fight for justice for her people and her homeland. But her English foe, Sir Kenneth Rushworth, doesn't just have the law on his side – he has allies not



Above: Colin Baker



Above (l-r): Colin Baker and Nicola Bryant

of this Earth. Allies who have a very particular interest in Saoirse...

Vortex asks Rob what led him to invite Nina to write for Big Finish. He reveals: "I'd directed an audio drama by Nina called *Delete* for

Wireless Theatre, which was a brilliant piece of writing, so it wasn't a great leap on my part to offer her a *Doctor Who* story. Not being a dyed-in-the-wool fan, she wasn't bringing any particular expectations

with her, which is what producer Jacqueline Rayner and I wanted.

"The Sixth Doctor – much to his horror – is about to encounter a shipload of pirates for the second time in his career. It's a swashbuckling tale with some real heart at the centre of it, and a fun and original take on alien invaders. Or in this case, alien privateers."

NINA SPOKE to *Vortex* from a remote island with just 3,000 inhabitants and patchy Wi-Fi as she was on her honeymoon! Nina says: "It was such a huge privilege to be a part of **The Eighth of March** project for so many

THE PROBLEM THEN WAS FINDING SOMETHING THAT HADN'T BEEN DONE BEFORE.

NINA MILLNS

different reasons. The calibre of actors and other writers involved, the fact that it was a special for International Women's Day celebrating so many of the brilliant female characters we've come to know and love over the decades, and of course bringing some of these iconic characters together for the first time. It was also a huge learning curve and I'm very grateful to Matt Fitton and the Big Finish team for all their support and patience."

Three years after *The Turn of the Tides*, Nina's new story also has a nautical connection.

Nina explains: "I actually worked on the Sixth Doctor story first so it has been interesting to hear **The Eighth of March** release while eagerly awaiting the release of this one! I've worked with the brilliant Rob before so I already knew what a powerhouse he is, and he was very supportive throughout the whole process, as was Jac.

"From what I can remember, the brief initially was to think of a historical context/story we could bring Peri and the Sixth

Doctor into. The problem then was finding something that hadn't been done before. The canon and breadth of the Whoniverse is so huge and prolific that I think I pitched several ideas in historical contexts that were duplicates. I then remembered a brilliant conversation I'd had with a friend about kick-ass Irish female pirates and we'd finally found a winner."

With the story being based on historical fact, how much research did Nina have to do into female pirates?

She explains: "I did a fair bit of research once we had agreed this was what we were going with, but it was honestly a labour of love because the stories, or at least the legends, are so awesome they inspired me and awed me in equal measure. I then felt a real duty of care to represent the spirit of these women with great respect, despite it ultimately being a work of fiction."

"I was a modest **Doctor Who** fan before I started writing for Big Finish and certainly didn't remember much about the Sixth Doctor. It has been a joy to immerse myself in this brilliant world with these brilliant characters, and also to be a small part of continuing the legacy in a way that is fitting and relevant to our current world and values."

Nina adds: "I still have to pinch myself that I have had the honour of writing for these legendary characters and actors. I have learned a lot along the way and I am so grateful to Robert, Matt, Jac and the Big Finish team for being wonderfully supportive and bringing me along for the ride. *Saoirse of the Seven Seas* is a joyful, fantastical, epic world to be a part of and a dream for a writer. I hope you all enjoy listening to it as much as I enjoyed writing it."

RED FOR Danger! by Nev

Fountain is the second adventure in this set. *New teachers Dr Pretorius (History) and Professor Brown (Biology) find a lot to alarm them at one of the most menacing places they've ever visited – a traditional English public school. Finding aliens among both staff and pupils, can they solve the mystery of Malcolm, a boy whose connection to the Doctor is closer than the Time Lord could ever imagine?*

Rob says: "Nev's story takes much of its inspiration from Lindsay



Above: Gareth David-Lloyd

THEY HAVE A CASTE SYSTEM, PECKING ORDER, HIERARCHIES AND POINTLESS RULES AND CEREMONIES.

NEV FOUNTAIN

Anderson's film *If....*..., but it's really chock full of every boarding-school adventure you can think of. There are plenty of twists and turns in this one, so I wouldn't want to give anything away."

