

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX

ISSUE 203
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ZYGON CENTURY

THOSE SHAPE-shifting aliens are back in the second box set of *Zygon Century*.

The Zygons have come to claim the Earth, and this time they're playing the long game. For the Black Cadre have a plan, a plan that will take exactly one hundred years to come to fruition. From the streets of St Petersburg to the plains of Death Valley, the Zygon Century continues...

Due for release in April 2026, *Transformation* is a box set of three adventures - 1922: *The Black Cadre* by Jonathan Barnes; 1968: *An Incident in Death Valley* by Lauren Mooney and Stewart Pringle; and 1974: *The Caldwell Restitution* by Ken Bentley.

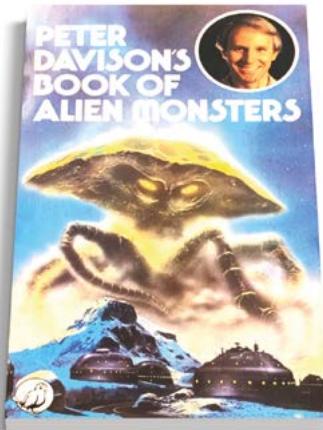
The opening story takes us to the 1920s and catches up with the paranormal investigator Herbert Scott (voiced by *Father Brown* star Jonathan Rigby). In the second adventure, Vorvoren (*The Play That Goes Wrong*'s Charlie Russell) - a Zygon previously held captive by humans, investigates a cult in California. And to conclude, secret agent Caldwell (Joshua Manning) has a new mission which takes him to the Soviet Union.

Producer Jonathan S Powell tells *Vortex*: "Zygon Century is back - and the invasion's gone international! After the success of *Infiltration*, script editor (and author) Jonathan and I were keen to push ourselves further and show our band of Zygons on the offensive. In these three exciting new episodes, we'll take you across the twentieth century from Russia to Dublin to Death Valley, and reveal more of the Black Cadre's simmering masterplan." **VORTEX**

ZYGON CENTURY TRANSFORMATION

■ RELEASED: APRIL 2026
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EDITORIAL

WHEN I was much younger, one of my favourite things to do was reading short stories. It all started with Puffin Books and releases like *Stories for Six-Year-Olds*.

As I got older, I remember being very excited by Peter Davison's *Book of Alien Monsters* and later, Peter Davison's *Book of Alien Planets*. Although there weren't any *Doctor Who* stories in them, there were some very clever - and dark - science fiction tales for young readers. They are well worth tracking down if you've never read them, especially the story *Semolina!*

I then graduated to Roald Dahl's short stories in *Tales of the Unexpected*, which gave me a real appreciation of brilliant, clever short form storytelling.

Doctor Who short stories arrived in the form of the *Decalog* books from Virgin Publishing, which continued as **Short Trips** in three volumes from BBC Books and later, Big Finish - first in print and then on audio.

I absolutely love the **Short Trips** range - there are so many clever little gems by a host of brilliant authors. There's a plethora of stories available on the Big Finish website covering all eras of the show from a variety of fantastic readers.

Short Trips Volume 14: Impeccable and Other Stories is now on its way, with an entertaining mix of adventures curated by producer Peter Anghelides. Absolutely perfect for listening on a quick hop to the shops! **VORTEX**





THE LATEST COLLECTION IN
THE POPULAR SHORT TRIPS
RANGE IS ON THE WAY...

SHORT AND SWEET

IMPECCABLE AND Other Stories is a new **Short Trips** anthology featuring six stories from the worlds of **Doctor Who**.

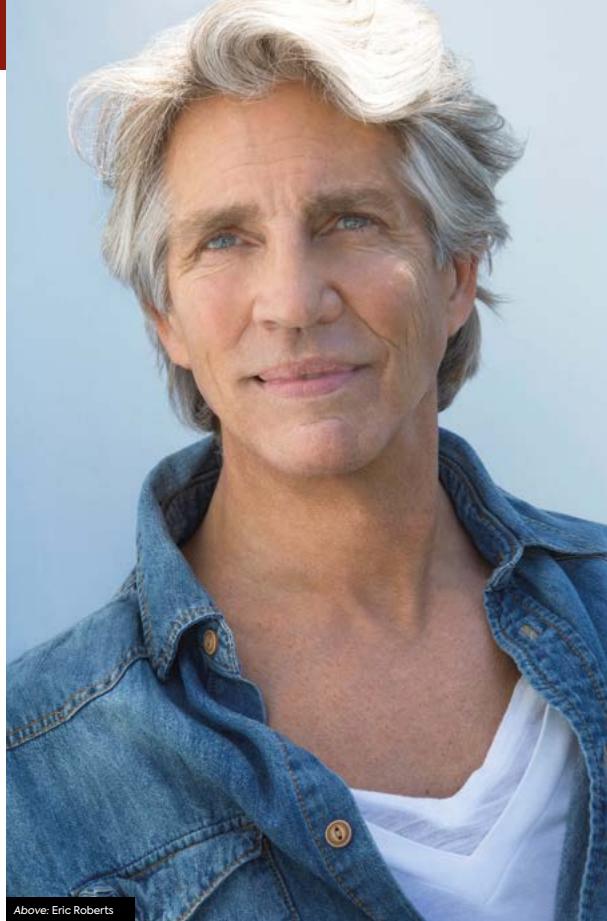
The new adventures are: *Impeccable* by Georgia Cook – a story set in the **Master!** universe read by Erik Roberts; *Hard Feelings* by Philip Lawrence – a Fifth Doctor and Nyssa story read by Sarah Sutton with Nicholas Briggs; *Cut-Out* by Dominick Polon read by Duncan Wisbey; *Bring Me the Head of*

Dorium Maldoval by Nick Slawicz – a Twelfth Doctor story read by Peter Forbes; *The Tip of the Mind* by Peter Anghelides – a conversation with Doctor Sandra Urtiman performed by Lisa Bowerman; and *Is Anybody There?* by Benjamin Mackenzie – a Ninth Doctor adventure read by Bronté Barbé.

Short Trips producer (and writer) Peter says: "For this set, I wanted six distinctive stories and so approached writers with different styles and

experience who could handle the particular requirements of writing prose. They included people new to Big Finish or who hadn't written **Doctor Who** for a while.

