

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX

ISSUE 208
JUNE 2026
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THE LEGEND OF DICK
TURPIN? THINK AGAIN...

AN INCIDENT AT HALLAMSHIRE

THERE'S A GOLD FRONT COMING FOR THE
THIRTEENTH DOCTOR – AND A VERY OLD FRIEND...





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NEW PATHWAYS

THE EIGHTH Doctor is back later this year for a mini-series – and his companions just might surprise you.

Paul McGann will be joined by Sam Stafford, known to viewers of Netflix series *Vikings: Valhalla*, as Alfie Steep. Plus Natalie Gumeo, star of *Titans*, *Jekyll and Hyde* and **Doctor Who** TV episode *Last Christmas*, takes on the role of Matilda 'Chase' Moyo.

Alfie is a kid from a London estate in the mid-21st century. A gentle giant without fear, he loves a bit of action when the opportunity arises. He's already been travelling with the Doctor for a while as *New Pathways* begins and the pair meet Chase. She's had a career in the movie industry but with the work drying up in the 2020s, she's taken a position in a call centre.

Producer David Richardson says: "Natalie and Sam have been on my radar to play companions for quite some time. They're both very experienced with audio, bring bucketloads of enthusiasm to the recordings, and throw energy and vitality into their performances. So here they are: Chase and Alfie, the Doctor's new best friends – and soon to be ours too..." The three episodes in *New Pathways*, due for release in November, are: *Chase* by Alan Ronald, *Magic of the Sycorax* by Katharine Armitage and *Blast from the Past* by Robert Valentine. *New Pathways 2* will follow in December with *The Junction* by Helen Goldwyn, *Yesterday Dies Today* by Alfie Shaw and *Matilda* by Alan Ronald. **VORTEX**

THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES NEW PATHWAYS

- RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2026
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

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EDITORIAL

DESPITE THE fact that there isn't a new series of **Doctor Who** on television this year, it feels like there are more adventures with our favourite Time Lord than ever! For example, **Rutans vs Sontarans** reaches its conclusion this month with the return of the Eighth Doctor, Charley and C'rizz. I've been an out and proud fan of this trio since 2004 so the chance to hear more of Paul McGann, India Fisher and Conrad Westmaas has me all a quiver!

Step back an incarnation and we have the Seventh Doctor in a trio of new adventures with his old friend Ray, the companion who wasn't. Well, now she is! And I can't wait to hear where the team take the duo.

We have 21st century Doctors too. The adventures with Thirteenth Doctor Jodie Whittaker continue and she's going to encounter an old friend. It's a reunion I'm especially looking forward to – how will Anna Hope's Detective Inspector Menzies cope with this regenerated Doctor?

And then there's the Twelfth Doctor's audio adventures. We may not have Peter Capaldi but Jon Culshaw does a sterling job. And given this run is being overseen by Alfie Shaw who helmed the outstanding Eleventh Doctor and Valarie run of audio tales, I'm very excited. In Alfie we trust!

Plus, to cap it all off, we're heading back to the realms of **Dark Gallifrey** with Geoffrey Beevers's incarnation of the Master. Who said this was a gap year?! **VORTEX**

Kerry



**THINK YOU KNOW
THE LEGEND OF
DICK TURPIN AS A
HAPPY-GO LUCKY
HIGHWAYMAN?
THINK AGAIN...**

DAYLIGHT ROBBERY

BIG FINISH has created a number of original audio series over the years, such as **The Confessions of Dorian Gray**, **The Human Frontier** and **ATA Girl**.

Now, we're stepping back in time as we join butcher Richard Turpin – known at large as Dick. But this is no New Romantic with make-up and pantaloons. This is gritty, nasty and vicious; punk attitude and anger rather than flamboyant fops. Dick is adamant that he wants money and will do what he has to to get it. Welcome to the world of **Turpin**.

Richard wants his share of the emerging wealth of the new United Kingdom. After poaching for easy profits, he abandons his stable life as

a butcher to become a violent outlaw.

Turpin is no goody two shoes and finds himself on the run and falls in with the vicious Gregory Gang. As his comrades are sent to the gallows, Turpin evades the hangman and becomes the country's most wanted man.

Turpin stars Dónal Finn (*Young Sherlock*) as Richard Turpin, the folk antihero who finds the money and notoriety he's always dreamed of.

Producer Lizzie Worsdell says: "Working on **Turpin** over the last two years has been so much fun. This is a story about someone everyone thinks they know but really don't. It's a bold, unexpected re-telling of Dick Turpin unlike anything you've heard before."

WRITTEN BY award-winning screenwriters (and directors) Mat Braddy and Darren Rapier, Darren tells *Vortex*: "Ever since discovering the real-life story of Richard Turpin, of which there are many factual accounts and reports from the time, I've been keen on telling this story rather than the dashing highwayman cliché. When I discovered Mat was keen on doing the same, we started talking about creating something together.

"The true story has more in common with the Kray twins than Robin Hood, and this is something we were eager to get across. Audio has allowed us to tell this epic tale in a fast and chaotic fashion – we like to



THE EPISODES IN VOLUME ONE, *ESSEX PISTOLS*, ARE:

NEVER MIND THE BULLOCK

Essex, 1730. Richard Turpin is twenty years old, newly married and already looking for shortcuts. His story begins not with a highway robbery but with a stolen horse and a wife left to answer for it.

LUCKY BLEEDER

Turpin runs. Betty doesn't. As Mason, the relentless Keeper of Epping Forest, closes in on the butcher's shop, Turpin finds himself deep in the forest with a gang of outlaws and a choice to make: go back for his wife or stay ahead of the rope.

ANARCHY IN THE MERRY KINGDOM

The Gregory Gang sharpens its tactics. Forget livestock. The real money is in the houses of the wealthy and Turpin has the nerve to kick the doors in. But Mason is watching every road out of Essex and the gang is about to learn what happens when the militia catches up.

CHIT FACED

Two weeks of chaos. The gang is on a relentless spree, Smith is closing in on Betty and someone inside the crew is being squeezed to talk. The episode ends at Hainault Lodge, Mason's own house, in the middle of the night with the gang and the law finally face to face.