Nev says: "I floated an idea that I thought would be a fun thing to do with the Sixth Doctor and post-*Mindwarp* Peri and Jac jumped at it. The only requirement was that I was to design the story to

finish a box set and end it on a cliff-hanger, which was quite tricky."

"As Peri is an American and the Doctor is a Time Lord, both come from cultures that have rather specialised schools. We know about American colleges, and we can certainly guess about the Gallifreyan Academy. It's not a huge leap to think that they are similar: they have a caste system, pecking order, hierarchies and pointless rules and ceremonies."

"It appealed to me to get them to bump up against the English private school environment. I have never written a three-part story before, so I used the format to focus in turn on three of the most famous works based around private schools; *Harry Potter*, *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and *If....*...."

"It's always a joy to write for Colin Baker and Nicola Bryant. They are real professionals and I know them both very well. The rhythm of their performances is ingrained on my DNA, so I have no problem rattling off dialogue. And I particularly like writing the Sixth Doctor with



Above: Nicola Bryant

the older Peri because it's a more relaxed relationship – and yet there's more sass between them."

NICOLA IS delighted to be back as the Sixth Doctor's original companion. She tells Vortex: "I love coming back to play Peri – I've been doing it for more than half my life. There's no stress, there's no strain or wondering if I know my character and if I've done my research. I'm going back to play someone that's really familiar. You read the script, you mark it up and don't have to ask questions. You know them as if they were you."

"I think what I enjoy about playing older Peri is having the maturity. For me, at my time of life, she's much more relatable. But then, Peri is always a very sensible companion. She's

the one that's saying to the Doctor, 'Are you sure about that? Are you thinking about this?' We've seen that, especially in the expansion of young Peri stories in Big Finish. She's very much the pacifist. She's a thinker."

"And it's lovely to be playing a more mature character because you get to say slightly more mature things! Although I'm not playing a super-intelligent Time Lord, I feel more equal to the Doctor because I'm bringing more life experience into the mix."

"I think the younger Peri is always deferring to the Doctor's knowledge and wisdom, which any sane human would do. But it feels much less unequal when you've got mature Peri who can weigh up the situation and say, 'Wait, we should think about this.' When the young Peri was with Erimem, that brought out

the side of her that likes helping people, sharing and imparting information. In *Red for Danger* it's great to find her in that role as a lecturer, albeit that she's undercover so it's not her primary task."

Nicola particularly enjoys having the chance to work with Colin again, some 42 years after they began recording together at the end of

I'VE BEEN DOING IT FOR MORE THAN HALF MY LIFE. THERE'S NO STRESS, THERE'S NO STRAIN...

NICOLA BRYANT

The Caves of Androzani. She says:

"It's always lovely to work with Colin. We see each other regularly at conventions, we chat on the phone and we message each other on WhatsApp. We keep an eye out for each other, it's always lovely to work with mates."

"Something I discovered pretty early on with Colin is we have a very similar working method. We both feel really comfortable with each other as actors, sharing our thoughts on scripts, although you know the quality of Big Finish scripts is so high there's really not a lot to say about them – most of the time!" **VORTEX**


THE SIXTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES BAD TERMS



■ RELEASED: AUGUST 2025
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

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THE CLASSIC TV SERIES BY BOB
BAKER AND DAVE MARTIN IS REVIVED
AS A FULL-CAST AUDIO DRAMA...

SKY HIGH

A CHILDREN'S television favourite from the 1970s is being released by Big Finish, picking up from its original run half a century ago. **Sky** was created by Bob Baker and Dave Martin, both of whom are also known for their numerous contributions to **Doctor Who**.

Sky followed a time-travelling alien boy with solid blue eyes and psychic powers, who found himself on Earth in the wrong period of history. Fifty years later, Sky has been reborn.

But why now? And what does Sky want with the old man living in the sheltered accommodation

who used to fight to save planet Earth from destroying itself...

The audio revival stars Cloud Quinn as Sky and Edwin Flay as Arby Vennor (originally played by Marc Harrison and Stuart Lock respectively).

Jessica Hayles and Samuel Morgan-Davies play new characters Bex Briggs and Kyle Braddock.