"Ben's **Short Trips** competition entry impressed me a few years ago, even though it wasn't a winner, and Nick won in 2022. Phil is an experienced screenwriter who last wrote for Big Finish a decade ago and was keen to do so again, and Georgia was my first choice for a



Above: Eric Roberts

Master story based on her recent *Doctor Who* novel and audio plays. "We have readers from across *Doctor Who*'s TV and audio history. Like prose writing, prose reading is a particular talent distinct from performing full-cast audios. It's marvellous to introduce Brontë (Lizzie from the 2025 television story *Lux*) to our roster, and I hope we'll hear more from her at Big Finish. Nick's story was originally written for the late Simon Fisher-Becker to read — we invited Peter back to Big Finish for a respectful tribute as Dorium Maldovar. We've given Duncan a challenge with a variety of voices in his story. Sarah has read half a dozen *Short Trips* before and provides a brilliant reading in a story that focuses on Nyssa. And Hollywood royalty Eric reads our title story commissioned specifically for his Master."



Above: Alistair Lock

IMPECCABLE OPENS the set. *Mark* loves every little moment of his perfect suburban life. His beautiful home. His friendly neighbours and their children. His wonderful wife, whatever her name is. But today there's

a nagging feeling in his mind. A nagging headache building at the back of his skull. And worst of all, a nagging voice that has very different ideas about Mark's cosy world.

Georgia says being asked to write for Eric's Master was: "Very exciting! He's not a **Who** character (well, regeneration) I've ever written before. I love getting to sink my teeth into a new incarnation."

"The brief was something possibly a little horror-flavoured, set during a certain point in the Master's timeline (and obviously to the usual word limit) but otherwise I was allowed to do pretty much what I liked. Which is always great fun, especially when it comes to prose pieces."

"He's certainly very different from Sacha Dhawan's Master who I've written for previously. He's much more calculated and ruthless — more of a shark, a predator, doing whatever it takes to survive. While

HE'S MUCH MORE CALCULATED AND RUTHLESS — MORE OF A SHARK, A PREDATOR, DOING WHATEVER IT TAKES TO SURVIVE.

GEORGIA COOK

he still has that Master-adjacent flair for the dramatics, he's much less childish and fun-orientated than some of his other selves."

Hard Feelings marks the return of Philip who previously wrote *Question Marks for Recorded Time and Other Stories* plus *The Fifth Traveller* for **The Early Adventures** and a pair of *Short Trips*. Since his last Big Finish release in 2016 he has written numerous episodes for *EastEnders*, *Holby City* and *Casualty*, and won the C21 Drama Script Prize with his black comedy *Euthanasia in Suburbia*.

Nyssa is trapped in a collapsing building during a Cyber invasion — terrified, unarmed and hunted by a lone Cyberman. As the creature closes in, Nyssa's fear becomes something different. What drives her growing anger, and will she really seek a cruel revenge on her pursuer?

Philip says: "I was introduced to

Peter virtually by Rossa McPhillips who was writing a **Short Trip** for Big Finish. I then vaguely pitched him some ideas but knowing that the slots were already filled for now. Coming up with **Doctor Who** stories is something I do in my downtime, I'm such a fan! I started thinking about Nyssa, a companion that's often quite

So encouraged by Lisa McMullin and Alfie Shaw, I emailed Peter on spec and said: 'How about this?'

"At first Peter said it wasn't possible because of the budget – I hadn't realised that Cybermen cost extra to use. He also envisaged it as a two-hander (again more expensive) which I hadn't. But luckily, I think something stuck

And writing for the Cybermen was just amazing; they've always been a favourite monster of mine.

"As a writer this one was a really fun challenge. I initially assumed it would be a single-person, prose adventure and it ended up being really different. A mix between prose, stream of consciousness and dialogue. It's like Nyssa meets *Die Hard*!"

CUT-OUT by Dominick is the next adventure. A shadowy island, a secret weapon, an off-the-books case. MI6 officer Benedict Flynn has run impossible operations before – though never with the Doctor as his undercover asset.

And the fourth episode in the set is *Bring Me the Head of Dorium Maldovar* by Nick. Nick is a former winner of the Paul Spragg Writing Opportunity (with *The*



Above: Peter Forbes



Above: Nick Slawicz

overlooked among the, shall we say, louder members of the TARDIS team, and I wondered what kind of stories I could tell with her? And *Hard Feelings* popped into my head and I thought, 'Hang on, this would make a good **Short Trip**.'

in the idea and Peter wangled a way that we could do it.

"It was hugely refreshing writing for Nyssa, really exploring who she is and everything she's been through in her young life, trying to give her a different kind of spin.

World Tree in 2022) and this is his first commission since then.

A long-forgotten dodgy deal by Dorium Maldovar comes back to haunt him, and a ruthless gangster has put a bounty on his head. With nobody (and no body) to help him, he calls in a favour from the Doctor. And like Dorium himself, the Doctor is not the man he once was.

Nick says: "It was just lovely to know that *The World Tree* had been well-received enough that Big Finish felt it was worth inviting me back – tremendously validating. It was pretty much an open pitch. Peter asked me for ideas and I ended up pitching two, this one and a Third Doctor/Liz Shaw bodysnatcher story set in a quaint English village.

"I worked on that pitch for about a month and then the day before I said I'd get it sent off the title for this one popped into my head and I decided to lean into it as my ridiculous

IT'S JUST YOUR AVERAGE OCEAN'S ELEVEN-STYLE BOOTSTRAP-PARADOX TIME-TRAVEL BUDDY-MOVIE HEIST-CAPER COMEDY...

NICK SLAWICZ

'well, the worst they can say is no...' alternative. I swore to myself after *The World Tree* that I wasn't going to do another timey-wimey story and then immediately ended up writing the most bootstrap-paradox story I could possibly have come up with!

"Basically, there's an alternate universe where my contribution to this set was instead a very sedate

THE TIP of the Mind by Peter is a conversation with Doctor Sandra Urtiman. Long-standing Big Finish fans may recognise this story as it was originally published in the printed **Short Trips** anthology *Companions* released in 2003.

Peter says: "Big Finish's **Short Trips** hardbacks are now long out of print. They were never made

on audio (plus, I know the author!). I may do the same with other people's stories in the future."

