

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX

ISSUE 206
APRIL 2026

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FEAR OF THE LIGHT

THE DOCTOR SENDS A DISTRESS CALL, IN DESPERATE NEED OF RESCUE. IT'S ANSWERED BY ONE OF HIS OLDEST FRIENDS, AND DEADLIEST FOES... THE RANI.

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INTO THE CHAOS

The audio drama revival of the classic fantasy children's television series **Sky**, created by Bob Baker and Dave Martin, continues in June with *Into the Chaos*.

In 1975, the alien Sky arrived on Earth and befriended a group of children. In 2025, he returned. And now, in 2026, the planet is in dire trouble. As a result of Sky's presence, the Earth has been covered in a calyx, a deadly web of foliage which blocks out the sun. It's up to the unearthly traveller and his friends to save the planet – but they might need the help of Sky's own people.

The three episodes in this box set, all written by Gary Hopkins, are: *The Confluence*, *The Place of Darkness* and *This Far and No Further*.

Producer and director Gary Russell says: "In *Before the Chaos*, we saw Sky return to Earth and try to be a hero by confronting Goodchild one last time. But that left our world in peril as nature proved stronger than nurture and planet Earth's vegetation fought back. And won.

"In *Into the Chaos* we get an opportunity to see others from Sky's race – the Travellers – and find out whether they are as willing to help save the planet as Sky was. Arby and Rebecca have a family reunion they were never expecting and see a side of Sky even they never imagined possible – and they realise just how chained Sky can be by their own innate morality." **VORTEX**

SKY INTO THE CHAOS

- RELEASED: JUNE 2026
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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Above (l-r): Jonathon Carley and Siobhan Redmond

EDITORIAL

SOMETIMES, WORKING on *Vortex* gives me the chance to interview fantastic actors, many of whom are instantly recognisable to Big Finish fans.

For example, I've been lucky enough to interview Tom Baker, Christopher Eccleston and Jodie Whittaker, and I'll always be grateful to Nicholas Briggs for putting Sheridan Smith on the phone to me for a chat.

One of the most delightful people I've spoken with is Siobhán Redmond, a fellow Scot, whose work I've loved since the early 1990s. She was actually part of my 20th birthday celebrations although she wasn't there in person – let me explain! My dear friend Alison hosted a party in 1994 where some of us watched the Republic of Ireland beat Italy at the World Cup. And this was then followed by every episode of the BBC sitcom *The High Life*.

For those who don't know, *The High Life* takes place on the fictional Scottish airline Air Scotia, with the cast consisting of Alan Cumming (just a year after appearing in the Nicholas Briggs-scripted *The Airzone Solution*), Big Finish guest actor Forbes Masson (*The Crown*), Patrick Ryecart (*The Trial of a Time Lord's Crozier*) and Siobhán playing Shona Spurtle.

Siobhán was, of course, brilliant and I've followed her career ever since: she was heartbreakingly good during a run in *Holby City*. So, to be given the chance to speak with her a few years ago during her first appearances as the Rani was great – and then to speak again this month was just a joy.

She also went to the same school as my mum! Here's to more Rani returns! **VORTEX**



QUEEN OF THE TIME WAR?

FLEEING FROM *the Daleks, the Doctor sends a distress call in desperate need of rescue. It's answered by one of his oldest friends and deadliest foes... the Rani. In the midst of the Time War, the Doctor must now consider the unthinkable. Can he set their differences aside and work with the Rani – to change the future of the universe?*

Jonathon Carley and Siobhán Redmond star in **The War Doctor Rises: Fear of the Light** by Rochana Patel, as the Doctor's old friend from the Time Lord Academy is back in audio for the first time in 11 years. Long before Anita Dobson and Archie Panjabi succeeded Kate O'Mara in the part on television, Siobhán played the

role in the Big Finish audios *The Rani Elite* and *Planet of the Rani*.

Producer David Richardson says: "Well, the Rani has been on my radar for about 10 years actually! I'd always wanted to bring Siobhán back for more after the two **The Monthly Adventures** stories she appeared in, but the rights were not available at the time and it became a waiting



Above: Jonathon Carley

ROCHANA SAYS of the Rani: “She’s a thrilling character to have in a story, because we now have a vast amount of off-screen character development which we can start to explore. TV episode *The Reality War* aired in May, I was pitching this in June, and here we are – less than a year later – about to dive into what happened between her on-screen adventures.

“We’re rejoining her story in the middle of the Time War, but where does this exiled Time Lord stand on the conflict? Is she a participant? What’s she been doing? What are her plans? These are all questions



Above (l-r): Jonathon Carley and Siobhan Redmond

game. But when the situation changed it seemed like a wonderful opportunity to pair the Rani with the War Doctor in the Time War.

“They’ve always been diametrically opposed individuals: how has that changed now that he is a warrior and she is fending for herself in a universe gone mad? They are front and centre in almost every scene of a story that explores the history and dynamic of their relationship. Rochana’s script is a belter. Absolutely stunning. Jonathon and Siobhán are electrifying together.”

WELL, THE RANI HAS BEEN ON MY RADAR FOR ABOUT 10 YEARS ACTUALLY!

DAVID RICHARDSON

that *Fear of the Light* answers. It’s very much the missing piece...

“I set out to do a character-piece about the War Doctor and the Rani, knowing that the Time War would make a fascinating backdrop. The Doctor no longer holds the moral high ground, so just how different are they at this point in their lives? I had ideas about how their dynamic would work, but when you’re doing a deep character dive across a three-hour story, it can be surprising what surfaces. I could have happily written another nine episodes of these two working through their differences!



Above (l-r): Thomas Arnold, Siobhán Redmond and Jonathon Carley



Above: Ony Uhlara

"The Doctor and the Rani have a complex relationship. They're the same age. They went to the Academy together. They've known each other a very long time. There's admiration. There's hate. There's history. However, if you've ever been to a school reunion, you'll know the past can be a very subjective place..."