RAT TRAP

Turpin breaks orders and heads back to town. A bad idea. Morris is turning the screws on Wheeler. Betty barely escapes with the baby. And a high-stakes heist at the Shelly household ends in violence that changes everything. The forest is the only place left to run. **VORTEX**



Above (l-r): Darren Rapier, Dónal Finn, Lizzie Worsdell and Mat Braddy

describe it as a period action drama."

Mat continues: "What constantly amazed us was the history itself. The real Turpin story is darker, stranger and more fascinating than the myth, and it's astonishing it hasn't been told properly before. I'm from Essex and I live in the very places where this happened, so telling a story set on my own home patch has been a huge thrill. I can't wait for people to hear it."

Directed by Ken Bentley alongside Mat and Darren, the first five episodes are being released in July with the second batch of five released in August. This gritty, visceral and darkly funny take on the legend also features Jemima Rooper (who Big Finish fans will remember as playing the Eighth Doctor's comic strip companion Izzy Sinclair in *The Company of Friends*) as Turpin's sharp-witted wife Betty. And alongside Dick as elegant thief Captain Tom King is Greg Wise.

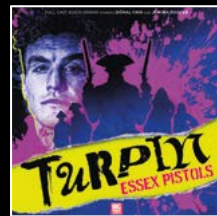
Every villain has their nemesis and in this case it's **Bernice Summerfield** regular Harry Myers who voices the dogged lawman Mason, with Richard Goulding playing James Smith, Turpin's law-abiding former friend.

Mat says: "Working with this cast has been an absolute joy. Dónal and Jemima are extraordinary together, and Greg brings such elegance and danger – everyone involved has helped make these characters feel utterly alive. One of the great freedoms

of audio is that you don't have to worry about a visual budget; you can let the imagination soar and the performances do all the work."

Lizzie concludes: "The recording was an absolute joy. The range across the cast is phenomenal. Dónal, who's brand new to Big Finish, gives an incredible lead performance and his chemistry with Jemima is a joy to hear. I've loved every minute of working with Ken, Mat and Darren, it's been a blast, and I can't wait for Big Finish listeners to dive into this original story." **VORTEX**

BIG FINISH ORIGINALS TURPIN: ESSEX PISTOLS



- RELEASED: JULY 2026
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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IT'S A NEW ERA FOR
THE DOCTOR AS JON
CULSHAW GETS HIS
HANDS ON THE TWELFTH
DOCTOR'S TARDIS...

THE

DOCTOR

RISES

BIG FINISH fans with long memories will remember that back in 2009 when there was no new series of **Doctor Who** on television, the third series of the Eighth Doctor and Lucie Miller adventures were streamed on a weekly basis. And there's a return to weekly adventures this July as the Twelfth Doctor, portrayed on screen by Peter Capaldi, will return for a brand-new series of audio adventures voiced by impressionist Jon Culshaw.

Set between the Christmas specials, *The Husbands of River Song* and *The Return of Doctor Mystero*, **The Twelfth Doctor Adventures** sees the Doctor meet a new friend Ash Wilton voiced by Gwethian Evans, a travelling bard from the end of the universe. The six episodes will be released as weekly downloads. Once all the episodes have been released, the series will also become available as a complete downloadable box set.

IN THIS issue of *Vortex*, we preview the first trio of tales. Producer Alfie Shaw says: "With the Twelfth Doctor, we never got the chance to do a full run of 12 episodes like we did with the Eleventh. I was idly chatting with Lisa McMullin and Max Kashevsky about what I would do if I was offered more producing work with Big Finish and the whole thing snowballed from there. By the end of that conversation, I already knew what the series was about and



Above (l-r): Jon Culshaw and Gwilym Evans

what the final scene was going to be. So that's really why I accepted this gig as I had an idea I really wanted to tell and I thought it would suit the Twelfth Doctor and where he's at in his timeline really well."

"We didn't get to see much of the Doctor and Nardole as a Doctor/companion double act, but here we have the Time Lord with a new a male companion.

Alfie explains: "It was just about doing something a bit different, really, both for the creative team and the audience. As soon as we started talking about it, the companion was almost instantly male and, within about 10 minutes, from the end of the universe. We wanted to see how that would affect the dynamic with the Twelfth Doctor.

"While the Doctor travels for a bit with Nardole and they have a combative, banterous relationship, it's always felt like there's an understanding there

**A POST-
APOCALYPTIC
COMPANION
WAS ALWAYS
SOMETHING I
WANTED TO TRY.**

ALFIE SHAW

through the links to River and guarding the vault, etc. We thought it would be interesting to start this adventure from the ground up with no previous links.

"Ash – and this whole series really – exists in concert with Valarie and the previous run. To be clear, they are almost entirely separate; the only direct link is the Eternal Dalek

and you don't need to have heard the previous series to listen to this one.

"There are a number of my own traits in Valarie, but there's a lot more of me in Ash. He's a bit cynical of the Doctor even when he needs them. Meanwhile, the Doctor is leaning more to being an actual doctor in this one. He cares deeply about Ash and so the dynamic in these three stories is flavoured more toward doctor/patient. Ash goes through a lot in these adventures and the Doctor's there trying to help him see the good in everything."

THE ADVENTURES will be released in the box set *Run Fast, Be Kind* and launches with *The Second Death* written by Alfie. He says: "The opening story is very heavily inspired by the *Fallout* series. I adore that franchise and a post-apocalyptic companion was always something I wanted to try. It just so happens that the apocalypse in question is just the universe being really, really old. So, it's a journey across a wasteland, uncovering secrets and fighting monsters as they go. We're picking up with the Doctor almost immediately after he's left River and see how he's coping with travelling again."

The Broken Man by Rochana Patel continues the adventures.

Alfie says: "For episode two, I asked the brilliant Rochana for a contemporary historical. Given Ash is from the end of the universe, it seemed like a fun idea that the modern day setting of when this would have gone out on telly would be a historical adventure. Ash and the Doctor are starting to find their groove together and investigate an archeological mystery the Doctor meant to solve with River but never got around to doing."

Rochana tells *Vortex*: "I'm absolutely honoured to be part of this new series. For me, the Peter Capaldi era produced some of the finest episodes in the show's history – it's just a little daunting trying to write scripts that would effortlessly fit in amongst Steven Moffat's finest work!