Is Anybody There? by Benjamin Mackenzie concludes the set with his Ninth Doctor adventure. A *disturbing unseen figure calls out to Keena from the shadows. It surely cannot be her bullying father: he died long ago and far from this space station. The Doctor arrives to help her – or is he just the creature's latest cruel manifestation?*

Ben says: "I had entered the Paul Spragg writing opportunity for Big Finish and unfortunately did not win, however, my entry clearly sparked some interest as about a year later I was contacted by Big Finish to suggest ideas for a Ninth Doctor story, which as a fan of *New Who* was a bonus in and of itself.

"I was asked to pitch a series of story ideas – some of them were good, some not so good – but one was chosen and we went from there. I was pretty open to being a part of the process, so whatever brief I was given, I was going to engage and write it to the best of my ability."

Ben concludes: "It was just an all-round great experience to get involved in. It is the first time I'll be a credited writer on anything so that's exciting enough really. Learning the process was also fascinating. The back and forth between producer and creative. The inner workings of something like Big Finish. It was work, but it was fun work and something I've always wanted to do." **VORTEX**

Above: Duncan Wisbey

and straightforward 1970s mystery – which I'm extremely grateful Peter didn't choose, as being trusted to write an established character and do something a bit more wild and out-there was a lot of fun.

"It's just your average *Ocean's Eleven*-style bootstrap-paradox time-travel buddy-movie heist-caper comedy, except there's only two of them and one is a head in a box. When an old swindle comes back to haunt a post-beheading Dorium, he and an unfamiliar Twelfth Doctor try to steal a priceless painting from Dorium's past self in order to stop him from making a very dangerous enemy. (Spoilers: it does not go well!)."

Nick adds: "It's been really great to come back and do this all again after a couple of years. Everyone I've worked with at Big Finish has been lovely, and it is just wonderful to be a part of that."



Above: Duncan Wisbey



Above: Peter Anghelides

available as eBooks and cost a king's ransom if you can find them these days. Some of them would make excellent audiobooks. My story from over 20 years ago was written as a monologue script and thus a candidate for a stylistic experiment

DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS IMPECCABLE AND OTHER STORIES



■ RELEASED: FEBRUARY 2026
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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THE DOCTOR AND
ROSE HAVE THEIR...

HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

AFTER THREE stories back at the Powell Estate, the TARDIS is taking the Ninth Doctor off for new adventures in *Cloud Eight*.

Written by Stewart Pringle and Lauren Mooney, the Doctor and Rose escape the present-day Powell Estate but land in its location in a far, far future rewilded Earth where humans live in cloud cities – but every utopia has its price.

Producer/script editor Matt Fitton says: "In *Cloud Eight* the Doctor and Rose take a break from the Powell Estate but actually don't stray that far from Earth. We asked Lauren and Stewart for a story out in time

and space, and in keeping with the 2005 series excursions into humanity's future they came up with this strange utopia, as the 47th century becomes another Dark Age.

"What appears to be the perfect society – no money, no work, unlimited leisure – holds dark secrets. We meet the family unit of Marty, Oz and Elsa, and Rose finds a 'little sister' keen for sleepovers and makeovers. But the Doctor is suspicious, as ever, and thinks things are too good to be true here in High High Wycombe. And as he scratches the surface, he uncovers a story with a lot to

say about our current obsession with technology and nostalgia.

Cloud Eight is a lovely, atmospheric episode with great performances from our leads and the brilliant guest cast. Don't have nightmares..."

THE WRITERS were delighted to be involved in this series. Stewart says: "We were aware of the rumours that were circling for a little while. Everyone had watched the video of Chris Eccleston and Billie Piper on a convention panel, and seen how much affection there still was for



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

both one another and for the incredible television series in 2005. But to actually get the message that the audios were happening, and that we were invited to be part of it – sometimes the stars align!"

Lauren adds: "We loved writing for the Ninth Doctor a few years ago with *Below There* and it was great to get the chance to do that again with Rose in the mix. I have such clear memories of watching their series on TV, they're an iconic pairing. Having written for a few ranges now, the Ninth is one of the Doctors whose 'voice' I find it easiest to lock into and write for."

Stewart continues: "Their series is a small but weighty part of the whole show's history. Thirteen glorious episodes to fix those two characters and their relationship so firmly in the nation's consciousness. I was in my first year at uni when that series aired, starting over the

I LOVED ACE AS A KID, AND ROSE REALLY SPOKE TO THE THINGS I'D RESPONDED TO IN THAT CHARACTER...

LAUREN MOONEY

Easter weekend. And it just kept getting better and better, all the way into the summer. I turned 20 the day before *Aliens of London* was on and that magnificent spaceship clanged through Big Ben. Incredible memories."

"I was still at school!" laughs Lauren. "It's very important that people know this, and recognise that

I am young and glamorous despite appearing to be in my mid-thirties and tired! I loved Ace as a kid, and Rose really spoke to the things I'd responded to in that character, being working-class, obviously, with that mix of boldness, empathy and youthful bravery.

"As a young working-class woman, I just loved getting to see Rose on TV every week, she felt like people I knew. Having that character front and centre in **Doctor Who** made it feel like a world I could be a part of. That first series is probably, these days, my favourite of **New Who**, so getting to write for this pairing was a bit of a pinch-me moment."



Above (l-r): Helen Goldwyn and Christopher Eccleston

WHEN ASKED what their brief was from Matt, Stewart reveals: "I think the brief was 'Let's get into space'. Part of what made the 2005 series so special was the tension between the domestic and the cosmic, between life rumbling on in the Powell Estate while Rose is flung back and forth across the universe, and Matt and the team were keen to stay faithful to that."

"So, while we have this big story brewing on the streets of South London, Matt also wanted some 'off-world' stories, and ours is the first one of those. There were a few rules: no Daleks and to try to find a tone that could fit into what we already know of their relationship at that point. It's quite an ingenious gap to be writing into, because there is something of a break between the Doctor and Rose after her foolhardy actions in the TV episode

Father's Day. We were able to lean into a bit of that – it's not tension exactly, but uncertainty. I think **Doctor Who** is often at its best when the TARDIS isn't too cosy."

Lauren agrees: "One of the things that's great about the way these ranges are produced is that the briefs tend to be relatively open, then you pitch a few ideas and they work out what will mix well together, and

Who TV episode *Gridlock*, a sprinkle of TV episode *The Beast Below* and a generous helping of 'Everything Lauren And I Are Afraid Of' when it comes to the decline of cultural production and public intellectual life. With monsters. And jokes."