It's not just the Rani who's returning in this story but her bat-like subservients, the Tetraps which appeared on TV in *Time and the Rani*, too. And they've had a bit of an upgrade.

"Yes, the Tetraps are back!" Rochana confirms. "They're a fascinating species with lots of story potential that can be used in many different ways. The last time we encountered them they were just

YES, THE TETRAPS ARE BACK!

ROCHANA PATEL

brutish henchman who betrayed and strung up the Rani, which is a behaviour she would never tolerate, but nature is her plaything and she can easily fix problems like that..."

THE COVER for this release features a lot of Daleks – some familiar, some less so...

Rochana explains "I'm a huge fan of Dalek variants. I knew I wanted a bucket load of them on the cover – so very deliberately set out to get them by purposefully giving the cover artist lots to work with! In story-terms it helps keep the Daleks feeling fresh. They've been exterminating people for 60-odd years now, so it never hurts to push them in slightly new directions. Also, don't miss the Rani's TARDIS tucked away in the top right-hand corner."

The studio recordings were overseen by director Ken Bentley. He tells *Vortex*: "Siobhán's amazing. I can't believe it's been 10 years since we last recorded the Rani with her. I hope we're going to make up for

Return of the Rani

MORE THAN a decade ago, the Sixth Doctor faced his amoral Time Lord rival, the Rani, in a pair of **The Monthly Adventures**.

Following the passing of Kate O'Mara, Pip and Jane Baker's creation regenerated in the form of Siobhán Redmond who featured in the Big Finish audios *The Rani Elite* and *Planet of the Rani*.

At that point, Peter Capaldi was the Doctor on television and Michelle Gomez was Missy, leading to a plethora of Scots Time Lords. Issues over the rights to the Rani went into flux but happily have now been resolved.

Talking to *Vortex*, Siobhán says: "I was amazed that a, the rights situation was cleared up in the end and b, that Big Finish wanted me back. I thought they might have just moved on, but it is a delight to return.

"I'm still as ignorant about the whole **Doctor Who** universe as ever I was because that's the only way through it for me now! There's so much homework that I would have to do. If I were to start at the very beginning, I would have room for nothing else in my life!

"I said yes as soon as Big Finish got in touch. These days, I have no hesitation about doing anything that I think will be fun or interesting – the Rani falls into both of those categories for me. I really like working for Big Finish, they're a very warm and welcoming company with a family feeling."

The Rani had been absent from the Whoniverse for a decade before she returned on TV last year, played by Anita Dobson before bi-generating into Archie Panjabi. Siobhán was well aware of the developments thanks to a friend with a big connection to **Doctor Who**.

Siobhán explains: "Yes, I was aware she had been back. Not because I watched it, but because Joe Ahearne told me. He's a great friend of mine and he directed some of Christopher Eccleston's episodes. He's still in touch with everything that goes on in the **Doctor Who** universe."

And what a time for the Rani to

return as she leaps straight into the Time War – she is back with a bang.

Siobhán agrees: "She certainly is. She's fun to play. She's smart – nearly as smart as she thinks she is!"

The War Doctor Rises: *Fear of the Light* box set sees her appearing alongside the War Doctor, originated by Sir John Hurt and now played for Big Finish by Jonathon Carley.

Siobhán continues: "When you hear Jonathon doing the voice, it's extraordinary, isn't it? Absolutely amazing. And he was delightful to work with too. He was able to guide me to places when I wasn't entirely sure what was going on.

"We had a really lovely time recording *Fear of the Light*, although as is often the case these days, some people have the facility to be able to record from home, so you only meet a certain number of the people that you're working with in real life, which is a shame. But it was a very warm and lovely experience and I was very glad to be back."

The relationship between the Rani and the Doctor has always been wonderfully antagonistic, but there promises to be a new dynamic with this battle-hardened warrior incarnation.

"Yes," Siobhán agrees. "It was an interesting part and I'm very much looking forward to hearing it when it's released."

Siobhán was reunited with producer David Richardson and director Ken Bentley, as she returned to the Rani. "It was lovely to see them again," she says, "as they're very funny. That makes a big difference really, particularly in these gloomy times through which we're all struggling."

For Siobhán, one of the delights of playing the part is getting to say lines that she wouldn't normally get to do in other productions. She tells *Vortex*: "I like how she dishes it out, for want of an expression. I like the fact that she's not backwards in coming forwards with her opinion."

Vortex suggests this is a Scottish trait. "Oh, absolutely," Siobhán agrees. **VORTEX**



Above: Siobhán Redmond

lost time because she's terrific in the role. Most of my life is spent listening to voices and Siobhán's Rani with Jonathon's War Doctor are two of the most captivating voices to listen to."

Speaking of whom, Jonathon says: "Completely selfishly, if the Rani was to come back on audio, I'm glad it was with me. When the scripts came through for *Fear of the Light*, I was actually expecting a different story, which has now been reshuffled in the release schedule. So when I saw the Rani listed in the cast I was completely blindsided – I re-read it about 15 times to be sure! Only two years absent from any medium, after the Rani could make a big come back and then do it again within a year. Rani does mean Queen after all.

"We know the Doctor and the Rani have a long history that has been alluded to in the occasional appearances – and which most recently suggested they were closer than we perhaps first thought. With that fresh and present in my mind, I was really excited to dig deeper into just what the relationship between these characters was and is. What did they mean to each other then and emotionally how do they feel about each other now?"