Above: Cloud Quinn

The first volume, *Before the Chaos*, has been written, produced and directed by Gary Russell and contains three stories: *Apotheose*, *Deitropism* and *Calyx*.

Gary tells *Vortex*: “**Sky** was a TV series produced by HTV in 1975, one of those great run of shows that Patrick Dromgoole made. It is the story of three teenagers one of whom, Sky, is an alien. We didn’t really know where he comes from, but he arrives on Earth and befriends the other two. He is searching for a way home, which he calls the Juganet. The seven episodes are basically the story of the two teenagers trying to get this alien god back home.

“That sounds simple if it wasn’t for the fact that his presence on Earth makes the planet act like a series of antibodies that try to kill him! Everywhere he goes, plant life etc. turns against him. It’s one of those things that if you look it up in on Wikipedia or books about children’s TV, they’ll all talk about how it is a great ecological drama.



Above: Samuel Morgan-Davies

But it isn’t really an ecological drama because the ecology is the villain!

“The plant life on Earth is controlled by an entity called the Animus which is trying to throw Sky off the planet. It’s basically saying, ‘You are evil. You are wrong for this planet.’ So it tries to kill him.

“Sky’s friends are trying to get him

to Juganet, which it turns out is at Stonehenge, before the planet literally throttles him and rips him apart. The Animus creates a personification of itself, made-up theoretically from twigs, leaves, bits of bark and things like that. It then takes a human form called Goodchild, and Goodchild’s job is to find Sky and destroy him.

“The 1975 series ended with one of the kids, Arby, getting Sky through the Juganet and back home. Home was the far future, which was after ‘the Chaos,’ as Sky kept referring to it. We discovered that the Chaos is some kind of post-nuclear nightmare created by NASA, and before Sky sends Arby back to the 20th century, he gives him a gift – a tiny little part of his god-like powers. These manifest themselves in your hand, growing like a shadow on the inside of the palm, and you can see the stars

CREDIBILITY AND SANITY THEN WENT OUT OF THE WINDOW...

GARY RUSSELL

and the cosmos through it. Sky had powers and used them to help people – to heal them and things like that.

“So Sky has given a tiny fragment to Arby and says when Arby gets back home, everyone else will have completely forgotten Sky ever existed. He’s now the only one that knows of Sky, and he has this new power in his body. That’s where the 1975 series ended.”

GARY WANTED to continue the series, rather than reimagine it. He explains: “Sky got to where he needed to be without being killed by Goodchild or the plant life. And Arby and his sister Jane, and another friend of theirs, Roy, carried on living their lives. But, of course, Roy and Jane have no recollection of either of them meeting Sky.

“We pick this up 50 years later and discover that Arby, with that little bit of power he has from Sky, went on a sort of David Icke-style crusade about ecology, saving the

world and trying to make it a better place to avoid the Chaos that Sky said was destroying the world.

"Arby's now in his late sixties and he's been locked away in a retirement hospital for old people because nobody believes him. He had been on TV about 20 years ago and tried to demonstrate his hand power but was ridiculed by the journalist hosting the TV show. His credibility and sanity then went out of the window,

they don't look remotely like the Sky he remembers.

"We have Edwin, who I had in a couple of small parts in **Irwin Allen's The Time Tunnel**, playing Arby. Then we have Samuel Morgan-Davies playing a character called Kyle Brannock. Sam was the little boy in *The Hungry Earth* in **Doctor Who**. He's an absolutely fantastic writer, director and actor; the complete package.

someone to ask me to do a Big Finish,' so I got her in as Miss Cornell."

CONRAD WESTMAAS, best known as the Eighth Doctor's companion C'rizz, has enjoyed returning to acting after a long break. He says: "I was absolutely delighted to be invited back as C'rizz for the special release of **Sontarans vs Rutans: The Battle of Giant's Causeway**, but I thought, 'Oh



Above (l-r): Conrad Westmaas, Rachel Handshaw, Caitlyn Galvin and Tara Ward

and now he's just an old man living in a home, being visited by his niece every so often. But he starts getting messages in his head from Sky. And he realises that, for some reason, Sky has come back to 2025, ostensibly to get the little bit of power back from Arby because he now needs it."