Lauren adds: "I think it's also doing a classic thing of that series, I hope, in having a big 'About...' something from our world that the

rights. Which I would say has only become more pertinent since we wrote the story, unfortunately."

DIRECTOR HELEN

Goldwyn has directed every release in this series. She tells **Vortex**: "These stories have been very faithful to the tone of Chris and Billie's series together, I think. The first episode we recorded was such a thrill, to hear the Ninth Doctor and Rose back together. It's been an interesting device to have them returning to different versions of the Powell Estate; a great juxtaposition of the seemingly mundane with the obscure and, of course, any excuse to bring Jackie Tyler back."

"This was an interesting one to cast as we needed a child-like voice but we got that in spades with the brilliant Felicity Cant. We were lucky to get Charlie Condou for Marty – he brought a lovely calm energy to the role, and then Lawrence Boothman as Oz, with his marvellous Scottish accent, gave a great contrast. Big Finish regular, Louise Faulkner, joined us again for a moving performance as Chihiro."

Helen concludes: "Whenever I listen to an edit on this series, I must confess to still having the tiniest thrill knowing I'm one of the first to hear it and that listeners will soon have the same fun. *Cloud Eight* is an unusual format, playing with the notion of memory loss, dreams and repetition in a way that creates an occasionally disorienting but exciting listen." **VORTEX**



Above (l-r): Lawrence Boothman, Felicity Cant and Charlie Condou

you start drilling down into your ideas after that. I really think 'space' was the limit of what we were asked to come up with and then we were able to think freely from there.

"This obviously should be ideal for sci-fi writers but having come from a background in stage naturalism and through the *Torchwood* range, in particular, we've tended to focus on more earthbound stories... So actually, even a brief as open as 'space' was a bit of a challenge! I remember that we were thinking about this one while on a trip to the seaside, tracking back and forth across the beach working out what we could tell and what excited us about the idea. We have ruined a lot of our holidays with work!"

Summing up the adventure, Stewart describes it as: "One part HG Wells's *The Time Machine* (but maybe not the part you're expecting) with a side-serving of the **Doctor**

WHENEVER I LISTEN TO AN EDIT ON THIS SERIES, I MUST CONFESS TO STILL HAVING THE TINIEST THRILL KNOWING I'M ONE OF THE FIRST TO HEAR IT...

HELEN GOLDWYN

story is tackling through sci-fi. To me, it's about how we consent to the colonisation of our own minds and attention spans, how any lack of objection is seen as consent, and how in accepting ease and comfort we can sometimes erode our own

THE NINTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES CLOUD EIGHT



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TORCHWOOD INSTANT KARMA



Above (l-r): Jonny Dixon, Naoko Mori and Sara McGaughey

WE'VE ALL had those days. We've tried to make our voices heard but ended up been spoken over or ignored. Or despite being more than competent at what you do, someone comes along and tells you how to do it, despite being totally unqualified to do so. And don't get started on those who are unable to accept responsibility for their own actions and try to scapegoat others. But what if you could change all of that? What if you had the power to make people just 'stop'? Would you do it? Could you really do it, especially if you were raging? Would you take revenge? Or make them suffer for past cruelties?

This is where *Torchwood's* *Instant Karma* comes in, when Toshiko Sato encounters a self-help group whose members have special powers.

The story was written by David Llewellyn, James Goss and Jonathan Morris. James recalls: "Jonny had

an idea so brilliant for this. What if you could explode the heads of people who were annoying? It's very *Torchwood* – it's absolutely the kind of thing that could be on television; it just wouldn't work in *Doctor Who*. You'd maybe have a politician clutching their heart and keeling over in a bloodless heart attack, but this is different, this is visceral. A pompous far right leader explodes on live television, vengeance is handed out left, right and centre – the anti-hero's dog even gets it at one point. It's a proper chewy, weird, visceral piece of 'what if?' – erry which makes *Torchwood* all the better for its existence.

"Plus it's great that it is a Tosh story – someone outwardly so calm, but you just know that inside she'd be the one setting her co-workers exploding! Owen first – by accident, of course – but definitely Owen."

Jonathan adds: "Oh my goodness! *Instant Karma*. Well. This was originally about two ideas. One, the idea from the TV episode *The Unquiet Dead* that people who grew up near the time rift in Cardiff would develop psychic powers. And two, the idea of the lynch mob; the way that good, kind people might still be tempted to dispense 'rough justice' to awful people who go around spreading hate and prejudice. Because who wouldn't want to see a homophobic newspaper columnist spontaneously combust on live TV?"

"This was around the time that 'cancel culture' was becoming a thing, although I don't think I'd heard the phrase at that point or I would have suggested it as the title. A bit of a contentious subject, maybe, but writing about contentious subjects is the appeal of *Torchwood*. "Anyway, I did four drafts but James and David still had concerns. At which point I went down with the norovirus and told them that I was in no fit state to do another draft, and suggested they could rewrite it between them. I was very happy with what they did. It is still my story and characters, and about a third of it is my dialogue, so it seemed fair to credit it to the three of us." **VORTEX**

TORCHWOOD INSTANT KARMA



■ RELEASED: JULY 2018
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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THE THIRD DOCTOR IS SET TO BE JOINED BY A PAIR OF COMPANIONS IN HIS NEXT BOX SET, AS LIZ SHAW AND SARAH JANE SMITH EXPERIENCE...



THE POWER OF THREE

THE THIRD Doctor's next story is such a complex adventure that he'll need more help than usual from his friends!

The Imposters written by Alan Barnes sees the Doctor (Tim Treloar), Sarah Jane Smith (Sadie Miller) and the Brigadier (Jon Culshaw) investigating the theft of top-secret technology. As the mystery becomes more surprising, the Time Lord finds himself reunited with an old UNIT colleague – Liz Shaw (Daisy Ashford).

Producer Lizzie Worsdell says: "I'm so excited to be producing my first **Doctor Who** story for Big Finish. And for the first time ever, Sadie and Daisy are together playing Sarah Jane and Liz in a brand-new Third Doctor adventure."