Above: Jonathon Carley

“Unlike with the Master who has so much relatively recent history with the Doctor and a current, ongoing antagonistic relationship, there is so much distance and ambiguity between the Doctor and the Rani; there is a lot of ground to explore. Will the universe going to hell in a handcart force them to be honest with each other? Forgive each other? Betray each other? It’s juicy stuff. I’m sure many of us can relate to having had someone in our lives we’re so close to that we innocently, hopefully or naively think we’ll be connected to forever, until by choice or circumstance we aren’t. This story is very much about confronting that. I think there are moments and themes about

how we perceive ourselves, what motivates change within us or our relationships and how we respond to that, which will really resonate with listeners. It’s a very honest and affecting script by Rochana.”

JONATHON WAS

particularly delighted to be working with Siobhán. He explains: “No disrespect to anybody else because they are all so consistently fantastic, but Siobhán is hands down one of my favourite guest actors I have ever worked with. I was a little bit intimidated at first because she is a very experienced and respected stage actor, but she is completely down to Earth with a dry sense of humour – a very playful and

generous performer. Also with her accent, every line sounds like poetry, you can’t help but listen. Siobhán’s Rani is icy but with a dark twinkle you can’t help but be drawn to. By the end of day one I said, ‘She’s my Rani.’

“What is even more incredible is that Siobhán has never seen an episode of **Doctor Who** and doesn’t have a TV, so she has no reference for the lore and backstory. But she just completely authentically gets the character of the Rani and lifts her off the page. We have a lot of meaty scenes together with just the two of us, but she made it so easy it was just a pleasure from start to finish. I really hope we can bring her back again or we get to work together on something else one day.”

Jonathon concludes: “A broad highlight was just the script, reading it before the recording I was in awe as it really went to places I didn’t expect. It gets deeply emotional, real and relatable in its own right, whilst also connecting the threads between TV stories and the pre-history, without either getting in the way of each other. There’s a meaningfulness that I think elevates the Rani and shines a different light on what we have seen and heard before.

“There was a scene that unexpectedly got to me emotionally and after we recorded it I had to take a moment. For anyone who has struggled with hardship and recognising their worth, value and identity, I hope this speaks to you as much as it did to me. Keep going!” **VORTEX**

THE WAR DOCTOR RISES FEAR OF THE LIGHT



■ RELEASED: MAY 2026
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

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DOCTOR WHO THE SECRET HISTORY



FOR A CHARACTER who only appeared on screen in two television stories, the Meddling Monk has become a real audio fan favourite whether played by Graeme Garden, Rufus Hound or Gemma Whelan. Big Finish's first interpretation of the Monk was played by former Goodie Graeme, who initially featured in **The Eighth Doctor Adventures** range, before making a surprise appearance in **The Monthly Adventures** when it was revealed that he was behind the locum Doctor's adventures.

The 200th **Monthly Adventure**, *The Secret History*, was written by Eddie Robson. Eddie says: "It was great getting to write for the Monk. I've been a huge fan of the television story *The Time Meddler* since the 1992 repeat on BBC2. Oddly, the reaction at the time seemed to be that it was a bit boring, yet it's one of the best loved William Hartnell stories now. I thought the Monk was great. Peter Butterworth is wonderful in the part – it's a shame he got nudged out of **Doctor Who** by the Master. But it's fantastic that Big Finish brought him back, I think Paul Cornell's novel *No Future* showed how much potential there is in the character."

THE MONK'S cheeky nature does set him apart from the Doctor's other main Time Lord adversary.

"I find the Monk quite distinct from the Master," continues Eddie. "The humour is part of that, but the Monk really doesn't think he's the bad guy, he's just got a different philosophy from the Doctor. Whereas with the Master, it's clearly very personal between them – and that's not new. The Delgado Master used to do stuff to wind the Doctor up and you do wonder what's more important to him, his own gain or antagonising the Doctor."

"I think it's best to keep the Monk concerned with what he can do with time travel, he doesn't want power or to invade planets or whatever, he wants to remake history to his own design. Funnily enough, the story of *The Secret History* – where he wants to take the Doctor's place – is rather

like what the Master does in the TV episode *The Power of the Doctor!*"

Writing *The Secret History* posed some issues for the writer as the Fifth Doctor was paired with Steven and Vicki.

Eddie explains: "There were two main challenges. The first was the period setting, which was much harder than I expected. I haven't written that many **Doctor Who** stories in period settings, but *Industrial Evolution*, for example, was much easier to do as the Victorian era is very familiar and I got a good sense of the type of setting I wanted by reading *Hard Times* and *North and South*. For this one in sixth century Constantinople, it was easy enough to find out the big historical stuff but I kept getting lost on the detail. Things like how people actually related to each other, what day-to-day life was like.

"The other challenge was making sense of the whole 'Doctors out of time' concept. It's obviously loads of fun and I jumped at the chance to be part of it. But, since I was writing the last episode, I had to work out a lot of the mechanics of why the Monk is doing things and bring it all to a satisfying end." **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO THE SECRET HISTORY



- RELEASED: JUNE 2015
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THE DOCTOR AND YAZ ARE SET TO FIND THEY HAVE THEIR OWN...



TOURIST TROUBLES

THE DOCTOR and Yaz must infiltrate the Aegis Protectorate interplanetary defence expo in search of someone who has been dogging their travels. As the Doctor digs into the company's main export – the sinister Trojan Program – Yaz faces a battle of her own. Will they finally uncover the truth about the Tourist?

Writer Noga Flaishon (also the series producer) says: "So, from

previous episodes we know that the Doctor and Yaz left the rest of the family on Earth and continued on their own, travelling through time and space. Recently, the Doctor realised they were being tailed. A mysterious entity calling itself the Tourist has been following them, possessing people along their path and sending them cryptic messages and coordinates. One

led them to the planet Rock where combatants were kidnapped from Earth to generate profit for an arms dealer, and more recently to 1920s London where the Tourist finally engaged in conversation. They are not out to harm the doctor; they are desperate for help.

