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COMING SOON

ROBOTS 2!



WE RETURN to Kaldor this June for our second box set of adventures with Liv Chenka and her sister Tula in **The Robots Volume Two** – and two familiar faces are appearing too!

Pamela Salem and David Collings reprise their television roles as Toos and Poul for the first time in the Big Finish universe, joining Nicola Walker and Claire Rushbrook.

Producer David Richardson says: "**The Robots** has fast become one of my favourite series. Nicola and Claire are such a complete joy to work with, and we're all so

inspired by the nature of the series – the 'what ifs' it allows us to explore.

"Kaldor has become a bit of a distorted mirror of our world, and in **The Robots Volume Two** we ponder: what might happen if robots are used in wars? And what might happen if a robot was put on trial?"

"And in this set we welcome Pamela Salem and David Collings, returning to the roles of Toos and Paul from *The Robots of Death* like they have never been away.

"And did I mention that this series is one of my favourite things?!" **VORTEX**



EDITORIAL



I LOVED doing jigsaw puzzles in my youth. I would concentrate on one section, and only when it was complete would I move on to another, and then another, until it all came together. I rather like it when things have a connection.

It's a bit like **Doctor Who** and Big Finish – everything is interlinked. Take the **Short Trips** range. In *Foreshadowing* we have the Eighth Doctor meet a young Mike Yates – and the events act as a prequel to the Big Finish/BBC co-produced 50th anniversary **Destiny of the Doctor** story, *Vengeance of the Stones*.

Or take Coal Hill School. It's been in **Doctor Who** several times and is the location for the spin-off Big Finish audio drama **Class**. With an inter-dimensional drift and the threat of Daleks at the school, an adventure there with Ace (**Class Volume Two**) makes complete sense.

Talking of Coal Hill, we're back in Shoreditch this month with a new special release, **Susan's War**, where the Doctor's granddaughter gets dragged into the Time War having been recruited by the Time Lords on Gallifrey. If you're familiar with the **Short Trip All Hands on Deck** (and if you're not, BUY IT RIGHT NOW!), then you'll know that it ended with Susan leaving to join the Time Lords, despite the Doctor trying to stop her.

And talking of **Class**, Volumes Three and Four of the acclaimed Big Finish series are out next month with more tales set during the television series' run. I loved the first two box sets and can't wait to hear these – **Class** is definitely back in session. **VORTEX**

Kenny



FROM ALEX TO DALEKS

The Doctor's granddaughter enters the Time War...



IN THE Big Finish Doctor Who audio world, where everything has a connection, we're about to discover a link that some listeners may have missed. In the 2017 **Short Trip, All Hands on Deck**, the Eighth Doctor tried to prevent Susan being recruited by the Time Lords on Gallifrey and dragged into the Time War. But his efforts were in vain, and now we find out what happens next.

In the special release, **Susan's War**, we'll hear the temporal conflict through the Doctor's

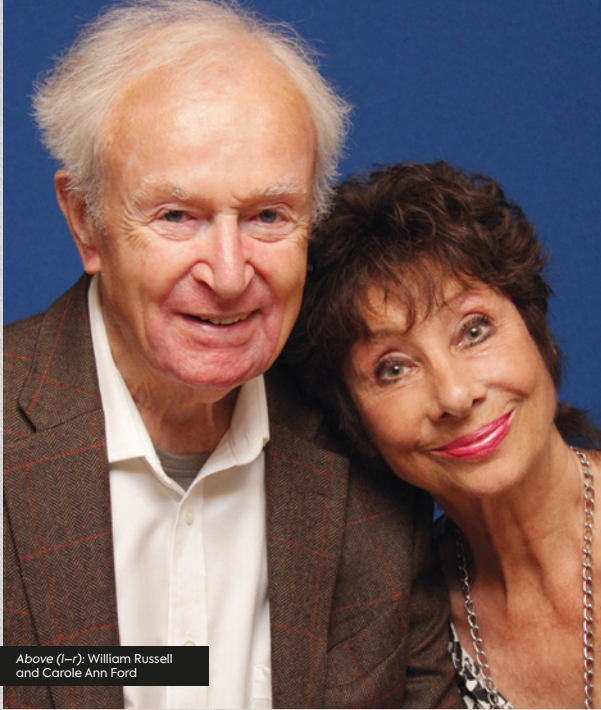
granddaughter's eyes. Producer David Richardson explains: "The series was the brilliant idea of Ian Atkins. He produced the **Short Trip, All Hands on Deck**, and saw the huge potential in a full-cast spin-off series in which Susan was a Time Lord agent in the Time War.