Alan says his brief was: "Six-parter, Sarah meets Liz – which was immediately exciting because they're very different people who don't necessarily know about their shared connection via UNIT. I

knew that I wanted them to meet in extremis when Sarah is at her bolshiest and Liz her most computer-like. And I also knew I had to get the Brigadier in there, too, so he could get shot at from all sides! I loved writing for the Brig in **The Third Doctor Adventures: Kaleidoscope**.

"I mention this a lot, but the best characters all believe themselves to be the sole protagonists of the adventures they're in, and that's completely true of the Third Doctor,



Above (l-r): Daisy Ashford, Tim Treloar and Sadie Miller



Above (l-r): Jon Culshaw, Sadie Miller and Tim Treloar

Sarah, Liz and the Brig. They each think themselves to be the sole voice of reason in any situation so they're never short of anything to say!"

Working with Sadie and Daisy was a joy for director Nicholas Briggs, with both actors playing the characters made famous by their respective mothers.

Nick says: "This is an idea that both Sadie and Daisy campaigned hard for – they often bump into each other at conventions and they were really keen to work together. It was really fun having them play their mothers' characters at the same time."

HOW WOULD Nick describes the dynamic of Sarah and Liz?

He explains: "There were several different contexts which probably would spoil the story if I shared them. Suffice it to say that Sarah has occasion to have a very harsh opinion of Liz for a while. But

I SUDDENLY HAD THIS IMAGE OF THE DOCTOR WATCHING THE WRESTLING ON ITV ON A RAINY SATURDAY AFTERNOON AT UNIT HQ...

ALAN BARNES

once they meet properly, there is a little over-politeness between them to start with, then things develop in a really interesting way."

Alan continues: "Ages ago, I was on a Zoom call with Nick and producer Heather Challands, talking about this and other projects. After *Kaleidoscope*, which riffed quite heavily on the 1970s HTV children's serials like *Sky*, I was musing aloud about what other uniquely 1970s icons I could play with, and I suddenly had this image of the Doctor watching the wrestling on ITV on a rainy Saturday afternoon at UNIT HQ, seeing a grappler performing some amazing throw, and saying: 'That's not wrestling, that's Venusian karate!' (More often karate than



Above (l-r): Lizzie Worsdell, Alan Barnes, Jon Culshaw, Samuel Clemens, Daisy Ashford, Sadie Miller, Tim Treloar, Grace Darling, Miranda Barnes, Gary Turner, Lara Lemon, Simon Kane and Mark Elstob

LARA LEMON IS MY GO-TO ACTOR WHEN I NEED ANY OUTRAGEOUS SUPPORTING CHARACTERS.

NICHOLAS BRIGGS

aikido – fact!). And then the Doctor was dashing down to Croydon, or wherever, and – like in the television episode *The Daemons* – ending up on the telly himself.

“So I blurted this out, and Nick and Heather sort of laughed indulgently and a bit pityingly because of course I was joking... wasn’t I? Wasn’t I? But the voice of the late, great Brian Glover kept speaking to me – what a fantastic character to play with. Hence ‘Sam Samsonson’.

“It’s quite hard to say very much about the actual story, because that’s only the starting-point. But I’d thought for ages it was bizarre that whereas early-1970s **Doctor Who** had gutted all the 1950s *Quatermass* serials, extracting every bit of story juice from them, it never touched the other great BBC science fiction serials of the period such as the *A For Andromeda* stories. So, I started playing around with ‘C For Centaurus’...”

DISCUSSING THE rest of the cast, Nick says: “We had a great bunch. Grace Darling plays the public schoolgirl from hell and is a terrifying villain. I’d seen her in a brilliant reworking of *The Mousetrap* in the West End and immediately knew I wanted to work with her – she has a real fire. Mark Elstob is one of my favourite actors and a semi-regular in **The Third Doctor Adventures**. His vast range as an actor makes that possible.

“Gary Turner is another actor who’s metaphorically on speed dial for me; I always make sure he has a different challenge. Samuel Clemens is an old mate. I usually cast him as heroic characters, but this time I thought it’d be fun to have him being a bit goofy so we got him on board as the hapless Lieutenant Gurney.

“Then, of course, there’s Simon Kane who I’d never worked with before, giving a fantastic turn as an all-in wrestler. A glorious

character from the endlessly creative pen of Alan who Simon brings to life deliciously. Lara Lemon is my go-to actor when I need any outrageous supporting characters. She’s one of those artists who can turn her voice to what feels like absolutely anything.

“And last, but by no means least, is Alan’s daughter, Miranda, who is in the early stages of pursuing an acting career. I auditioned her and she was just right as Annabel and our army of ‘space knights’ with laser lances.” **VORTEX**

THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES THE IMPOSTERS



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CHIMING FOR CHARLEY

Back in 2020, I wrote asking you what had become of series three of the **Charlotte Pollard** adventures. Nick replied to say they were definitely going to happen, but since then... nothing! Please release the good lady from her status of 'pickled in time' and give closure to her followers! Also, I was very impressed by **The Companion Chronicles: Families** box set. Stephen Noonan really sounds like William Hartnell this time. **Mervyn Capel**
Nick: There are scripts drafted for Charlotte Pollard Series Three, Mervyn, but they still need some work. Glad you enjoyed Stephen's performance.

CASTING A SHADOW

In *Vortex 183*, I asked about **Dark Shadows**. It seemed two more mini-series were spoken about that never materialised: *Windcliff* and *Thirteen*. Has there been any movement on any **Dark Shadows** audios? **Charles Mento**

Nick: No movement on this as yet, Charles, apologies.

BRILLIANT BARRABAS

I am loving the new **The Eighth Doctor Adventures** with Audacity and Charley. Such interesting dynamics and stories, but a huge highlight has been Mr Barrabas in the latest *Causeway* box set. You could have a new spin off on your hands with his character, or at least an

unbound box set or a crossover with **The Paternoster Gang**. I really hope this isn't a one-off character and would love to see him woven into more material if that's at all possible.

Caleb Thomas

Nick: Now there's a thought, Caleb.

MORE EARLY DOCTORS?

Thanks for all the wonderful hours of entertainment. I absolutely love the variety of story lengths that come from the multi-episode format of each Doctor's adventures (particularly six-parters). My first two Doctors were the first two Doctors (not by virtue of my



age but by ABC repeat) and they remain my absolute favourites. I note that Doctors 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8 get two releases per year (on top of anything else they appear in beyond their regular adventures, which is brilliant). Is there any chance my top two Doctors (the First and Second) will ever see two releases per year?