"I think of *Aegis* as the mid-season finale. I knew right from the start that if I wanted to write an episode,



Above: Jodie Whittaker

I would have to do a later one. As the producer, I read everyone else's scripts which put me in a great position to tie up some plot threads, reveal villains in all their glory and answer questions posed by previous writers in this range."

Summing up the adventure, Noga reveals: "The Doctor has decided it's time to get some answers so Yaz and the Doctor infiltrate the Aegis Protectorate interplanetary defence expo in search of the Tourist. It's an action-packed sci-fi story testing the bond between the Doctor and Yaz – how well do they actually know one another?"

In addition to Jodie Whittaker (the Doctor), Mandip Gill (Yaz) and Maddison Bullyment (the Tourist), the guest cast assembled by director Ken Bentley includes Juliet Aubrey as Athena Nikos, Jason Forbes as Prospero and Shoga Miyakita as the Mech Soldiers.

Ken says: "Shogo's got a terrific voice, perfect for tough soldier-

**I JUST TRY TO
MAKE SURE
EVERYBODY'S
ENJOYING
THEMSELVES.**

KEN BENTLEY

types. And Juliet has played sinister powerful women for me in the past so I knew she'd relish playing Athena. The Tourist is an interesting character, bouncing between angry and powerful, childlike and vulnerable. Maddison has a playful energy as an actor so I knew they'd be able to bring the character to life."

How does Ken find studio days and building up the energy in the room?

He explains: "I just try to make sure everybody's enjoying themselves. Having fun is an enthusiastic energy, it's something you do on the front foot, ready to laugh at a joke or to make one. It's something you do in the moment, and that's what acting is, responding to the moment the characters are in."

Noga adds: "The recording day was a real highlight. Hearing actors bringing my script to life always was and will be my favourite part of the job, and the fact that the Tourist was played by my friend (and absolute performance powerhouse) Maddison was just the cherry on top – they are a phenomenal and generous performer, and I adore listening to them."

CONTINUING HIS work on this series is composer/sound designer Joe Kraemer.

Joe says: "I have loved being involved on this range. It's been really delightful getting to know the Thirteenth Doctor and Yaz through the intimacy of audio drama, especially working on both the music and the sound where I can hear the actors themselves develop aspects of their characterization across the different takes and scenes.

"I really am both delighted and honoured to have been assigned this 12-episode run by Big Finish, which has allowed me to make it 'mine'. I've developed musical themes across the six episodes I've worked on so far, and have also been able to create a consistency in the sound design that has been pleasing to me. I hope the listeners agree!

"With *Aegis* in particular, it was great to revisit the character of Prospero, wonderfully performed by Jason, and to adapt the sound treatment of his voice to the new body he has in this story. Related to his character are the Trojans, mech-soldiers of Aegis, and their voices were also fun to create.

"There's an aspect of this story that takes place in a sort of surreal 'mindscape' and that has been a pleasure to explore with sound design. As a composer, this adventure offered a number of welcome opportunities, including the chance to write a big, bombastic 'theme-tune' for the Aegis Corporation, which I treated as a sort of satirical take on the commercialisation of the military



Above: Mandip Gill

and the creation of weapons. I also wrote a theme for the Tourist, which was gratifying for me, as it gave me a chance to reflect on this character's qualities in a musical setting."

RAFE WALLBANK has also worked on each of the stories, creating the covers in the style used to promote **Doctor Who** on television. He admits: "It's definitely taken a bit of getting used to as it's a bit different from what I usually do for cover art! However, the uniformity and consistency are quite satisfying when seeing them side-by-side. They remind me of the DVD volumes they used to put out for the first five series of the revival when I was younger, so it's almost a bit of a nostalgic throwback.

"I have had two big joys with the job of making these covers. The first has been the opportunity to comp-together and 'Frankenstein' some unique new monsters. My early exposure to **Doctor Who** growing up was classic stories on DVD, as well as the first Russell T Davies and early Steven Moffat eras on TV, both of which featured creature designs from Neill Gorton's crew that tended to mash up animal and human features. My designs for the vampire and armadillo aliens on the covers are a definite pastiche/homage to those fabulous prosthetics.

"The second joy is less to do with the actual crafting of the covers and more to do with after they've been released. I've often seen clips of interviews of Jodie on social media

talking about how proud she is of the role of the Doctor and how much fun she's had with it – both on screen as well as in the world of audio (sometimes alongside an image of one of the covers). It's when I see these clips that I truly feel honoured and proud to be able to contribute to such a loving project, and I hope my contributions do justice to such a talented and passionate actor.

"Another thing is that I've been able to feature a couple of my close friends as the monsters on the covers which has been fun!"

Rafe concludes: "Starting with the previous episode, *The Violet Hour*, I had begun to experiment with the set layout and *Aegis* continues this. When reading the brief, the idea of a 'crustacean mech' made this story the one I was most anticipating making the cover for! I knew I wanted it to be quite aquatic with lots of ocean elements and teal-y blue tones. When I originally sent the cover off for approval I had created the 'crab robot' as a biomechanical creature that used images of a real crab – but I was then told that the crustacean description was not to be taken so literally!

"I'm very fond of the final crab robot and I think the ocean floor element towards the bottom creates a lovely, unique look for this particular story. I also got to use a not-usually-seen outfit for Yaz (intentionally recoloured to evoke the Tenth Doctor's standard outfit, just because!)." **VORTEX**

THE THIRTEENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES AEGIS



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'WOOD WONDERING

May I begin by saying how much I have loved your incredible **Torchwood** range? I am also adoring everything coming from the Thirteenth Doctor's era too – **The Fugitive Doctor**, **Call Me Master**, and the Jodie and Mandip stories (can we get Roy Gill to write something for Jodie please?!). I am curious to know if the **Torchwood Legacy** releases

will be on physical media. After 10 years of collecting, it would be a shame not to have this celebratory event on disc (be it CD or vinyl!). Keep up the fantastic work.