THIS SERIES features a brand-new cast. Gary says: "We don't have any of the original cast, this is recast as it's 50 years later. Cloud is playing Sky who looks and sounds a bit different. That's deliberate, and for a while when Arby first meets him, he doesn't even believe it's Sky because

"Jessica Hayles plays Bex Briggs, Arby's niece. Jess was in the Peter Capaldi Twelfth Doctor TV episode *Flatline*. And I've got Conrad Westmaas playing Jack Diver, who is the journalist that ridiculed and destroyed Arby's mind.

"Rachel Handshaw, who I also had in **Irwin Allen's The Time Tunnel**, is playing Rhea Holmes, who's sort of the villain of the piece. And there's a lovely little cameo part for Tara Ward from the **Doctor Who** TV episode *Warriors of the Deep* playing Rhea's secretary. I couldn't believe that she'd never done a Big Finish! She was so pleased and told me, 'I've been waiting years for

well, this is it for a day. This is a nice one off!' And then, to my great surprise, I got a call from Gary asking if I'd be interested in being in **Sky**.

"I was intrigued. I was just a smidge too young for it when it was broadcast and, to my great shame I'd never heard of it, so the first thing I did was watch the whole series – I didn't know what to expect! Bob Baker and Dave Martin had amazing imaginations – I think **Doctor Who** struggled to accommodate their wild ideas!

"I was really enchanted with the series. It's like a bit like **Sapphire & Steel** with a kind of folk, eco message. It's very strange, possibly

a little Lovecraft in there, with a bit of *The Man Who Fell to Earth*. I fell in love with it, so I am delighted to be involved. It's really fun to enter this unique little world."

Talking of his character, Conrad adds: "I play Jack Diver, who's a TV personality with his own chat show, but gets involved with Sky via an old friend of his. Although he's quite cynical, Jack ends up deeply affected by Sky's presence

IT'S VERY STRANGE, POSSIBLY A LITTLE LOVECRAFT IN THERE...

CONRAD WESTMAAS



Above: Jessica Hayles

on Earth and the fight that's going on around him. He has trouble believing it, and that cynicism gets really, really tested as the Earth catches up with Sky's arrival.

"It was great to play the character because Sky changes everyone they meet and it affects people in different ways – some positively, some negatively. Jack goes through a lot of emotions and finds himself thrown in with a mismatched

bunch of people who have all have been caught up in the vortex of events that swirl around Sky."

LOOKING AFTER the music on *Sky* is Ioan Morris. He reveals: "About a year before I started the scoring, Gary mentioned he was working on the series and was keen for me to do the music. He sent me the TV series to watch, so by the time I began composing I was up

to speed. Before that, it was something I was aware of but had never seen, not even clips.

"I knew Gary really liked the original music and wanted the same kind of feel. There's an incongruity to the scoring in the TV version that adds a level of eeriness you'd otherwise miss. From there, I took my cues from the scripts, so a modern approach that's informed by the original. Without giving too much away, this is a story about the world as it is now and that's reflected in the storytelling, so it makes sense for the music to follow suit.

"Eric Wetherell's original theme is a deeply strange, almost mournful piece of music and I tried to retain that vibe with my version. I used the cello motif as the starting point for a new melody and kept the instrumentation roughly the same. Same goes for the three-part 'hard cut' structure. It's not the kind of thing anyone would think to do with a theme tune now, which was all the more reason to do it!"

Gary concludes: "This is the first time I've written a whole series for Big Finish by myself. I thought the thing to look at was the planet repelling Sky, it was almost sidelined in the original series. I thought, 'What if we get to a stage where the whole of planet Earth, in its attempt to get rid of Sky, is trapped inside a calyx, which means there's no light, no air, no carbon.' The world is basically dying, and we end up with a sort of Bob and Dave version of *Survivors* at the end!" **VORTEX**

SKY BEFORE THE CHAOS



■ RELEASED: AUGUST 2025
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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TWO-GETHER AGAIN

Fresh from seeing Ncuti Gatwa and Jodie Whittaker together on television, it's time to reacquaint ourselves with some other Doctor pairings...

IF DOCTOR WHO fans say that they don't enjoy multi-Doctor meetings, they're probably fibbing! Who can resist the temptation to see how different incarnations interact with their past and future selves?