Ben Gott

*Nick: The number of releases per Doctor is based on how successful their ranges are – there is a tendency for the older Doctors to sell fewer copies. We are hatching a plan to do two Second Doctor releases per year, Ben, but no news yet on the First Doctor. There is, of course, more First Doctor in **The First Doctor Unbound** range.* **VORTEX**



THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE
POLICE FORCE SEE SOME VERY
DIFFERENT KIND OF STARS...

STAR TURN

THE STAR Cops continue their adventures in **Conflict Part Two: Shadow of the Moonlight** by Mark Wright. David Calder returns as Commander Nathan Spring with Trevor Cooper as Inspector Colin Devis and Linda Newton as Chief Superintendent Pal Kenzy.

Script editor Andrew Smith says: "I gave Mark a briefing on the overall concept of the **Conflict** set we were planning, roughly where his episode sat in that plan and that it might be nice to have a new character included with a link back to the television episodes.

"Beyond that he had free rein to come up with whatever story he fancied, and he's delivered a cracking murder mystery set around the very enticing scenario of a glamorous movie premiere event on the Moon. It's thrilling and clever – and the back story has real heart and pathos.

"And as for the character that ties into the TV series... they're present, and Mark has used that part of the brief very cleverly. It was a treat to have him on board for this series. He's such a **Star Cops** fan, his knowledge and love for the series is evident in his script."

MARK ADMITS he was absolutely delighted to be asked to write a **Star Cops** script. He explains: "I've been knocking on the airlock door literally since the range began, constantly offering Andrew my right arm for the chance to just pitch for the range! **Star Cops** is one of those shows that has always stayed with me and I've frequently been back to it over the years. I love the characters so much. I was in studio at the same time as Andrew back in 2024 where he quietly asked me if I was a **Star Cops** fan and if so, would I like to write for the next series."



Above (l-r): Trevor Cooper, David Calder and Linda Newton

"I had a fairly loose brief to come up with a story that could slot in around the ongoing arc and do its own thing – the International Space Police Force being brilliant doing their important work. I love procedural stuff so I wanted to do a straight down the line murder investigation (albeit with some Hollywood glitz), and also to revisit Nathan's love of movies and movie trivia from the original series. I always found that really fun in the early episodes."

Summing up his script Mark says: "The movie *Shadow of the Moonlight* (couldn't resist a cheeky nod to the TV series theme) is having its premiere at the Rothchester-Remini, one of the Moon's space hotels. The film's a thriller about the International Space Police Force but things become real when actor Striker Torrance is murdered, leading to fears for the life of legendary star and the movie's producer, Coral Goldfinch. Nathan and the team must protect Goldfinch and find the murderer."

"It was yet another dream come true courtesy of Big Finish. A little like writing *Blake's 7*, the rhythms

FOR THE FIRST FEW ADVENTURES, IT WAS ALL ABOUT DAVID, TREVOR AND LINDA'S 'FAMILY' REUNION BUT NOW I FEEL LIKE A COUSIN WHO'S BEEN LET INTO THE FOLD!

HELEN GOLDWYN

of dialogue between Nathan, Kenzy and Devis are all in my head, along with lovely Philip Oliver as Paul. I find a lot of police procedurals are built on the foundations of dialogue between the regulars, and that's key to bringing your audience with you."

DIRECTOR HELEN

Goldwyn tells *Vortex*: "I've been fortunate enough to work on *Star Cops* from the very beginning so this is one of those lovely jobs where it feels like old friends coming back together. For the first few

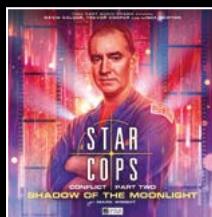
adventures, it was all about David, Trevor and Linda's 'family' reunion but now I feel like a cousin who's been let into the fold!"

"Aside from the fun and laughter we have in the studio, working with David, Trevor and Linda always makes my job easy – they know their characters so well they hardly ever need direction. They're all very experienced and instinctive, and David in particular is brilliant at spotting lines in the script that can be tweaked to convey information in a more succinct 'Nathan' kind of way."

"This script was quite a change from the usual procedural space-based stories as this time Hollywood comes to the Moon! Obviously in the near-future world of *Star Cops*, every industry is interested in being involved in the colonisation of other planets and the entertainment industry is no exception. With a new movie featuring fictional Star Cops, it all turns out to be a bit meta!"

Mark adds: "Working with Andrew is always a joy – he's such a forensic and encouraging script editor – along with Helen on directing duties. And being in studio was brilliant, talking with David, Linda and Trevor, and seeing Philip again for the first time since we recorded *Project: Destiny*. I did the trip from West Yorkshire to London and back on the same day. Linda couldn't believe I'd done that so I could meet the cast and gave me a big hug – and I pointed out that she'd come all the way from Australia!" **VORTEX**

STAR COPS: CONFLICT SHADOW OF THE MOONLIGHT



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WE'RE STEPPING BACK
ALMOST SEVEN YEARS TO
COMPLETE THE CELEBRATION
OF THE LEGACY OF TIME...



THE GOOD COMPANIONS

BIG FINISH marked its 20th anniversary in 2019 with a very special multi-part story *The Legacy of Time* which featured Tom Baker, Peter Davison, Colin Baker, Sylvester McCoy and Paul McGann, plus Tim Treloar as the Third Doctor – oh, and David Tennant appeared too! And now we're going to find out more about the first two incarnations of the Doctor in **The Companion Chronicles: The Legacy of Time**.

The First and Second Doctors will meet faces from their futures in this double release. In the opening instalment, the First Doctor (Stephen Noonan) crashes into a confrontation between the Brigadier and the Master (Jon Culshaw) – and the Master's brought a kraken to the fight!

Then the Second Doctor (Michael Troughton) has an adventure with two future companions – Harry Sullivan (Christopher Naylor) and Naomi Cross (Eleanor Crooks) – as a ferocious sea besieges a mysterious warehouse.

Producer Dominic G. Martin says: “It was a thrill to be asked to do these stories. I really enjoyed the original *The Legacy of Time* stories, they were a lot of fun – so to find out that Big Finish actually had plans to cover what the First and Second Doctor were doing during those adventures was tremendously interesting to me. It fills in the gaps and you have an added bonus to the original release a few years down the line.