Ben Ripley

*Nick: Glad you're loving all those releases, Ben. Roy always delivers great work, so fingers crossed for that. There are still discussions to be had about **Torchwood: Legacy**.*

PRESS ON DEMAND?

Following the recent discussion on CDs and downloads, would it be possible to do some sort of create-a-CD on demand, where the price is greatly reduced for pre-orders?

Stephanie Gelder

Nick: We're always looking into ways to make our products available via a variety of formats, Stephanie.

VERY MASTERFUL

Congratulations on the extension of the **Doctor Who** licence through 2035! My favourite **Doctor Who** villain is the Master, and I especially enjoy the classic dynamic between the Third Doctor and the Delgado Master. However, I often wonder how it would have been if the Master – and particularly which Master – had appeared on screen during Jon Pertwee's first and final year. So, with this speculation in mind, my question to you is: does Big Finish consider Roger Delgado as the incumbent Master during Season Seven? Similarly, does Big Finish consider the Delgado Master to be the incumbent incarnation during Season Eleven of the Pertwee era? Thank you again for all your wonderful stories and best wishes for the rest of this year!

Chris McKeon

Nick: There's no real policy decision on this, Chris, but I would say that Roger Delgado was definitely the Pertwee-era Master.

TWELVE PART MASTERPLANS

After the successful releases of *The Last Day* and *Hooklight*, do you currently have any plans to develop further 12-part epics for any of the Doctors? I'd be particularly excited to hear one for the Third Doctor!

Elijah Snyder

Nick: Oooh, now you've got me thinking! **VORTEX**



THE DOCTOR AND ALEX FIND
THINGS ARE BECOMING EVEN
MORE UNUSUAL IN THE
UNCHARTED UNIVERSE...

STRANGER THINGS

THE EIGHTH Doctor's adventures continue in **Time War Uncharted**. *Branches*, as he and his great-grandson Alex explore a mysterious new universe on the trail of their lost friend Cass.

Paul McGann, with Sonny McGann and Emma Campbell-Jones, continue their adventures as the search leads

to a series of surprising encounters for the TARDIS crew as they attempt to cross from one end of an unfamiliar universe to the other. There's Cassie, this universe's swashbuckling version of Cass. There are the Daleks - but not as the Doctor's ever seen them before.

Charting the Uncharted, they will discover what became of the Daleks in

this universe, and that someone else has come looking for them... Susan!

Producer Matt Fitton says: "This is the third box set of the **Uncharted** run, where we have the Doctor and his great-grandson Alex, who's been restored to him from another universe in the past, stuck in a strange alternate universe, the Uncharted.



Above: Daphne Ashbrook

It's a place where time and space seem to work slightly differently, even though it has really strong echoes of the Doctor's own universe.

"They're gradually working out what's going on here, what are the differences, where things have changed course. So, for example, the Time Lords have been usurped by Sontarans. There don't seem to be any Daleks around at all so far.

"One of the other things that's happened is they keep losing Cass. We begin volume three with the Doctor and Alex reunited after a tricky period, when Alex ran off with the TARDIS with Cass, thinking he could do things better. The Doctor caught up with them in the First Forest, which was the very beginning of this Uncharted universe, where Cass seemingly vanished and perished. They've been told that she is in the opposite temporal pole so they're working their way across

I ALWAYS FEEL THAT A TIME WAR STORY HAS TO BE SLIGHTLY STRANGE AND YOU HAVE TO PAY ATTENTION.

JOHN DORNEY

the Uncharted to try and find her.

"In this set, the Doctor and Alex are without Cass, but they do meet Cassie, who is this universe's own version of Cass Fermazzi. She's a little bit different to the friend that they know as she's a bit of a buccaneer, a space adventurer, a pirate, and she has a mission. She believes she has a

destiny, and she has a sword, on which is written her destiny. And she won't let anyone get in the way of what she believes she's supposed to be doing."

THE EIGHTH Doctor's trips into the unknown begin with *The Only Girl in the World* by John Dorney. Matt says: "*The Only Girl in the World* sees us tackle the question of what happened to the Daleks in this universe. And Dorney has done this clever thing of introducing Cassie, linking her story to that of the Daleks, or rather one particular Dalek-like creature called Mr Karl. Cassie believes her destiny is intertwined with his and that he is the monster she needs to defeat in revenge for destroying her home world.

"But when the Doctor and Alex turn up, her destiny gets more complicated. They're on a time ship - I mean, it wouldn't be a Dorney script if there weren't some kind of high concept shenanigans - where Karl, the captain, is able to roll back time whenever things start to go wrong for him."

John continues: "The moment I figured out what I wanted to do with the story, the title came to me quite quickly, which is a nod to the old standard song. As ever with these things, you might expect the title to mean one thing - maybe it does, maybe it doesn't.

"It was quite a loose briefing. I had a Zoom meeting with Matt, Tim and the other writers. I think the last two episodes were basically locked, but Ali and I could discuss what we wanted to do about the other two and which way around we wanted to go. I was quite inclined to go with one of the stories - and ended up doing the other one.

"The main reason I was interested in doing the story I didn't do was because I thought of an interesting casting note which could be fun to do. But at the same time I had an idea I'd been potting about with for a while. I hadn't quite known where to put it, and during the course of the meeting, I realised, 'Oh, this is a good space for that idea!'"

THE WRITER finds it difficult to tease the story, and grins: "That's a very tricky question, really! What I can say is, the Doctor

and Alex are on the search for Cass, but they encounter Cassie, an alternative iteration of her. Cassie's a bit more swashbuckling, a bit more pirate-y, if anything. That was my vague thinking, to make her more action-y. She's from the Uncharted universe and is the survivor of a massive tragedy, and is out for revenge - effectively seeking her own destiny in the stars.