"Unfortunately Ian left the project before any episodes beyond the first had been developed, though I immediately suggested that myself and Matt Fitton could take it on instead. I loved the concept, and I could see how it would link very elegantly into our Eighth Doctor

Time War series – and beyond...

"Matt and I brought in Veklin (played by Beth Chalmers) and Rasmus (Damian Lynch), who have already established and ever-growing character arcs. (Veklin made her debut in **The War Doctor** over four years ago).

"Ian had already worked with Eddie Robson to include the Sensorites in the first episode. And I think (though my memory is hazy) that it was Matt and I who then wanted to add Ian Chesterton (played by William Russell) into the mix – an older Ian,



Above (l-r): William Russell and Carole Ann Ford

long after he travelled with the Doctor, meeting an older Susan.

“And we also wanted Paul McGann as the Eighth Doctor in the finale. There is unfinished business between these characters, and it seemed inevitable that Susan’s trajectory would intersect with her grandfather’s.”

Script editor Matt continues: “I had an image of Susan in the special TV episode, *The Five Doctors*, in that trenchcoat which makes me think of her as a spy! So here we have her on diplomatic and espionage missions rather than military operations, to show another aspect of how special ops are going on behind-the-scenes.”

A delighted Carole Ann Ford said of returning to play Susan: “It’s a very complex, interesting and fascinating piece of work which goes backwards and forwards in time in a way I’ve never actually done before in **Doctor Who**. We’re finding all sorts of extraordinary ways to chase after time machines, and the different phases in Time Lords’ lives are being investigated.

“Also it’s Susan when she’s pushed on a few years. She has different attitudes to things and expects different behaviour from



Above (l-r): Beth Chalmers and Carole Ann Ford

the people that she’s with. So this is marvellous. She’s a much stronger person, and I really like that.”



WE OPEN with *Sphere of Influence* by Eddie Robson, a story which sees Susan and Ian reunited with the Sensorites. When Eddie wrote *All Hands on Deck*, did he ever expect it

to lead to anything else? “Not at all,” he admits. “It never occurred to me that we’d actually see Susan in the Time War, so I wrote it thinking it was chronologically Susan’s last story. Even when the Doctor finds Gallifrey he doesn’t look for her, so I assumed she didn’t survive the war. But then the story came out and lots of people immediately said it seemed to be setting up more!

“That was never the intention, I wasn’t angling for it and I didn’t follow up by pitching a series. But it’s great – even though I hadn’t intended for my story to lead there, it seems like a really good thing to do with the character. When writing *All Hands on Deck* I realised Susan had been driven into quite a sad and lonely place, having seen so much death and destruction on Earth, and I felt it made sense that she’d leave and take on a new sense of purpose at the end of the story.”

I had an image of Susan in the special TV episode, *The Five Doctors*, in that trenchcoat which makes me think of her as a spy!

Matt Fitton

Eddie was given a concise brief for what was required of his box set opener.

He explains: “Matt had a clear idea of the basic premise: the Time Lords task Susan with travelling to the Sense-Sphere to convince the Sensorites to join the Time War, and Ian goes along with her. I’m a huge fan of the Hartnell era



Above (l-r): Dan Hennessy, Simon Guerrier, Dan Starkey, Laura Aikman, Carole Ann Ford, Beth Chalmers, Simon Ludders and Trudie Goodwin

I was plugging the first season of 20th-century **Doctor Who** into the first season of 21st-century **Doctor Who**.

Eddie Robson

and I love the TV episode, *The Sensorites*, so this was a thrilling brief to be handed. I could hardly have been more excited.

"I had Susan, Ian and the Sensorites on the one hand, and the Time War on the other. I was plugging the first season of 20th-century **Doctor Who** into the first season of 21st-century **Doctor Who**. And they went together surprisingly well, because the Daleks have a similarly central position in both. In 1964, none of the other big returning monsters or villains had been created, and in 2005 they

hadn't been introduced yet. So I was able to write Susan talking about the Daleks in a way that felt like it would fit comfortably in either era."