In 2020, 2021 and 2022, the Tenth Doctor got to meet his Fourth, Fifth and Sixth incarnations in the special **The Tenth Doctor Adventures** audio series *Out of Time*. Along the way, the Doctors encountered Daleks, Cybermen and the Weeping Angels. And now, the trio of tales is being brought together as a digital release for the first time.

Producer David Richardson says: "*Out of Time* was planned as a one-off, a chance to get David Tennant and Tom Baker together

in a special story. Then COVID-19 came along and we were able to secure David for more recordings, and so the second and third instalments became a possibility.

"The recording of each one was so different... The second, *The Gates of Hell*, was great fun in studio as David and Peter Davison know each other so well. And I remember David being so very happy to be working with Colin Baker on the third, telling Colin what an honour it was...

"*Out of Time 3: Wink* was actually one of the most stressful recording days I've ever produced. We had some catastrophic remote recording equipment failures and so we didn't even start recording until 2:30 in the afternoon.

This one went in the can almost "as live", but we had such an experienced team of actors that it really didn't matter – they were all 'first take wonders' anyway!"

Matt Fitton wrote the first of the releases, bringing together David and Tom with the Daleks. He recalls: "This was an absolute

dream come true: uniting the Doctor from my childhood with an iconic new series Doctor – probably the two greatest peaks of popularity among the general public that the show has seen.

"When I heard the end result, I couldn't help smiling all the way through. It's a love letter to so many things. I wanted these two Doctors to impress one another – for the Tenth to remember his magnificent past and the Fourth to be reassured about his future – and pay homage to some old enemies and friends along the way."

The second adventure, *The Gates of Hell* by David Llewellyn, unites the Tenth and Fifth Doctors along with the Cybermen.

David says of writing for the villains: "They are surprisingly difficult. It's too easy to slip into dialogue that's too chatty, especially if everyone else is speaking that way, but they're Cybermen. And if anything, they're less expressive than the Daleks!"

"There was some discussion about which era of Cybermen I was writing for because the voices, and even what passes for a personality, changes over the years. It was my first go at writing for them so it took a couple of drafts to get it right."

The final release of the range is *Wink*, a cheeky nod to the story which introduced the Weeping Angels, featuring the Tenth and Sixth Doctors.

Writer Lisa McMullin tells *Vortex*: "This was written and recorded in about a fortnight during lockdown. I absolutely adore the way Colin and David bounce off each other – the total dream team. And the way the music and sound design conveys the threat of the Weeping Angels (who should be near impossible to do justice to on audio) blows me away!" **VORTEX**

THE TENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES OUT OF TIME: THE COMPLETE SERIES

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TORCHWOOD THE DOLLHOUSE



Above (l-r): Laila Pyne, Kelly Anne Lyons and Ajjaz Awad

IT'S 1970s Los Angeles – the city of angels and broken dreams. It's the place where the unusual is the usual, where three remarkable women keep the West Coast of America safe from alien attacks.

Marlow Sweet, Charley Du Bujeau and Gabi Martinez are Torchwood Los Angeles.

Released in 2017 and written by Juno Dawson – eight years before her **Doctor Who** television debut script – *The Dollhouse* is a dark, humorous look on a very familiar television show and film series. Juno has also written *Orr* for the ongoing **Torchwood Among Us** range.

Producer James Goss says: "Many of you will be saying, 'Wait, what, Juno wrote for **Torchwood**?' Yes, she did! – and both are excellent and innovative episodes.

"*The Dollhouse* is an engaging, funny take on *Charlie's Angels* seen through a modern feminist lens. It's a really fun episode because of that – the whole idea of what if **Torchwood**, with all its trauma and hard edges, was also a TV show in the 1970s."

Juno says: "It all came about at Eurovision when I was in Vienna 2015 with a lovely man called Matt Nicholls who was working on the brand at the time. He said, 'You're a **Doctor Who** fan, aren't you?' Then he said, 'My friend is producing some **Torchwood** audios...'. I had seen every episode of **Torchwood**, so I was keen on the chance to dip my toe into the world of **Doctor Who**. I pitched some storylines and was firstly commissioned to write what became *Orr*, and then *The Dollhouse* came about."