"The story looks into destiny as a concept and believing in our own fate - those sort of things. That's a subject that's interested me a while, questioning the idea of whether destiny is a thing.

"It's also a bit weird because I always feel that a Time War story has to be slightly strange and you have to pay attention. There's something interesting about the timescale of it and the chronology of the story. But I can't really go into too much more on that.

"The other thing I can mention is that I occasionally find myself leaning into doing riffs on classic movies. I had a hook for the central premise quite quickly from what was in the nominal brief from Matt and Tim.

"I couldn't quite get the story for it, but I was aware I was trying to place it within a particular genre. Then I realised there was a film of that genre I'd seen for the first time a few weeks beforehand, despite the fact it is quite a well-known, well-regarded film. I decided, 'maybe if I do a riff on that...'. It should become very obvious when you've listened to it just what the film is, but through a very different filter."

John adds: "One highlight, which I didn't get to be in studio for because I was being interviewed at the time, was when I got Nick Briggs to sing! Nick plays a character called Karl, who's the captain of a slaver ship and is dealing with rebels. But as ever, there's more going on than that. I think he had a good time with this part because it's slightly different from the things he would usually do!

"He sent me an email afterwards saying he'd had a good time. Nick gave exactly the performance that I had envisaged, if not better."

FALSE DAWN by Alison

Winter continues the adventure, and Matt says: "*False Dawn* pushes the envelope of how weird we can go in the Time War. We've



Above (l-r): Akbar Kurtha and Kate Harbour

THE WORD STRANGENESS CAME UP A LOT.

ALISON WINTER

established that this Uncharted universe is full of strange temporal flora, plants that have curious qualities that are weaving their way in through the dimensions. I envisage them as growing through the cracks in the Time War, so this is where they're coming from. They're growing from this universe and affecting all others.

"The TARDIS crew run across a massive infestation of these plants, which they can't pass. They try and trace it to its source to remove the obstruction from their course

across the Uncharted. But as they do so, the Doctor falls victim to these plants and they're drawn on an interdimensional journey where things get very strange indeed."

Ali reveals: "Matt sent us a basic structure for the set which included some key story beats but was otherwise quite open. The word strangeness came up a lot. We met to break the story across four episodes, and see who resonated with what. Then we brought some ideas in to make it all work. I was fascinated by the nature of the First Forest, so I decided to explore that concept a little further, and a little deeper.

"This is a tough story to sum-up spoiler free, so instead, have a cosmic teaser! I read recently that we never truly experience reality, but simply experience our nervous systems - the stuff on the inside influencing the stuff on the outside, one might say. Taken to the Uncharted universe, there's no telling how much could be pulled inside-out."



Above: Susan Penhaligon

Ali enjoyed being able to play with the character dynamics.

She explains: "Character dynamics certainly shift in this set, with a swashbuckling version of Cass who's somewhat oblivious to the ongoing tensions between Alex and the Doctor, which are now really coming to the surface. But Cassie being aboard affords Alex an opportunity to show up very differently, especially in moments where the Doctor either doesn't, or can't, show up himself. Alex struggles with not being quite as Time Lord as the Doctor, but this is very much a story about roots, and Alex's Earth upbringing adds its own value.

"Audio is great for being boundless in terms of vast universes and incredible worlds that would be very costly to film. There are certainly a few sequences, settings, and curiosities in this episode that would have demanded a large screen budget, if it were a movie."

A WEIRD KOOKY EPISODE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE RUN!

TIM FOLEY

THERE'S A family reunion on the cards in *Council of Susan* by Tim Foley. Matt says: "Tim Foley and I have been steering the *Uncharted* series together. I formally brought him on as a script editor on some of the stories in this set, but when we had our discussions about what we wanted to do, from the very start when Alex first came back, something I wanted to touch on was having Susan meet him at some point in the adventures.

"For *The Council of Susan*, Tim came up with this idea of Susan having visited the *Uncharted* and leaving an impression upon those that she met. We arrive in a very strange, almost convent-like set up on a space station, where all the sisters and novices are dedicated to the works of Susan and all her good intentions and the lessons they've learned from her. It's a very strange experience for Alex, finding a cult set up around his mother."

Tim says: "When I knew Matt wanted Carole Ann Ford back, I had a slightly barmy idea as to how and why she's in the *Uncharted* universe, so I'm delighted to have written this episode. It's nice to not be writing a season opener or a season finale for once, but a weird kooky episode in the middle of the run! There's a lot to explore about Alex and his relationship with his mum, so we get to touch on that here."

ALL OVER by Patrick

O'Connor brings this series to an end, as the latest incarnation of Hieronyma Friend makes herself known. Matt hints: "*All Over* builds to a great big cliffhanger. We find out the truth about Cassie's destiny. Hieronyma Friend turns up once again, having had a little glimpse of her earlier in the set. She's now carrying out the final part of her plan, or so she thinks. Friend is protesting that she's trying to help, but she's like the boy who cried wolf. Nobody trusts her, neither the Doctor or Alex, or Cassie who's just met her.

"They all feel she doesn't have their best interests at heart, that she's working to her own ends, which may or may not be unfair this time around."

This time, Friend is played by Daphne Ashbrook – better known to *Doctor Who* fans as Dr Grace Holloway in the TV Movie. Matt explains: "As this year is the 30th anniversary of the TV Movie, I really wanted to have a nod back to that. What we're doing with the character of Friend gave us the opportunity to cast another of the Eighth Doctor's past friends in the role.

"It was a bit of a logistical challenge, but Daphne was keen and so happy to be involved. We managed to make it all work. It was a real delight to spend time with her - she loves the



Above (1-2): Daphne Ashbrook and Matt Fitton

show, she loves Paul's Doctor and was delighted to join in any capacity at all.