Matt adds: "*Sphere of Influence* ends up becoming a sort of political thriller – Susan is entering into talks with the Sensorites and trying to justify the war, but obviously it's not going to go entirely smoothly."

Eddie concludes: "It's one of my favourite things I've written for Big Finish, mostly because of the characters I was working with. As far as I know it's the first sequel to *The Sensorites* in any medium,

and I really enjoyed getting to do new things with them."



THE UNCERTAIN *Shore* by

Simon Guerrier is the second adventure in the series. Simon says: "In November 2018, Matt told me the basic idea for the **Susan** series and sent me the script that had already been recorded – Eddie Robson's brilliant *Sphere of Influence*. My job was to come up with what happened next.

"In chatting to Matt, he suggested that Susan is on the trail of the Dalek agent responsible for some of the stuff going on in Eddie's story but I couldn't use the Daleks directly. At the time, I was busy finishing off a Radio 3 documentary about Victorian women who'd travelled to Egypt in search of archaeological relics, and Matt seemed not to hate my idea of Susan and Veklin (who'd featured in Eddie's story) pretending to be women on a similar Grand Tour while they're actually hunting for a spy.



Above (l-r): Tom Mahy, Becky Wright, Carole Ann Ford, Nicholas Briggs and Louis Davison



Above (l-r): Damian Lynch, Carole Ann Ford and Beth Chalmers

“Then I had to work out where this Grand Tour would take place. I was thinking initially of Agatha Christie’s *Death on the Nile* continuing those links to archaeology, but my thoughts moved to *Casablanca*. So I had that as a setting, and then Matt suggested using the Ogrons so we’d have an indirect link to the Daleks.”

How would Simon sum up the plot? He teases: “*Casablanca* in space to begin with. And then – well, wait and see!”

Simon was pleased to be able to take 1960s **Doctor Who** and bring into it some 21st century revival concepts, with Susan in the Time War. He admits it was: “Very exciting! First, it was thrilling

to find out what she got up to in Eddie’s script, which is typically infuriatingly smart and funny. That very much set the tone and scope for Susan in this series, so I really just followed his lead.”



THE THIRD adventure in this series is *Assets of War* by Lou Morgan. She says: “Matt was

keen to have another story involving the Orrovix, which were the monsters I’d created for my episode of *Gallifrey: Time War Volume Three*. They come from inside the vortex, so it felt like they would lend themselves quite nicely to another part of the Time War. Other than that, the brief was pretty open.

“I’d been reading a lot about the First World War – especially the run up to the first day of the Somme Offensive – and I had the idea of the Time Lords using a creature like the Orrovix as a weapon. I think my initial description was something like: the scene from *Jurassic Park* with the velociraptors in the kitchen, but in a WW1 command chateau. Luckily, Matt didn’t immediately turn around and tell me I was bananas!”

With the monsters and brief in place, how would Lou summarise her story? She says: “The Time Lords need Susan to assess the capabilities of a new weapon: one they hope will turn the tide of the war. She assumes it’s because of her knowledge of the Daleks – but she’s wrong.

“These weapons are alive, genetically engineered and selectively bred to be perfect killers, and the generals have summoned Susan to confirm that their new pets will do as they are told. But when the creatures escape, the base goes into lockdown, trapping Time Lords and monsters inside together.

“It was incredibly exciting to be given the chance to write for such an iconic character – because she is, isn’t she? It’s an enormous privilege, but it definitely comes with responsibility, too. Susan means so much to a lot of people: you really want to do her justice.”

Susan comes down to Earth with a bump in the final story in the set, *The Shoreditch Intervention* by Alan Barnes. Having met



Above (l-r): Ian Brooker, William Russell, Hugh Fraser, Carole Ann Ford, Claire Vousden and Beth Chalmers

I very quickly latched onto the idea of taking Susan back to London, 1963... Alan Barnes

her grandfather again in **The Eighth Doctor Adventures** with tragic consequences for her son, the Time Lords are faced with Alex's killers once more.

Matt says: "Susan's got personal reasons to go up against the Daleks as well, with the loss of her son, and while the Doctor's instinct is to push away from the conflict, she wants to do her bit."