"The brief from Alfie was to do a small-stakes, upbeat story in a contemporary or historical setting. He seemed a little concerned that there was a lot of horror and trauma in the rest of the series, so



Above (l-r): Dee Sadler, Jon Gledroyc, Jon Culshaw and Gwithian Evans



Above (l-r): Gwithian Evans, Raffiella Chapma, Jon Culshaw, Ella Dale and Malcolm Sinclair

wanted me to lighten the load!

"This is a story of how you can go through hell, pick up the pieces and still put yourself back together again. The Doctor has recently said a final goodbye to River Song. Our new companion has also not had the easiest of times. They've got all of time and space to explore, so where do they start... Scotland. 2016. Obviously! For Ash it's wildly strange and exotic. The Doctor is trying to prove one of River Song's theories and solve an ancient archaeological mystery."

Rochana concludes: "This story is unlike anything I've ever written for Big Finish. Normally we're trying to

break hearts but here I'm trying to mend them. I think the world needs a few more stories like that right now."

THE BEAUTIFUL and the Damned by Katherine White follows. Alfie says: "The Beautiful and the Damned by our wonderful new to Big Finish writer Katherine is a fantastic skewering of social media. I loved how she was able to explore both the positive and negative impacts it has and there are some killer lines in this. I particularly adore the final line so, so much."

Katherine says: "This is my first big commission - outside of writing I'm a trained dancer and actor working

mostly in theatre. I'd sent in some short scripts to John Dorney and in the summer of 2024 I got a lovely email from Alfie asking if I had any ideas for the Twelfth Doctor. I played it cool, sent over three ideas (whilst internally screaming) and luckily Alfie liked them.

"The brief was to focus on an adventure set in the near future so we settled on my idea of a futuristic world where plastic surgery and aesthetics rule public consciousness, controlled by an omnipotent social media firm. Alfie wanted to explore the corruption of humanity on an otherwise perfect planet and I was interested in exploring our obsession with constantly shifting beauty standards (it's crazy how we'll let the world burn so long as we look good). Alfie was really intrigued by the idea of a social media company pulling the strings of this world and the monsters ultimately being ourselves.

"It was a daunting challenge, but Alfie was incredible every step of the way. The process itself was amazing, I got to listen to loads of Big Finish stories, learning from excellent writers and storytellers (and rewatch many **Doctor Who** episodes of course). I just kept having to pinch myself that I was writing for Big Finish, getting to tell a story that means so much to me, knowing that soon some incredible performers would be bringing my work to life... it's been an experience like no other." **VORTEX**

THE TWELFTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES
RUN FAST, BE KIND



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GALLIFREY TIME WAR: VOLUME ONE



WE'VE HAD a number of stories set during the Time War with the Eighth Doctor, the War Doctor and the War Master in recent years. But the first story in the Time War era saw Big Finish **Gallifrey** regulars Lalla Ward, Louise Jameson, Seán Carlsen and Miles Richardson – plus the more recent recruit Sophie Aldred – in the depths of the Time War for a new chapter of the series.

Romana, Leela, Narvin, Braxiatel and Ace all star in *Celestial Intervention* by David Llewellyn, *Soldier Obscura* by Tim Foley, *The Devil You Know* by Scott Handcock and *Desperate Measures* by Matt Fitton.

David says: “Leela, Romana and Narvin are always a pleasure to write for because there’s already an established chemistry between them. The Time War ups the stakes somewhat, but one of the things we wanted to get across is that with the War Council grasping for power, their triumvirate are actually on the edge of things – they’re not in charge. So the question is, how do they react to that?”

Tim tells **Vortex**: “Writing for the series was just a complete joy. I was addicted to **Gallifrey** as a kid, I loved *The West Wing* in

I LOVED THE WEST WING IN SPACE VIBE. NOW WE'VE PUT THE WEST WING TO WAR...

TIM FOLEY

space vibe. Now we’ve put *The West Wing* to war – still machinations aplenty but this time not everybody will get out unscathed...”

SCOTT, ALSO the producer and director for the series, featured the War Master in his adventure. Scott recalls: “The Master was always in my mind for this just because I felt it would shake up the **Gallifrey** dynamic a bit. Script editor Matt Fitton and I spoke initially about doing a *Suicide Squad* style series with the Master, the Monk – maybe even the Rani – but it just became quite a struggle to tell a story that satisfied and we realised **Gallifrey** fans ultimately love the characters of Romana, Leela, Narvin and the gang. So, we focussed on their roles and their story but still with the aim of bringing the Master in as a guest character.

“We started planning this around the time I pitched the **War Master** box set, so the intention was always to record that and **Gallifrey** in a single block if Derek Jacobi was keen on reprising the role – which he was! In fact, the **Gallifrey** episode was our very first day recording with him and he slipped back into the menacing charm of the Master effortlessly. It’s lovely to hear him spar with Romana, especially as Lalla Ward was Ophelia to his Hamlet back in the 1970s, but it’s his relationship with Louise as Leela that makes the episode.”

Matt concludes: “I’ve followed **Gallifrey** since the very beginning. I love all of the characters and was desperate to bring Narvin into the Eighth Doctor’s story in *Dark Eyes*. I really like how the character has developed over time alongside Romana and Leela. It gives us a chance to pick up from the last series where Romana had been placed in charge of the CIA and Livia is president.

“We’re now some time after that, with a new Livia in a later term of office, but effectively that’s the status quo in terms of everyone’s positions. But a conflict has been escalating, which tips over into the events of the Time War.” **VORTEX**

GALLIFREY TIME WAR: VOLUME ONE



■ RELEASED: FEBRUARY 2018
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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THERE'S A COLD FRONT COMING FOR THE DOCTOR – AND A VERY OLD FRIEND...

COLD FUSION

CLASSIC ERA Big Finish collides with a 21st century incarnation of the Doctor in *The Hallamshire Incident* by Rochana Patel. Fans of the Sixth Doctor audios will remember Detective Inspector Patricia Menzies played by Anna Hope, a police officer who liaised with aliens in Britain. And now she's back after a huge UFO crashes in Hallamshire Forest.

Producer Noga Flaishon says: "We wanted to explore Yaz's connection to Earth, particularly to her family and her work as a police constable. There was a lot to unpack there – her absence from her family's lives and her seemingly never-ending secondment. At the same time, this still needed to feel

like a *Doctor Who* story with the Doctor staying central to the plot. That's quite a lot to juggle so we knew we needed a strong writer.