Ajjaz Awad plays Gabi and recalls: "I remember being cast for this one very well. I was a couple of years out of graduating and I hadn't really had much work; I'd joined a co-operative agency in Lambeth Walk called the Actors Network Agency. One day I was in the office with another actor and something came up for a Colombian character. So, of course we start doing our best Colombian accents. My friend, who actually is Colombian, said 'Your accent's really good.'

"I didn't get that job, but I kept the accent up on Spotlight and then director Lisa Bowerman messaged the agency, offering the part of Gabi. It was great being a 'Charlie's Angel' for a day – the other girls and I had great fun doing the photo shoot!" The story features Guy Adams as the voice of Mr Beamish, the Torchwood contact for the team, but James reveals: "I have one confession which it's probably safe to air after all these years. John Barrowman was supposed to cameo in the episode but we couldn't make it work at the time. I still remember emailing Juno from the floor of an airport and marvelling at her ability to solve any problem." **VORTEX**

TORCHWOOD THE DOLLHOUSE



■ RELEASED: APRIL 2017
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/dollhouse



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HOLMES-WARD BOUND

I just saw the announcement about **Sherlock Holmes: Untold**, and I look forward to more Briggs/Holmes deductions. However, unresolved cliffhangers always rub me up the wrong way. In the finale of *The Sacrifice of Sherlock Holmes* box set in 2016, Holmes encounters mysterious 'lights' in the Arctic Circle in his older years attacking an expedition. Will we ever see a resolution to this singular, spectacular series?

Ian Manning

Nick: I'm certain Jonathan Barnes intends to follow that up at some point, Ian. It won't be in *Sherlock Holmes: Untold*, but let's hope there's more Holmes from Big Finish in the future. I'm actually having a catch-up chat this evening with Richard Earl. It's ages since I've spoken to my Watson!

DRAX FACTOR

One of my most favourite audio dramas of yours is **[The Fourth Doctor Adventures] The Trouble with Drax**. Thanks to it, Drax has become my singlemost favourite

character in the entire series. I know he has one more audio in the Eighth Doctor series, yet I haven't reached it chronologically. I wanted to ask – is it possible that we get more Drax content in the future? I need more Drax!

Mark Osnay

Nick: There are no more plans for Drax at the moment, Mark, but I too have very fond memories of him. Great character. I remember being intrigued by him when the teenage me saw him in The Armageddon Factor.

EMPIRE BUILDING

I've been relistening to **Dalek Empire Series I to III** over the past weeks. I remember these coming out monthly and eagerly listening to them. These stories, especially *Series III*, are some of the best examples of what Big Finish can do. Nick's writing is excellent. There is hope, loss, betrayal, shifting emotions and just great stories here. *Series III* is disturbing in what the Daleks want to achieve. Kami's storyline particularly so. Even before he became the Doctor, I thought there

was something special about David Tennant in *Series III*. **Dalek Empire** would make a great idea for a TV mini-series. Nick, thank you for writing these. Blooming marvellous!

Andrew Scott

Nick: That is so kind of you, Andrew. We all had a great time working on them, and I look back on them very fondly. I remember a young David Tennant asking me at a party if he could be in the next series of *Dalek Empire*. I was happy to oblige!

COMPANION PIECES

I'm hoping that there are plans to continue the Eighth Doctor's adventures alongside Liv and Helen. This is one of my favourite teams, with Nicola Walker's delivery of Liv's sarcastic comments towards the Doctor a highlight. With no disrespect to the TV companions, I think my favourites are those created by Big Finish. Constance Clarke, Flip Jackson and Raine Creevy, although the best has to be the late, great Maggie Stables as Evelyn Smythe. Her chemistry with Colin Baker was evident through the headphones. Having reached the end of Evelyn's journey, I've gone back to *The Marian Conspiracy* for a relisten.

David Canfield

Nick: Those great Evelyn adventures can always be counted upon! Glad you love our audio-specific companions, David. It's always been great to be able to create new TARDIS crews, and here's to many more in the future.

DARK PLANS

While it's nice to see new stories in the **Dark Gallifrey** series, we've had three seasons based around different incarnations of the Master. Are we going to get **Dark Gallifrey** seasons based on enemies other than the Master?

Myles Cook

Nick: Absolutely, Myles, you are going to get those too. **VORTEX**



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