Alan says his brief was: "Susan and the Doctor v the Daleks, round... four, I think? Obviously, they have history... not least after what happened to Susan's son, Alex, in *To the Death*."

"I very quickly latched onto the idea of taking Susan back to London, 1963... an idea that someone was bound to do eventually, so I thought it might as well be me!

"The difficulty with London, 1963 – or anything on Earth during the Time War – is getting around the fact that Earth is one of the time-locked planets. So I started to think: OK, how am I going to circumvent that? And actually, circumventing the Time Lock became a very significant part of the plot."

How did Alan find writing for the Doctor and Susan?

He admits: "It's the first time they've met since Susan accepted her 'call-up', so plainly there was much for them to talk about. And that dictated the tone, in part. But in the way of all interpersonal relationships, they tend to lapse into their established mode very quickly – grandfather and granddaughter – which has a touch of the old timey-wimey about it now, obviously."

And summing up the plot, Alan grins: "Without spoilers? Mods versus rockers with a Time War twist!" **VORTEX**



THE WORLDS OF DOCTOR WHO

TIME WAR: SUSAN'S WAR

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DOCTOR WHO: TECHNOPHOBIA



TIME TRAVEL is an incredible thing.

It's been 12 years since the Doctor and Donna Noble were careering from planet to planet on television – and it's been four years since they first materialised at Big Finish.

Their opening audio story was *Technophobia*, a condition described as a: 'fear, dislike or avoidance of new technology.' Producer David Richardson recalls: "A moment I'll always remember is recording the very first scene of *Technophobia* where David Tennant and Catherine Tate threw themselves into it like they'd never been away. I was in the control room and writer Matt Fitton was sitting on the sofa, and we just turned to each other and grinned the biggest grins!

"I love all three scripts in **The Tenth Doctor Adventures** Volume One and *Technophobia* is just perfect for the opening story. It began life as something else altogether. I'd been holding on to an idea for a story about sleep deprivation – what would happen if the whole world lost the ability to sleep?" That was going to be our first episode. And then we submitted it to the BBC in Cardiff and found out that *Sleep No More* was planned for TV season nine, so there was a clash. But Matt rather brilliantly took the core idea and twisted it into something else entirely different and really clever."

Matt confirms: "The original idea for the story that became *Technophobia*, was an adventure called *Sleepless* which had all of London affected by insomnia, and people staying up at night.

"I had to rework it because it was going to clash with *Sleep No More*, but I was able to find a different hook to hang it on. I turned it into something different, something affecting people's brains.

"It was a fairly easy jump from the sleep deprivation story and actually it gave us more aspects to lock on to. If people suffer from insomnia it would become more and more difficult to do specific

tasks and they'd be distracted. Looking for an alternative, looking at your phone or tablet and thinking, What do I do with this?, was the next step along.

"Then as you buy new devices, it can get more and more complicated, and you have to turn to your children and younger generations to show you how to use things!

"From that grew the whole setting and the cast. Rachel Stirling's character of a tech boss scared of her own tablet grabbed me, and the idea it would then affect the Doctor himself."

Quite a few things from *Sleepless* made it into the finished play. Matt says: "Lots of elements survived from the original, like Beth with an X, and the character who became the train driver is in there. The whole setting is a strange altered version of London.

"We wanted it to feel like a Russell T Davies season opener, set in contemporary London, to get us up and running. We knew it would be the first story in the set, and I

David Tennant and Catherine Tate threw themselves into it like they'd never been away.

DAVID RICHARDSON

had lots of different things going through my mind. At one point I had an idea for a wild west story with the Doctor stopping a train while riding a buffalo, but we pulled it back and made it more low key with the London setting and tech museum."

Did Matt feel any strain writing the first audio story for this pairing? He laughs: "Oh yes, I definitely felt the pressure, especially that first scene. How do you reintroduce them after so long away? I just tried to make them as wonderfully quintessential Doctor and Donna as possible." **VORTEX**

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STEP JACK IN TIME

It's time to follow
Captain Harkness and
his Vortex manipulator...



THERE'S NO denying that the leader of Cardiff's Torchwood Three has enjoyed a long and varied life. We've had glimpses of what he gets up to, learned his real name, seen him encounter the Sixth Doctor, Jackie Tyler and Trinity Wells, and work his way through various decades. And now we're back with the good ol' captain for the third volume of **The Lives of Captain Jack**.