“I took on these productions much nearer the beginning of my time at Big Finish so this release has been in

the works for a while. I remember when David Richardson passed over being producer to me, I was terribly keen to get started. Overseeing stories by the lovely Barbara Hamby and Simon Guerrier, both of whom are spectacularly talented writers, was a joy. The younger me was incredibly excited and the older me finds it thrilling that this duology is nearly out.

“The format of these adventures isn’t the typical **Companion Chronicles** style as the range usually excels on being two-handers. This time they’re full-cast adventures, ensuring the companions are the focus, so you have the Brigadier as the lead character in *The Kraken of Hagwell*, and Naomi and Harry in *The Heartless Sea*, all of which aren’t

your typical companions as usually featured in a **Companion Chronicle**.

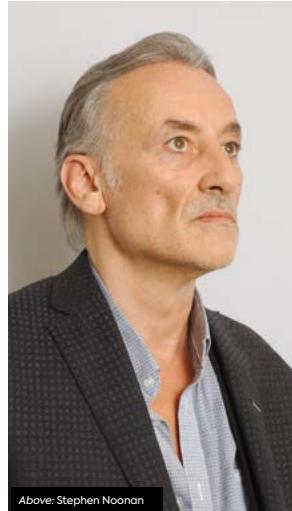
"It's always fun to expand the roster for a special occasion. We have Doctors involved, both the First and Second Doctors, and following on from *Families* they're once again played by actors Stephen Noonan and Michael Troughton respectively. This is actually Michael's first appearance as the Second Doctor in **The Companion Chronicles** range. Everyone has done a sterling job."

THE KRAKEN of *Hagwell* opens the set. Author Barbara, an acclaimed science fiction novelist who makes her Big Finish debut with this set, says: "I was delighted to be asked to write a Big Finish audio adventure for **Doctor Who**. I've been a fan of the Doctor since I first saw the television episode *The Face of Evil* at a science fiction convention in 1982. I've been a regular attendee at the Gallifrey One conventions in Los Angeles, and in the Green Room there I've met a number of Big Finish staff and freelancers. At the 2020 Gallifrey One, I asked about writing for Big Finish and was offered this slot writing for **The Companion Chronicles**. They asked which companion I would like and I responded immediately with the Brigadier. The Brigadier is one of my absolute favourite characters, not only as the head of UNIT but as one of the Doctor's best friends on Earth."

"Big Finish wanted a story about the Brigadier working with the First Doctor before the First Doctor meets him in the TV episode *The Three Doctors*, so when they do meet, the Doctor doesn't know who the heck this spit-and-polish officer is and why this officer knows him. In other words – it's the first time the Doctor meets the Brigadier. That was wonderful for me. Plus, I got to write my favourite incarnation of the Master as originally played by the late Roger Delgado and voiced by Jon. Three of my favourite characters in the whole of the series! These were the highlights for me."

"It took five years for the story to work through the production schedule (due partly to COVID), but for me it's been well worth the wait."

THE HEARTLESS Sea is the second adventure in this set. Simon says: "Script editor Matt



Above: Stephen Noonan

THE DOCTOR DOESN'T KNOW WHO THE HECK THIS SPIT- AND-POLISH OFFICER IS...

BARBARA HAMBLY

Fitton originally got in touch about this in 2020 when we were still in lockdown. Big Finish was working out how to continue recording when all the studios were closed so they'd carried out an audit of Doctors and companions with the ability to record from home. Chris Naylor, playing Harry Sullivan, had all the right kit so I was asked to write a **Companion Chronicle** for him and – just to mix things up a bit – the Second Doctor.

"Matt and David Richardson suggested a story set at sea and told me about Naomi, this new character they'd created. They thought it might be fun if I divided the story between Naomi and Harry, each of them telling half the adventure – and the structure of *The Heartless Sea* came out of that."

How did Simon find writing for this Doctor and companion combination? He replies: "It was great fun! Matt initially told me that Naomi was sort

of like Sarah Jane Smith but as an ordinary soldier. Then he shared the scripts of her first few stories which gave me a good sense of her and of her relationship with Harry. But putting Harry with the Second Doctor makes for a very different dynamic. Harry is from the Doctor's future so knows stuff the Doctor doesn't and is a few steps ahead. Harry and the Second Doctor are also both rather comic characters, so it was fun playing that against the serious, spooky plot."

Asked for a highlight, Simon says: "Well, just as we were starting, Matt asked if I could add in one last thing, and that bit ended up being the first scene I wrote. I won't spoil it, but you'll probably recognise what it was when you hear it."

Dominic adds: "The edits are coming along fabulously. We have some wonderful sound design from the maestro that is Richard Fox who has always done exemplary work on **The Companion Chronicles** range. He has created a marvellous score and SFX on these two episodes; they're both quite immersive, along with their watery themes."

"It's just been a joy to work with everyone on this. It was my first time working with Nicholas Briggs as the director and it was a delight to be his right-hand man for a couple of days, working with all the cast. It's always a privilege to be with other talented creatives in this field and create something that I hope people will enjoy." **VORTEX**

THE COMPANION CHRONICLES THE LEGACY OF TIME



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IRWIN ALLEN'S THE TIME TUNNEL
RETURNS WITH THREE NEW ADVENTURES...



TIC-TOC GENERATION

THE SECOND release in BIG FINISH's revival of 1960s sci-fi show **Irwin Allen's The Time Tunnel** is on its way.

In 1979, 20 years after it was set up, *Project Tic-Toc* was shut down by the American authorities. All hope of retrieving scientists Tony Newman and Doug Phillips, who were lost in the *Time Tunnel* during 1968 has been abandoned.

But in 2025, four people are brought together by a need to reopen the Arizona base and reactivate the *Time Tunnel* in secret. From there they

must try to find Doug or Tony, because something they have done in the past has changed the present. And not changed it for the better... the world is now under the power of Rakervia...

The three stories in this second set, *The Dimensions of Time*, are: *Families and Lies* by Mark B Oliver, *Divine Intervention* by Lisa McMullin and *Rendezvous With Tomorrow* by Gary Hopkins. Regular cast members from the first series, Rachel Handshaw (as Clare MacGregor), Safiyya Ingar (MB), Jay Reum (Cole Smith) and Seán Carlsen (Lewis Haworth) all return.