"We loved Rochana's work in *The Thirteenth Doctor Adventures* story *Ride or Die* – her writing has a real strength when it comes to character. I knew she could handle this brief and she absolutely delivered.

"I was keen to take a closer look at Yaz's work as a constable. Throughout her story, we've seen her draw on her training and her actions are clearly driven by a strong sense of justice, but we haven't seen her do much police work on Earth since her debut. This felt like the right time to revisit that.

"We also wanted to bring Sonya back. Bhavnisha Parmar is fantastic

in the television series – she is a brilliant actor, so funny – and her dynamic with Yaz (and Mandip Gill) is a real joy to hear."

ROCHANA TELLS *Vortex*: "I was thrilled to be asked to write for the Thirteenth Doctor and Yaz again. Heck, I'd write the whole series if they'd let me! That said, I think one of the greatest strengths of this range is the sheer diversity of writers from absolute beginners to longtime pros.

"The original brief from Noga was to write a story that revisited Yaz's police career whilst featuring the return of her sister Sonya. All the other elements came much later. The premise for this one is really



Above (l-r): Jodie Whittaker

simple. A UFO has crashed on the outskirts of Sheffield, however, this is during the era that UNIT was briefly decommissioned due to budget cuts, so the civilian authorities have to deal with the situation on their own. Fortunately, they have one or two officers with relevant experience..."

The adventure features not only the return of Patricia, but also pits the Thirteenth Doctor against a foe she never had the chance to meet on screen – the Ice Warriors.

Noga says: "Both of those ideas actually came from Rochana. DI Menzies was written with some flexibility as we weren't sure whether Anna would be available and we might have had to adapt the character. Fortunately, we were able to book her, which was brilliant. Patricia Menzies is a great character and it's so exciting to have her back. And I got to see Nicholas Briggs perform a monster voice in the studio when he did the Ice Warriors – it was a real highlight."

Rochana says: "We're revisiting Yaz's police career and I wanted her

WE OFTEN ONLY HAVE ONE MONSTER IN THE BUILDING SO IT'S ALWAYS ENTERTAINING WHEN THERE ARE TWO OF THEM.

KEN BENTLEY

to have a superior officer with some clout, so bringing back Patricia made perfect sense. The story always comes first. If you don't know who she is, don't worry, neither does Yaz! However, some listeners will know her as a recurring character from the Sixth Doctor adventures range. Sonya is there for new fans; Patricia is there for faithful, long-term Big Finish listeners – there's something for everyone!

"The Thirteenth Doctor met all the big enemies on TV, often multiple times – Daleks, Cybermen, Weeping Angels, the Master. She's

met them all except one... and this is Big Finish so we can fix that! So the Thirteenth Doctor and Yaz are finally facing the Ice Warriors! They're my favourite monster because when it comes to these giant green reptiles, you know any situation can rapidly spiral out of control."

DIRECTOR KEN Bentley says:

"Casting *The Hallamshire Incident* was a joy because I didn't have to do any! They were all roles that had already been established and the recording date was booked in around everybody's availability. All I had to do was turn up!

"I wasn't the director on any of Patricia's previous appearances so I had no idea it had been so long since Anna last played the role. It's always fun being part of having people back, I enjoy seeing people catch up with each other and reminisce."

The adventure also features Mark Elstob as the Martians. Ken says: "We often only have one monster in the building so it's always entertaining when there are two of them. Nick and Mark are very familiar with the Ice Warriors which means we often get some amusing Ice Warrior banter. A perk of the job is hearing silly banter from monsters and aliens we know well!"

Noga concludes: "I think it's a fantastic story. It has everything you'd want from **Doctor Who**: a tense alien mystery, a mix of familiar and new characters, and a strong emotional core." **VORTEX**

**THE THIRTEENTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES
THE HALLAMSHIRE INCIDENT**



- RELEASED: JULY 2026
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

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THE SEVENTH DOCTOR IS BACK FOR MORE ADVENTURES IN SPACE AND TIME WITH HIS OLD/NEW FRIEND – AND HE FINDS SHE’S A...

RAY OF LIGHT

AS THE Seventh Doctor nears the end of his life he’s going back to fix things with the help of Welsh mechanic Ray as introduced in the **Doctor Who** television serial *Delta and the Bannermen*. The pair were reunited on audio in *Catastrophix*, the second story in **The Seventh Doctor Adventures: Past Forward** box set, and are now travelling together in the TARDIS.

The Seventh Doctor Adventures: Fixers features three adventures: *The Executor* by Chris Chapman, *Oil and Water* by James McDermott and *Much*

Ado About Racing by Fio Trethewey.

Script editor Matt Fitton says:

“The Seventh Doctor has met up again with Ray! But it’s an older, more experienced Ray who feels she may have missed out on life...

The Doctor sees her potential, just as he did with Ace.

“Now he’s also older and wiser, he’s tidying up a few loose ends while trying not to repeat mistakes he made with his previous protegee.

Perhaps the two travellers can help each other as well as all the people in trouble that they meet? Encountering

a mysterious inheritance, dangerous sea life off the Norfolk coast and a high-octane space race – the Doctor and Ray are here to fix things!”

THE EXECUTOR opens the set. Chris is an experienced Big Finish writer, usually associated with the Sixth Doctor, but he reveals: “I’ve written about a dozen stories for Big Finish, but there was one glaring omission – I’d never created a story for the Seventh Doctor. That era of TV is what made me a **Doctor Who** fan. I was born in 1981 so I have



Above (l-r): Poppy Miller,
Sylvester McCoy and Sara Griffiths

incredibly vivid memories of watching *Remembrance of the Daleks* in 1988 when I would have been seven and thinking it was amazing.

"So, I basically harangued Big Finish and, amazingly, they came through and said that I'd be able to pitch for the Seventh Doctor and Ray. It's lovely that Big Finish brought her back into the mix. And it's great for me because I'm half Welsh, on my dad's side.

"I've been wanting to write something for a while about grief and having to do a house clearance. Many of us have been there, a family member dies and as well as dealing with all the grief of it, you're left with a house full of possessions. When we cleared my Great Auntie Babs's house, we found love letters that she'd written to her boyfriend who died in the war. It was really interesting, you build up a picture of somebody after they're gone through the things that they left behind.