Producer James Goss has been overwhelmed by the positivity shown to the box sets so far. James says: "Favourite thing about it all? The listeners love Jack and Jackie Tyler as much as we do. They barely had

a scene together on screen and yet John Barrowman and Camille Coduri in studio is beyond comedy gold. They're like the **Sapphire & Steel** remake we've been cruelly denied."

The Lives of Captain Jack Volume Three also brings together two of the biggest characters of the 21st century revival of **Doctor Who**: Jack, created by showrunner Russell T Davies; and River Song, originated by his successor, Steven Moffat.

When it came to selecting the stories to tell in this set, James says it was through: "Bold choices, cunning and desperation! River and Jack came about because both John and Alex Kingston asked to do

something together. It took a long time and a lot of scheduling and rescheduling, but we got there."

In the first story of the set, Jack and Jackie Tyler are reunited in *Crush* by Guy Adams, which sees the Captain take Mrs Tyler on a luxury cruise in space.

Guy laughs: "What could go wrong? Everything! I have an automatic twitch as a writer – I veer towards funny. In many ways, I like Hinchcliffe more than Williams, but put me in front of a keyboard and I go all Williams! When writing this, I thought I needed to push against that, so it's not just, 'Jack and Jackie have a hoot'.



Above (l-r): Alex Kingston and John Barrowman

The notion of the gregarious Captain becoming a quiet hermit is just lovely. Especially when he turns out to be a quiet ninja hermit fighting vampires... JAMES GOSS

"I knew it was important that it was a little bit miserable. There's something about poor Jackie. Jack turns up to give her the time of her life and it should be amazing... but that's just not going to happen to Jackie. She's not that sort of person. She always finds that something is a little bit broken. I wanted to give an emotional side to it. Jackie must be terribly, terribly lonely, living life on the estate.

"I thought, let's have a look at how she might be feeling, the sadness that she has, to counter-balance all the comedy. There's still some, but there's also an emotional richness, which triggered the whole idea. Jackie always picks the out-of-date ready meal in the supermarket – it's not always easy being her.

"They're on a rail replacement service in space. When you think of any over-subscribed form of public transport, you think to yourself, how on earth am I going to fit in there, as the bus doors hiss open, or a crowded underground train arrives? You think, if I wait for the next one, it will be just as bad, so you push in, and there's this crush of people. "It's suffocating and it makes everyone anxious. I thought, what if they started dying, and that's where we start the story."

On directorial duties for this series is Scott Handcock, who adds: "Reuniting Camille and John for *Crush* was just as fun as when we threw them together for the first volume of *The Lives*

of *Captain Jack*. The pair have natural chemistry and support each other effortlessly in every single scene. There's so much love between them, and that really registers over the microphone."



MIGHTY & *Despair* by Tim Foley is set on a distant planet in the far future, where two travellers have come looking for a mythical hero.

James says: "*Mighty & Despair* is a lovely idea from Tim Foley – the idea that there's an awful lot of eternity left to fill in for Jack, so what happens as we go further into it? The notion of the gregarious Captain becoming a quiet hermit is just lovely. Especially when he turns out to be a quiet ninja hermit fighting vampires..."

Tim says: "I got an incredibly broad brief from James. I was asked to tell a story about Jack from a standalone era of his life. My first thought was a story with an ancient Jack, a bit Old Man

The joy of Captain Jack is he's immortal. But unlike Dorian Gray (the other immortal at Big Finish), he's not confined to a single world.

SCOTT HANDCOCK



Above (l-r): John Barrowman and Camille Coduri

Logan in his appearance. I was interested in his immortality and exploring his approach to it, so I placed him alongside another immortal race – vampires.

"We're countless years in the future and on an impossible planet in an even more impossible region of space. There's a queen and her servant, and they're looking for a legend. That legend is Captain Jack! He's not the Jack that **Torchwood** listeners would recognise – I pushed myself right out my comfort zone. Instead we have a mythical figure that's retreated into a certain way of life and needs to be drawn out of his shell. This is my stab at a big fantasy blockbuster, and Captain Jack Harkness isn't necessarily the hero..."