"I think she got the character of Friend as well and really ran with it. It's a lovely new iteration of Friend that we meet in this story."

Daphne tells *Vortex*: "I'm thrilled to be back in the Eighth Doctor's universe by way of the fabulous Big Finish audio plays! It's always a distinct pleasure to be invited to participate in these wonderfully imaginative stories, especially when I'm pared up again with my dear friend Paul McGann.

"This year being the 30th anniversary of the filming of the movie, it's especially exciting! In some ways it seems like yesterday when I was introduced into this lovely adventure and yet I've had the privilege of 30 years meeting *Doctor Who*

fans from all over the world.

"I can't thank Big Finish enough for giving me the opportunity to play again in this magnificent world of fun, imagination and love. My cup runneth over!"

Writer Patrick concludes: "Throughout the **Uncharted** stories, we've been hearing about these mythical Time Lord places, so Matt and Tim asked me to imagine what would lie at the end of the universe. I thought it would be very empty and cold, and basically fraying at the edges. That fraying became very important for the plot we came up with.

"Writing for Hieronyma Friend was a fun challenge! She's been played by all sorts of the Eighth Doctor's companions in the past, but I still can't believe who they got to play her this time around.

For the 30th anniversary of the TV Movie (something I'm a huge fan of!) it feels very apt!" **VORTEX**

**DOCTOR WHO: TIME WAR UNCHARTED
BRANCHES**



■ RELEASED: MAY 2026
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THE SECOND SONTARANS

CAN TWO INCARNATIONS OF THE DOCTOR STOP THE RUTAN VERSUS SONTARAN CONFLICT?

THE SECOND series of the battle between the clones and the space jellyfish continues in **Rutans vs Sontarans – Rendition**.

At the edge of the Sontaran-Rutan War, a large medical ship lingers in space. The Doctor and his friends find a group of strange survivors aboard planning something unusual to save their commander. What new powers do the Rutans possess? What secrets does the Lockhart hold? As the conflict creeps closer, the Doctor must work out how to rescue those no longer versed in war...

Michael Troughton (the Second Doctor), Frazer Hines (Jamie McCrimmon) and Wendy Padbury (Zoe) are joined by Paul McGann (the Eighth Doctor).

Writer Tim Foley says: "I'm delighted to have written for the Second Doctor, he's one of the few Doctors I've not had chance to scribble for yet and he's a particular

IT WAS UNEXPECTED TO GET THE FIRST CALL TO BE ASKED TO PLAY A SONTARAN, NEVER MIND THE SECOND.

JONATHON CARLEY

favourite of mine. And it's great to revisit the Sontaran-Rutan conflict, but this isn't just a second series for the sake of it – script editor John Dorney had a brilliant idea for a narrative arc and you can see that making an appearance here. Why is the Eighth Doctor popping up? You'll just have to listen to the series to find out!"

The story's guest stars are Lucy Scott (Nurse Marva), Tom Alexander (The Patients) and Jonathon Carley

as the Sontarans. Jonathon was delighted to play a monster instead of the War Doctor. He explains: "It was unexpected to get the first call to be asked to play a Sontaran, never mind the second. I was concerned for Dan Starkey's well-being (who usually plays the Sontarans), but was assured he was fine! Jumping in with the established tight knit team of Frazer and Wendy, now led by the lovely and brilliant Michael, was a bit dazzling really. It did feel like listening to a 1960s episode, but then the Doctor, Jamie and Zoe started answering back and it gave me goosebumps.

"We all know Sontarans are clones and you want to be authentic, but on audio they have to be distinct from one another so as not to be confusing. First up we had the General and I thought I'd evoke something from the batch of Group Marshall Stike in the television episode *The Two Doctors* as a bit of a nod. That gives him a real hardened, bullish quality and distinguishes him from his lowly pilot lackey, who is closer to Kevin Lindsay's original Sontarans, which for me is the default sound. Then I have to flip between them in the same scene, talking to myself.

"We also have a covert operations Sontaran in stealth mode, so he became a more slithery, softly spoken version of Kevin's Linx. He has to bite his tongue and watch his temper so he doesn't give himself away. So that was fun, taking something familiar and established, and adapting them to fit their individual story roles." **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO: RUTANS VS SONTARANS RENDITION



- RELEASED: MAY 2026
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IT'S TIME TO SAY GOODBYE TO THE TORCHWOOD RANGE AS IT HITS RELEASE 100...

SO LONG, FARE WELL...

IANTO JONES and Tommy Pierce have fought many alien invaders together. They're more than work colleagues, they're friends. But their friendship is about to be put to the test as they prepare to face a Cyberman. A Cyberman in a cellar. In the village of Wetwang.

Big Finish's **Torchwood** range is set to bow out in style in *Fare Well* by Joseph Lidster – writer of the **Torchwood** television episode *A Day in the Death* – in a story starring Gareth David-Lloyd as Ianto and

Timothy Bentinck as Tommy Pierce. Some 20 years after the Battle of Canary Wharf, we're about to find out what happened next. Producer James Goss says: "Joe pitched this story to me one evening and I said, 'Oh yes, that's how it ends,' because it ties up two stories – that of Ianto and that of Tommy. Someone from the TV series who has lived a wild and vivid life on audio, and someone who Joe created for Big Finish, a character as mad and bold and real that it's impossible not to think he was actually on TV!"

"It's a love story, told in a way that only Joe can do. So, it's a bromance involving two men and an alien menace because of course, as it's the end of **Torchwood**, we finally have to have a Cyber story. But also, because it's a Joe script, everyone also goes down the pub!"