Above (l-r): Sylvester McCoy
and Anne Odeke

"And I thought, 'Wouldn't it be fun to do a **Doctor Who** version of a house clearance? What would be the **Doctor Who** version of that?' Well, it would be a TARDIS clearance! What if a Time Lord acquaintance of the Doctor has died and the Doctor's named as the executor of that Time Lord's will?

To do it with a TARDIS instead of a house, and to have the limitless nature of a TARDIS, represents how dwarfed I think we all feel by having to explore the life of someone we've lost and lament accordingly.

"The Doctor and Ray travel across North Wales to a broken-down old stone dovecot – which is actually the disguise of a TARDIS – the home of a Time Lord called Peg. They're clearing the TARDIS and we start to realise that maybe the thing that killed Peg could still be inside.

"I'd said to Big Finish early on, if you're thinking about who to play Peg, you should ask Celia Imrie. Celia's an amazing actress and she and Sylvester would be really good equals in that kind of setting. And I could imagine her as a Time Lady, you know, having that fierce intelligence and being funny and maybe slightly chaotic as well.

WOULDN'T IT BE FUN TO DO A DOCTOR WHO VERSION OF A HOUSE CLEARANCE?

CHRIS CHAPMAN

Then they came back and said, we've got Celia which was amazing."

OIL AND *Water* is the middle story in the set. Writer James tells *Vortex*: "I've been a **Doctor Who** fan since 2006 and I started scriptwriting as a teenager through penning my own fan fiction episodes. I discovered Big Finish in lockdown (David Tennant and Tom Baker's *Out of Time* was my gateway) and then I contacted Matt Fitton to ask if I could be considered to write an episode. Matt is an *EastEnders* fan, which I was writing on at the time, so thankfully he knew of my work and kindly offered me a commission on this Seventh Doctor range.

"My brief from Matt was really open – write an adventure featuring the Seventh Doctor and Sara Griffiths as 'new' companion Ray, with a maximum of two other guest actors in the episode. I pitched three story

ideas which were sent to producer Emma Haigh. Emma liked two of the three ideas and suggested I conflate them into one which became the story *Oil and Water*.”

Summing up the story, James says: “*Oil and Water* is a funny fast-paced climate-conscious grief-themed character-driven adventure featuring giant killer seals, set in Blakeney on my native Norfolk coast!

“I always love to set my work in my under-represented home county of East Anglia and, since losing my father to COVID-19 in the pandemic, I’m regularly drawn to writing about grief. **Doctor Who** is one of the best cultural texts on grief, loss, change and regeneration, so I couldn’t resist the opportunity to tell a grief-themed

DOCTOR WHO IS ONE OF THE BEST CULTURAL TEXTS ON GRIEF, LOSS, CHANGE AND REGENERATION.

JAMES McDERMOTT

story with this commission.”

James concludes: “After years of dreaming of one day writing an actual **Doctor Who** story, opening a script of mine by typing ‘the sound of the TARDIS materialising’ was a pinch-me moment. I was fortunate enough to be in the studio on the day of recording and everyone was so welcoming, professional and playful, especially Sylvester. He has a lot of dialogue in this story so he was teasing me all day about how hard I was making him work! I also really clicked with Sara. We kept in touch after recording and have become good friends, which has been an unexpected highlight of the project.”

MUCH ADO *About Racing* concludes the adventures. Fio says: “I was asked to create a standalone Seventh Doctor and Ray adventure, and I really wanted to explore Ray because there’s so much left to uncover from when we said goodbye in *Delta and the Bannerman*. I ironically love *Delta and the Bannerman*, even though it’s a very strange story. The darkness that



Above (l-r): Celia Imrie and Sara Griffiths

slams against the absurdity of a lot of the plot makes it a highlight for me – that and Ray and the Doctor’s beginnings of a friendship.

“I think the title *Much ADO About Racing* really sums up the plot, but in case people don’t get the references I’ve basically smashed together science fiction racing with Shakespeare’s *Much ADO About Nothing*, with a pinch of *Back to the Future* time travel fixin’ thrown in! Unusually for me, the title came first and once I had the idea, I couldn’t shake it, so that’s how the story began.

“This story is the definition of a cosy sci-fi adventure. It’s a bit cheesy, it’s heartwarming, it’s a story about heartache and love, and what success really looks like and what it is to understand yourself and your own feelings. But it’s also about racecraft and zooming across space into unknown territory. It’s my homage to the **Doctor Who** of this era and it’s probably the most personal script I’ve ever written for **Doctor Who**.”

Fio adds: “Our team of cast and crew at Big Finish are always

incredible and I’m super excited to hear the final product as there’s so much that relies upon sound. I was lucky enough to get to go to the recording and I must say that Anne Odeke and Annie Wallace brought out such vibrant versions of Boots and Mercury on audio, they need to be given all the accolades.” **VORTEX**

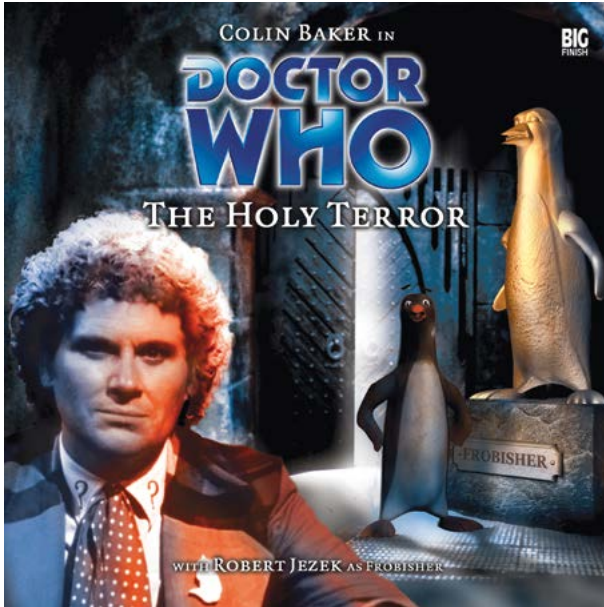
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VORTEX MAIL



FROBISHER FAN

What's happened to our favourite shapeshifter? Since the *Maltese Penguin* in 2002, Frobisher, our favourite shapeshifter Whifferdill has disappeared! Never to be seen again at Big Finish! This makes me very sad as he's one of my all-time favourite characters. For so long now, I've been wondering... what happened? PS: loved **UNIT: Hostile Universe**.