The first adventure is *Families and Lies*. Cole arrives, alone, in Greenwich Village, Manhattan on Saturday, 28th June 1969 the day before the Stonewall uprising. With Lewis and MB nowhere to be found, he forges new friendships, but they have their own troubles.

Co-producer and director Gary Russell says: "This first episode takes us back to 1969 in New York, on the night of the Stonewall riots. It's very much a Cole-centric story because at the end of the previous season he was thrown into the Time Tunnel to join the other two. It's a very powerful



Above (l-r): Kim Tatum,
Jay Reum and Safiyya Ingabar

THEY SAY 'NEVER MEET YOUR HEROES' BUT NOBODY WARNS YOU ABOUT MEETING THEM IN BATTLE.

LISA McMULLIN

and emotional story. Mark really did his research; it works as a piece of drama with a little science fiction bent. And there's a real *Time Tunnel* moment slap in the middle of it that changes everything up a gear."

Writer Mark says: "When Gary sent through the series proposal that set out the new characters and the background for the continuation, it was the first I'd heard of Big Finish bringing this classic back to life. He very kindly wondered if I'd be interested in contributing, and I nearly bit his hand off!"

"Gary wanted my story to be Cole-centric, which was lovely. Cole is a terrific character, and I very much enjoyed writing for him. It's a story

about families, both biological and found, and is driven, I hope, by the strong relationships between the characters. Cole arrives in Manhattan in the late 1960s and immediately finds himself in trouble. He's rescued by Lily and is drawn into the increasingly dangerous situation that she, and her landlady the indomitable Mrs H, find themselves in."

GARY CONTINUES: "The second episode is very much what I wanted to do right from the outset. I told Lisa that I wanted something very female-centric and she came up with a couple of ideas – I latched onto Joan of Arc because it's a

story that fascinates me. *Divine Intervention* is a really fun story, with a lovely cast."

Lisa tells *Vortex*: "Gary and I discussed a few interesting historical figures but we were both particularly excited by Joan of Arc. Regardless of your opinions on religion and faith, and whether you believe she was acting under divine instruction or not, it's hard to deny that a 19-year-old woman facing off against the English military is pretty impressive.

"Our *Time Tunnel* team get caught up in the siege and battle of Orleans... and discover they're on the wrong side. I've always thought of Joan as a heroic if tragic figure – I think even here in the UK we see her as the protagonist, never the antagonist. But she was fighting against the English.

"I enjoyed playing with the dilemma of MB and Cole (our heroes) finding themselves in the not-so-enviable position of possibly having to go into battle against Joan of Arc: a figure they've always admired. They say 'never meet your heroes' but nobody warns you about meeting them in battle!"

RENDEZVOUS WITH

Tomorrow by Gary Hopkins concludes this set. Producer Gary explains: "The third story takes us back to the very beginning – not our beginning but the whole of *The Time Tunnel*'s start. We rendezvous on the *Titanic* pretty shortly after the end of episode one of the original TV series which featured Tony and Doug blithely not giving a damn about treading on butterflies and basically trying to stop the *Titanic* being sunk – and of course, that has consequences. We explore those consequences and also feature the return of Tony and Doug because I wanted to tell their story, to see if we could find a way to possibly get them home."

"We were unable to get the two original actors back, sadly. James Darren passed away shortly after we'd got in touch and Robert Colbert was just not available to do so, so I had to cast two magnificent new actors to play them. I sent various audition tapes over to Legendary, who have the rights to *Irwin's Allen's The Time Tunnel*, and they came back and said we think this actor for Doug and that for Tony –



Above (l-r): Flavie Ravenhill and Rachel Handshaw

fortunately they were the two that I wanted! So Tony is played by Todd Kramer and Doug by Mark Arnold.

"In *Rendezvous With Tomorrow* we find out what happened to them after 60 odd years floating around the Time Tunnel being bounced around the history and future of Earth. It's lovely to be able to pick up that story and give it a certain resolution."

Writer Gary says: "The brief for this one mapped out a story arc of sorts for the new main characters, with a narrative focus on a lot of what would end up in the opening episode.

"I knew where it would start, a little of what the characters' journeys would be, and where I needed them to be at the end of six episodes. I also knew by then that I'd be writing the finale of this set of adventures, and that I wanted it to be suitably climactic. And given that it was also going to be an episode linking up directly with the original series,

I WANTED TO FIND THE HUMOUR WHEREVER POSSIBLE...

GARY HOPKINS

it made sense to me that it should circle back to the very first TV episode *Rendezvous With Yesterday*.

"I found myself thinking about another Irwin Allen production, *The Poseidon Adventure*, when writing some scenes of the *Titanic* taking its final plunge. *Rendezvous With Tomorrow* is very much a character piece about love and self-sacrifice.

"I was keen not to reference any of the real-life people in the real-life tragedy, steering even further

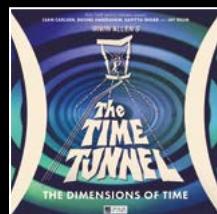
away from it than *Rendezvous With Yesterday* had done while trying to make the characters feel authentic. But of course, this is **Irwin Allen's The Time Tunnel** and so there are plenty of twists and turns along the way. Fans of *Rendezvous With Yesterday* should have some fun with the sequel.

"I love the new main characters that have been created for the audios, and I particularly enjoyed giving them a lot of quick-fire banter to lighten the gloom of what was, after all, one of the worst maritime disasters in history. I wanted to find the humour wherever possible, without taking anything away from the awfulness of what happened. I've always been fascinated by the story of the *Titanic*, and never found quite the right vehicle to incorporate it until this particular project came along. At which point all the different pieces seemed to fall neatly into place."

Producer Gary concludes: "Mark Hendrick's done some brilliant work on sound design and music. He's working on six stories, all in different time zones across the two box sets, and thematically has managed to link them together. He did lovely recreations of all the 1960s sound effects.

"And we have the great artist Rafe Wallbank doing the cover. I gave Rafe very simple, basic idea for the artwork - I like single images or indeed, giant logos. He's done something that really sells the series to you." **VORTEX**

IRWIN ALLEN'S THE TIME TUNNEL THE DIMENSIONS OF TIME



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