AND SO we come to *R & J* by James Goss, where River and Jack finally cross swords. James says: "R & J is definitely a love story about the two characters. Because how can you not?"

"The danger with them both is writing their lines in highlighter pen, where they spend their time just quipping and being all cheekbones and hair. But both are interesting, layered characters,

and part of the story is how they keep failing to connect because they can never quite say what's going on to each other in a straightforward way.

Scott adds: "It goes without saying that it was a privilege to work with Alex on this set. Like John, she's such a versatile actor, so getting to throw all manner of scenarios at her alongside Captain Jack, was an absolute blast!"



SCOTT CONCLUDES:

"The joy of Captain Jack is he's immortal. But unlike Dorian Gray (the other immortal at Big Finish), he's not confined to a single world. He has access to time travel so we get to explore history with him at various points throughout his extended life. And, of course, the main joy stems from the fact that John Barrowman plays him. It's always a pleasure to work with John – he's such fun and has bags of energy – and is also an incredible actor. The great thing about this series is we're able to showcase all his abilities. In the last set, for instance, John got to stretch his comedy muscles with *Piece of Mind* before giving an incredibly intense and emotional performance in *What Have I Done?*

"Every one of these scripts excites me in an entirely different way, and shows completely different sides to Jack, but the sheer ambition of *R & J* – throwing together two of the new series' most popular characters across space and time – really challenged myself and the cast. I can't wait for everyone to hear it!" **VORTEX**



THE WORLDS OF DOCTOR WHO

THE LIVES OF CAPTAIN JACK: VOLUME THREE

RELEASED: MARCH 2020

FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD



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UNBOUND AGAIN

I've just binged on the whole of the **Doctor Who Unbound** series that you did, and I wonder, are there any plans to do a second run? I know you have David Warner and Mark Gatiss reprising their respective roles in the **Bernice Summerfield** range and in *Anti-Genesis* but I'd love to see some more stand alone stories like *Full Fathom Five* and the beautiful *Deadline*.

Ivan

Nick: Hi Ivan, it's certainly something we'd love to do but no firm plans yet.

FESTIVE FUN

Thank you all for once again providing a year of adventure, entertainment and surprises. I wish I had a **Jago & Litefoot** Christmas special to listen to. Would a jovial Jago **Short Trip** Yuletide reminisce be too much to hope for next year?

Michael Toates

Nick: Nice idea, Michael. No plans for this year, but I'll have a word.

SCREAM IF YOU WANNA GO SHALKA

I was wondering if you'd ever looked into doing productions with the *Scream of the Shalka* incarnation of the TARDIS team. I'm sure I can't be the only one for which this was our first exciting new era of **Doctor Who**, and while I am dearly in love with the 2005 revival, I would adore seeing some new adventures with Richard E Grant, Sir Derek Jacobi and Sophie Okonedo.

James Manley-Buser

Nick: There was a time after Doctor Who had been taken off the air

when Big Finish was involved in producing a follow-up to Shalka, featuring that Doctor, James. But those plans were superseded by the return of the TV series.

WHERE'S RODAN?

I was wondering why you've never used the character of Rodan from *The Invasion of Time*. When Leela stayed on **Gallifrey**, she was her only friend besides Andred, but she's not been mentioned in any of the **Gallifrey** stories.

Jen

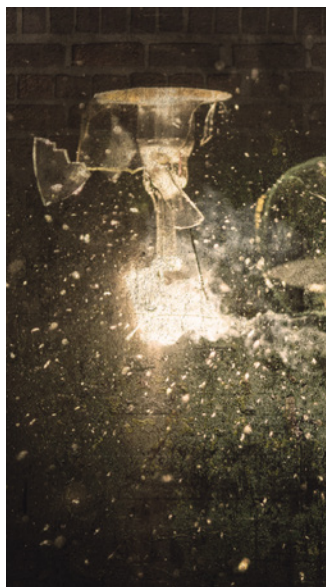
Nick: I'm not sure why not, Jen. I remember thinking, back in the day, that she was a kind of prototype Romana. What do you reckon?

A CALL FOR CALLAN

After the superb treatment given to James Mitchell's *Express* stories, I was wondering if any consideration had been given to restoration of the **Callan** canon by producing the episodes from the first two series as audiobooks for which recordings are incomplete, damaged or no longer exist. Hope this doesn't put me in a Red File!