Arthur

Nick: *Thanks for the UNIT love, Arthur. Frobisher was always a bit tricky for us. As a non-television companion, he was initially greeted with some scepticism by our listeners, all those years ago, and for many years The Holy Terror was consequently one of our worst-selling titles. However, all that changed once everyone realised what a genius Robert Shearman is! So, maybe it is time for more Frobisher. Hmm... food for thought.*

BLAKE BOOKS

Have you considered doing the **Blake's 7: Origins** novels as audio books read by the surviving cast members? I'm sure there would be huge demand for these, they would complement the **Blake's 7** range and give access to the books for everyone. Keep up the good work, especially **Star Cops**.

Ralph Bonnett

Nick: *It's certainly something we are mulling over, Ralph.*

MASTER PLAN?

With the **Torchwood** monthly range now over, I must make a point of saying that I still find myself unreasonably attached to these characters and stories. My first and main impression of **Torchwood** has been from Big Finish, and whilst 100 stories is a good place to end the range, I still need to hear more of

the characters. Specifically, I would love a **War Master** box set with Suzie Costello as a companion. The Master and Suzie would get along infamously and the duo of Derek Jacobi and Indra Varma would have me relistening for the rest of time!

Luke Uddin

Nick: *Interesting thoughts, Luke. We'd certainly never say never concerning Torchwood.*

FIVE ALIVE

Thank you for *Helter Skelter*. I started watching **Doctor Who** in January 1982 at just 4 3/4 years old, but it's only after *The Five Doctors* and Season 21 that I can recall with story-by-story clarity. This means that the Fifth Doctor, Tegan and Turlough are my early childhood TARDIS team, but actor availability has meant that Big Finish has had to work around them. Before now, it's only been a tantalising name check in *The Sirens of Time* and **Lost Story Nightmare Country**, where we've had my comfort blanket crew – but now *Helter Skelter* has given us a whole box set of the Fifth and T 'n' T and it's been a blast!

Paul Castle

Nick: *And there'll be more where that came from, Paul!*

THEME THOUGHTS

I've been listening to a lot of the older Big Finish stories recently, having gone back to (the original) *Sirens of Time*. I can't help but notice these all feature the Tom Baker version of the **Doctor Who** theme – is there any chance these could perhaps be bundled up in the future, with the appropriate eighties themes added, perhaps with some bonus content too? Maybe with the behind-the-scenes features as mentioned on the Big Finish podcast recently?

Paul Mason

Nick: *You and Vortex editor Kenny Smith have a lot in common here, Paul! I certainly think all these stories should have their correct themes. VORTEX*



LAST PEACE

OVER THE past four months, we've joined various Doctors as they've encountered Rutans and Sontarans, and even found out the original cause of the conflict.

Now, this special release of **Rutans vs Sontarans** is coming to a climax with Tim Foley writing *Peace at Last*.

Producer David Richardson was delighted to bring back the Eighth Doctor with Charley and C'rizz for this adventure. David says: "We had such a fun time working on *Sontarans vs Rutans* that I'd been looking for opportunities

to reunite the team again. So, when **Rutans vs Sontarans** was commissioned they were the first people I placed in the running order.

"We had plans for the Eighth Doctor to be a thread through the series. He popped up in the Second Doctor story *Rendition* and again in the Sixth Doctor story *Grave Moon*. And now, *Peace at Last* will explain everything..."

Script editor John Dorney tells *Vortex*: "The final story in this series was originally going to be written by Stewart Pringle and Lauren Mooney

but they became busy with other things and we switched things around. Tim had been involved in the original chat so it made sense to ask him to write this adventure.

Tim says: "It was a bit of a surprise to be asked since I was originally only assigned episode two! But you know me, I can't say no to writing some **Doctor Who!** *Peace at Last* is very much the season finale of the run – it ties up loose threads from all three stories. Episode one peered into the murky origin of the eternal war so it felt natural that this last story



Above (l-r), Conrad Westmaas and India Fisher

would peer at a possible conclusion. John always has a great overview of sets that he works on and this was no different, so together we plotted out how this wraps everything up for the mysterious Melmoth.”

TIM WAS delighted to be given the Doctor, Charley and C’rizz as his TARDIS team. He says: “I wanted them for the first special release *Sontarans v Rutans* but writer Lizzie Hopley beat me in a game of tiddlywinks and she got to claim them first. This time the challenge was the caber toss. Sadly, I lost again (Lizzie has a mean throw), but she very kindly let me have my beloved Charley and C’rizz after all! They’re my era of *Doctor Who* and I’m delighted we’re hearing more stories with these companions.

“It’s quite funny that Big Finish can now do missing adventures that take place during their different eras. India Fisher and Conrad Westmaas are just superb in a room together so I tried to write scenes that reflected their relationship.”

John adds: “We are all very happy with how *The Battle of Giant’s*

LIZZIE HOPLEY BEAT ME IN A GAME OF TIDDLYWINKS AND SHE GOT TO CLAIM THEM FIRST.

TIM FOLEY

Causeway went down. In particular, we are all really happy to have C’rizz back, which was Lizzie’s wonderful suggestion in the first series. It is clearly a bit of a treat for everyone, not least because we talked about there being something to draw out with parallels between C’rizz and the Rutans, and the connection there was worth playing with. The Doctor, Charley and C’rizz felt like the perfect fit to finish this series on.”

Conrad tells *Vortex*: “Having started the *Sontarans vs Rutans* series with

The Battle of Giant’s Causeway, it felt good to reunite with Paul and India to bookend the series. Tim digs into diplomacy and politics at a critical stage of the Rutan/Sontaran conflict with the Eighth Doctor, Charley and C’rizz working together in ‘mission’ mode, which we don’t often see and was great fun to play.”

FANS HAVE noted Paul McGann’s appearances in these stories and have been wondering what his involvement has to do with the finale? John says: “I’ve seen a lot of people already speculating online about why the Eighth Doctor is appearing in other stories and it’s not for me to say about what’s going on. However, I hope people will be interested and excited in finding out how it all ties together...”