JOE TELLS *Vortex*: "The initial idea came to me at the recording of the **Torchwood One: I Hate Mondays** box set. Ten years ago, as part of the semi-regular cast of



Above (l-r): Gareth David-Lloyd and Devante Fleming

Torchwood One, we created this character, Tommy, and since then he's basically bullied his way into becoming one the main characters. The various writers and, of course actor Tim, have over the years made Tommy equal to the already-existing TV characters of Yvonne and Ianto, and it felt like a real shame that he presumably just dies off-screen during the events of the **Doctor Who** TV episode *Doomsday* without any kind of farewell. So, I suggested we find a way to give the character a 'final' story (not necessarily a leaving story) and James replied with 'and a Cyberman in a basement'.

"The story really revolves around the friendship between Tommy and Ianto. This old man who's seen everything and this young tortured soul who's already seen far too much. It's about how they perceive each other and how that relationship has changed since the day they first met. In many ways, it's a love story."

Joe adds: "It's a script I'm very proud of because of two things. Firstly, James really pushed me with it. He asked for more plot, more twists and turns and, because of that, the script and the characters are so much more interesting than they were originally. It was a real challenge but worth it. That's what James is good at and I've learned so much from him over the years.

"Secondly, without realising when I wrote it, it's a script that very much mirrors a friendship in my own life that's been very important to me. Tragically, since I finished the script, my friend has died so in my mind it's an absolute tribute to him and to friendship generally. It's all about making every second of our lives count. It's about love."

DIRECTOR SCOTT Handcock tells *Vortex*: "One of the big things about **Torchwood** is its Welsh connection and *Fare Well* was

recorded at the One Louder Studios in Newport, which is Gareth's home turf. Tim wasn't able to travel to us but joined remotely. We had the lovely Devante Fleming in, who's a brilliant Cardiff-based actor I know because he worked behind the scenes on **Doctor Who** with me in the recent *Bad Wolf* era. He's really lovely and a massive **Doctor Who** and **Torchwood** fan, so I knew he'd get it.

"It was just about trying to keep the spirit of **Torchwood** local and Cardiff-centric, ironically in a story about the **Torchwood** London team. It felt important as we were wrapping up the range to have release number 100, our final story, recorded in Wales."

Scott was particularly delighted to have Joe in studio. He says: "One of the main highlights for me from the recording of *Fare Well* was Joe being able to join us in Newport. Writers are generally invited to recording sessions and it meant a lot that Joe came all the

way up to Wales for the session.

"I've known Joe for over 20 years. We're very good mates but don't see each other as often as we used to. It was a really lovely reunion for this final one. James, who used to work for BBC Worldwide, was here producing. I was directing, Joe was the writer and Gareth was in studio. It was a really lovely band of people and it transported us back to 2007–08."

As the final curtain falls on the **Torchwood** monthly range, James recalls: "I've just loved **Torchwood** ever since I read the pilot script when it was still called *Flotsam & Jetsam*, featured Idris and everyone clocked off at 5.30pm. It was a major part of my time living in Cardiff. You'd wonder what the light was pouring through your curtains at 2am and there would be Owen Harper dancing on the roof of the multi-story opposite!

"The first book I ever wrote was for **Torchwood** (five weeks from phone call to first draft, while holding down a full-time job and feeling very tired, but also having the most fun of my life). And of course, the first radio play I created was for **Torchwood**. I've never dared listen to it again, but it was a privilege to do.

"For the last 10 years it's been a constant drumbeat. A beast that needed feeding, a friend to go for walks with, a nightmare to gossip with friends about. The sheer joy of working with Scott and composer Blair Mowat on the majority of them, the glory of other directors such as the endlessly calm Bethany Weimers, the glorious Lisa Bowerman and the enthusiasm of David O'Mahony. I promised senior producer John Ainsworth I'd stay to #100, and I did it and I'll miss it like mad."

SCOTT ADDS: "**Torchwood** holds a very special place in my heart. I moved to Cardiff in 2006 and worked behind the scenes on **Doctor Who**, but also **Torchwood** with **Torchwood Declassified**. And so I was sort of around in Cardiff during **Torchwood's** infancy and saw how it grew and the breadth of stories it could tell. Not just the sci-fi concepts, but also the more emotional human dramas.

"And Cardiff and Wales are such a huge important part of its identity. When we came to do the audio series,



Above: Timothy Bentinck

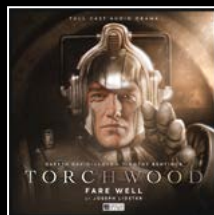
I'd been living in Cardiff for a decade. Now I've been living in Cardiff for 20 years. It's always felt very special because it's so closely linked to home."

James, producer on every **Torchwood** release, adds: "Back when I started, I bought a shelf. A CD rack for **Torchwood**. I was amazed Argos still had them, and I think they were amazed that someone actually bought one! And over the years it has filled up, and then it started to groan and then spilled out onto the Lego Death Star. But now it's all over, I've been packing the CDs away into a little plastic folder before sending the CD rack off to baffle the British Heart Foundation charity shop! It's been a chance to look at each release – there were some I'd even forgotten – and remember that, by and large, we banged."

And the highlight of the whole series has been its creator, Russell T Davies. James concludes: "Russell has given his support throughout. Whenever a crisis hit, he'd be

there, no matter how busy he was. And, of course, on the last day in studio he sent a long and beautiful message. The sheer kindness of a man who doesn't need to be that thoughtful but just is." **VORTEX**

TORCHWOOD
FARE WELL



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VORTEX

ISSUE 206
APRIL 2026

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TORCHWOOD

FAREWELL

**IANTO JONES PREPARES TO FACE A
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IN THE VILLAGE OF WETWANG.**

THE THIRTEENTH DOCTOR

**WILL THE DOCTOR AND YAZ FINALLY
UNCOVER THE TRUTH ABOUT THE TOURIST?**