Given the positive reaction to the series, John concludes: “I’d be very happy to do another series as there are always stories to tell about the war. I’m delighted with these two sets because we had a really strong team and great writing going on. I enjoyed the first one a lot but, if anything, I think the second run is better. We’re all very happy with the shape and arc of it.

“And of course, it would be interesting to find another angle or see what the next thing is. Another series would be a good place to drop in Stewart and Lauren’s suggested storyline, I enjoyed the creative process on it very much.” **VORTEX**

RUTANS vs SONTARANS PEACE AT LAST



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The second set of a seventies series returns...

REACH FOR THE SKY

FIRST BROADCAST in 1975, ITV children's series **Sky** followed a time-travelling alien boy with solid blue eyes and psychic powers who found himself on Earth in the wrong period of history. Created by Bob Baker and Dave Martin, the show has had a Big Finish audio rebirth (see *Vortex* issue 197).

Today, **Sky** features Cloud Quinn as the titular character with Edwin Flay playing Arby Vennor, as **Sky** tries to return to his home, the Juganet.

Producer/director Gary Russell says: "The original plan was that Gary Hopkins and I would alternate writing episodes, in the best Terry Nation and Dennis Spooner-style, on

all six episodes. But then I thought that I would write the first three episodes, which were released last year in **Sky: Before the Chaos**, and give him the second three. And, of course, I left him on a cliffhanger in a typical, 'Ha, now get out of that' way!

"I thought of Gary right from the beginning, partly because I love working with him – I've worked with him many times over the years – but also because he knew Bob. Gary wrote for the television series *Into the Labyrinth* with Bob, so he was an obvious fit. And I knew he loved **Sky** from our many conversations over the years.

"Gary brought in ideas about the

heritage and characters of the show that frankly – and I've watched **Sky** about a hundred times – I didn't latch onto. He would suggest, 'What about this and what about that?' And I thought, 'Oh, that would actually be really interesting...'"

GARY HOPKINS admits: "I watched the serial avidly when it was first shown in 1975 (I was in my teens) and many times in more recent years. Anything with Bob and Dave's names on it was of interest to me back in the 1970s, and **Sky** was like nothing I'd seen before: I loved that it was so surreal. I also loved the fact that it was set in the West

Country and produced by HTV in Bristol, quite close to home.”

How did Gary find coming to the audio series? “I was a bit nervous about that to begin with,” he concedes, “as I’d known Bob well for many years. We’d often talked about **SKY** and the possibility of there being a sequel one day, and I felt a responsibility to do justice to the original idea. Gary had a very clear direction of travel for his first three episodes and I wanted to do something a bit different

I LOVED THAT IT WAS SO SURREAL. I ALSO LOVED THE FACT THAT IT WAS SET IN THE WEST COUNTRY...

GARY HOPKINS



Above (l-r): Caitlin Griffiths, Jessica Hayles, Samuel Morgan-Davies, Helen Bang, Katy Manning, Sarah Douglas, Conrad Westmaas, Edwin Flay and Cloud Quinn

with the remaining three, as well as wrapping up the overall story. We certainly felt the pressure to honour the spirit of the TV show.

“Gary had gone as far as he could go with the first set, with its apocalyptic storyline and devastating cliffhanger. Those episodes are darkly surreal and I didn’t want to do exactly the same thing again, quite apart from which we needed to resolve loose ends and complete the characters’ journeys. Sky and Arby were central to this, of course. Gary and I had agreed the broad strokes for the second set before we started work on the first, which he wrote and I script edited, and then vice versa for this second set. We have both been completely

involved in all six episodes.”

Gary Russell adds: “I think Gary’s writing is closer to Bob and Dave’s than mine was. I play with Bob and Dave’s characters but I think Gary has an instinctive intuition for writing Bob and Dave stuff that benefits the second box set and makes it feel so authentic to **SKY**, which is really nice.”

LOOKING AT the second set,

Sky: Into the Chaos, Gary

Hopkins says: “*The Confluence*

is the Juganet episode where we explore the complexities of this amazing machine which seems to have a mind of its own. It’s the episode that took the longest time to write and we went through a couple

of drafts as ideas were kicked around. It’s also the episode in which Arby’s sister Jane is reintroduced to the story as I wanted another perspective on the events of the 1975 TV series and felt that she was a sufficiently strong character to add that other dimension. I enjoyed writing for her.”

Gary Russell adds: “Gary makes Jane, next to Arby and Sky, the main character of *Into the Chaos* and it works really well because of it. Bringing her in gives a really good little kick to the story and to all the other characters who talked about Jane in *Before the Chaos*.

“Helen Bang, who plays Jane, is the ‘biggest’ new member of the cast. I met Helen for the first time when we recorded *Irwin Allen’s The Time Tunnel*. Everyone loved her. She brings so much fun and energy in studio and is a superb actress who can turn her voice to anything.”

“The second adventure, *The Place of Darkness*, is an episode I wanted to have more fun with,” says Gary Hopkins, “and also to look at other directions we could take **SKY** to if there was any scope for future stories beyond this set. Everything then had to be wrapped up in *This Far and No Further* with an ending that could be both final and, at the same time, ambiguous.”

Gary concludes: “The whole thing was massive fun and I hope Bob and Dave would approve of what we’ve done with their brilliant creation.” **VORTEX**

SKY
INTO THE CHAOS



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STATE OF DECAYED

EVER SINCE Geoffrey Beevers returned to the role of the Master in **The Monthly Adventures** *Dust Breeding*, he's been hugely popular with **Doctor Who** fans. His ice-cold voice, dripping with malevolence and charm in equal measure, has seen him return time and again to encounter various Doctors. And now, he's set for his own series: **Dark Gallifrey – The Decayed Master**.

Producer Alfie Shaw says: "What I love about this particular incarnation of the Master is that he's such an inherent contradiction. He's basically clinging on for dear

life while still claiming to be the rightful ruler of everything and everyone should bow down to him. It's a lethal combination.

"Also, Geoffrey's voice is so iconic as the Master. As a long-time listener and fan, I was delighted he was one of the two villains handed over for me to produce in this range."

This three-part mini-series has been written by popular husband and wife writing team of Stewart Pringle and Lauren Mooney.

Christmas 1896 at the beautiful and secluded Longmoss House. Diana Blount has lived here all

her life – but since her father died, Longmoss has lost its magic. In the shut-up east wing, games and ghost stories begin to get out of hand.

Something is trying to get through – something with a Master to serve.

Alfie continues: "Lauren and Stewart are both delightful. I've wanted to work with them for ages and I'm so grateful that we've finally been able to make that happen. It's been such a nice change of pace on this one. With series like **The Eleventh Doctor Chronicles** or **The Twelfth Doctor Adventures**, I'm generally the one steering the series, whereas with this it was very



Above: Geoffrey Beavers

much a matter of sitting back and saying, 'This is all you, do whatever you want.' And they both seized the opportunity and ran with it!"

THE WRITERS were delighted to be given this incarnation of the Master.

Lauren explains: "It's a real 'gotta catch 'em all' with the Masters! We've been lucky enough to write for one other incarnation – our **Zygon Century: Transformation** adventure *1968: An Incident in Death Valley* features Eric Roberts – so this was great fun. Obviously, the challenge is to be true to both this particular incarnation of the Master, with his desperation, and what the Master feels like generally – someone who is quite in control of the situation. It's a tricky line to walk but I hope we've achieved it."

Stewart agrees: "He's such a shadowy, ambiguous figure in this incarnation so we felt we had licence to lean into horror elements

WE FELT WE
HAD LICENCE
TO LEAN
INTO HORROR
ELEMENTS
AND TELL
SOMETHING
OF A GHOST
STORY.

STEWART PRINGLE

and tell something of a ghost story. Geoffrey's take on the Master feels like it embodies the character at his most desperate, and that pushed us to create a story which showcases his power but also his vulnerability."

Lauren continues: "It was a totally open brief but we were asked to be bold and wild in our thinking, to do things we wouldn't necessarily be able to do in other ranges. We've said it a lot, but coming from theatre all our early pitches were like, It's Two People in a Room. It's Very Cheap. But audio drama doesn't have to be like that! There are no sets, no costumes – you can be entirely free. And this is the story where I think we've most leaned into that. Stewart came up with the initial idea for the first part inspired by *The Box of Delights* which we watch every Christmas..."

STEWART TELLS *Vortex*:

"We started off with thoughts of a horror anthology in the Amicus mould with the Master as a kind of *Dr Terror* figure. When that didn't quite click with the team we looked to another classic horror series *Dr Phibes*, and that was very much the inspiration for the wider story and its structure. Without giving too much away, we wanted to create our own **Doctor Who** version of those classic films which have such a distinctive tone and vibe: 'Nine murdered her, nine shall die, nine eternities in doom!'"

Vortex asks the couple to sum up the three parts to the story. Lauren explains: "Honestly, it's quite hard to do without giving spoilers because we hope that each section will be a surprise. What I will say is that we move from mainly rural Victorian England at Christmas, with lots of snowstorms and buttered crumpets for tea, to a pocket universe where a group of Gallifreyan outlaws are hiding out. In disc two, we track one of the characters to 18th century Venice for the masquerade, and in disc three we move across time, between modern and medieval York. So each release really has its own flavour, but they are very much part of the same story and should definitely be listened to in order."

This Master is very much someone who lives in constant pain and Lauren says: "I think it makes him a version of the Master that is wilder, more desperate, more likely to surprise himself and us. He's like a cornered animal. That's what pain does – it reduces us – but then, he's still the Master, he's still someone who enjoys power. So, you have to



Above: Barnaby Edwards

find a way to make him not be so reduced by it that he becomes a completely different character.”

ASKED FOR her highlights, Lauren says: “Venice! What a fascinating period in history although shamefully, we picked it because we’d just had a very nice holiday there! It’s an incredible city, great spritzes on every corner. The no car thing is real magic: we went to a birthday party and afterwards, walking home in the small hours, the lack of traffic gave you a real sense of this unbroken ancientness – that this was how the city would have looked and sounded at 3am a couple of hundred years earlier, or even longer ago. Getting to revisit that beautiful place, even just in our imaginations, was a huge treat.”

Stewart adds: “Yes, it does feel like we’ve really drawn from our

**HE UTTERED
HIS LINES AS
THE MASTER,
IT REALLY
WAS SPINE-
TINGLING!**

HELEN GOLDWYN

favourite holidays with this release. We loved Venice so much, and also York is one of our most beloved and regular destinations. I wrote a play about the ghost tours and the history of York back in 2013, and we’d wanted to set something for Big Finish there for a while, but of course the brilliant James Goss has already written *Ghost*

Walk. But this is a very different take on the city, albeit still with a cheeky nod to the ghost hunting industry.”

BRINGING THE story to life in studio is director Helen Goldwyn, who says: “When Alfie asked me to direct *Dark Gallifrey* I was intrigued to know what direction and style these stories would take as I was unfamiliar with this Gallifreyan world.

“I’d never had the chance to work with Geoffrey before (although of course his name is legend at Big Finish) so I had the thrill of hearing his extraordinary voice on mic for the first time as he uttered his lines as the Master. It really was spine-tingling!

“Joining us in the cast was Kate Copeland (who I’d wanted to use again for a long time since she co-starred in our *ATA Girl* series) playing Niamh and Lady Blount plus Hannah Brown as Diana and Shreya Lallu as Charlotte. The icing on the casting cake was that Barnaby Edwards somehow found time in his endlessly busy schedule to play numerous roles for us including the marvellously sinister Oro and the doomed Reginald Blount.

“We also had an actor entirely new to Big Finish – Giles Abbott as Algrim and Lupo – who took to the task with outstanding flair. He really was such an exciting addition, as was the ever-excellent Harley Viveash joining us as Lucello. We were all in the thrall of Geoffrey’s Master of course, often giving a collective shudder, and we had some jolly good laughs along the way!” **VORTEX**

**DARK GALLIFREY
THE DECAYED MASTER: PART ONE**



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THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX

ISSUE 208
JUNE 2026

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PEACE AT LAST

THE DOCTOR, CHARLEY AND C'RIZZ ARE ABOUT TO WATCH HISTORY BEING MADE, BUT HISTORY HAS OTHER IDEAS...

AN INCIDENT AT HALLAMSHIRE

THERE'S A GOLD FRONT COMING FOR THE THIRTEENTH DOCTOR – AND A VERY OLD FRIEND...