Robert Blanchett

Nick: No one wants to be in a Red File, Robert! The rights will be more complicated for adapting existing TV scripts, so it's unlikely we'll ever do that I'm very sorry to say. Our task currently is trying to find a moment when Frank Skinner and Ben Miles are both available at the same time. **VORTEX**





IT'S TIME FOR THE THIRD AND FOURTH
TERMS OF CLASS AT BIG FINISH . . .

CLASS ACTS



ALTHOUGH CLASS only ran for one series of eight episodes on television, Big Finish is keeping it alive in its fantastic audio series. Volumes One and Two, comprising six stories in total, were an instant success, and now Volumes Three and Four are due for release this April.

Alongside the series regulars, Greg Austin (playing Charlie Smith), Sophie Hopkins (April MacLean) and Fady Elsayed (Ram Singh), there are two new faces joining the cast. Dervla Kirwan (who first appeared in the *Doctor Who* TV universe as Miss Hartigan in *The Next Doctor* and also starred in Netflix's *The Stranger*, playing the mother of Big Finish's own Jacob Dudman) takes over from Katherine Kelly as Miss Quill, while Joanna McGibbon succeeds Vivian Oparah as student prodigy, Tanya Adeola.

Producer Scott Handcock says: "The great reaction to the first two volumes

took us by surprise. We knew there was a fanbase for **Class**, but we didn't know if they'd take to the audio format, or stories set within the TV timeline. So it was a really pleasant surprise when the adventures were released that we received a lot of love not only from existing fans, but also newcomers who were already familiar with Big Finish's other ranges.

"The first six stories gave us a sense of how we could grow the **Class** universe on audio, and working with the cast gave me a personal idea of what they responded to. It meant we had that extra bit of confidence returning for these new adventures. The cast especially, having already recorded the first set of stories, were all a lot more comfortable with the medium and we were able to push them more in these new adventures. I also bit the bullet and committed to a jigsaw-style recording schedule, much as we do on **Torchwood**, so we could have stories featuring lots

of the regular characters without having to find a date when they might all be available – which would have been impossible."

Why do these box sets feature new actors taking over from the previously established TV cast? Scott explains: "Obviously listeners are going to have questions about the recasting of two of our leads, and I've already seen people saying perhaps we shouldn't have included those characters if we couldn't get the original actors. But development isn't instant – it takes a long time between first getting storylines approved and scripts commissioned, and then coming into the studio. And though we keep in touch with all our regulars, sometimes things don't work out. By the time we were looking at scheduling, Katherine and Vivian were unavailable. At that point, we either had to make the decision to scrap four of the six scripts or recast – and it seemed a



Above (l-r): Sophie Hopkins and Fady Elsayed

shame to deny the audience these new stories. But it wasn't a decision anyone at Big Finish took lightly.

"Recasting's a tricky process because people become familiar with a particular actor, and you don't want to ask a performer to actively imitate what came before as that can often prove more distracting. But Dervla's Quill is just as sarcastic and scathing as Katherine was on screen, and she embraced the character and backstory instantly: she's got some really strong material in these stories. Similarly, Joanna came to Tanya relatively fresh, reacting to what was written on the page, and it instantly feels like she's been living with the rest of the cast for years."



THE SOERS' *Ditch* by Carl Rowens opens Volume Three. He says: "I've always been fascinated by English folklore and the legend of the Green Children of Woolpit was something I've played around with a few times but never found a home for. Although we couldn't set **Class** in Suffolk, that myth was certainly the starting point of this story. Then I opted to add in wolves, a bowling alley and a giant inter-dimensional underground pit so it ultimately ended up nowhere close



Above: Joanna McGibbon

to the Green Children of Woolpit, but children with a wolf and a pit. It's all very logical in my head!

"The best thing about this, for me, was the chance to write outside of my comfort zone, dealing with teens and relationships... especially that tricky point when Charlie and Matteusz are committed to one another but start to realise, as all relationships do after the

initial honeymoon period, that they don't know quite as much as they thought they do about each other."

The second story of the set is *Catfish* by Kate Thorman. She says: "The brief was pretty broad, actually, and left a lot of room for me to play around. The story had to be set within the timeframe of the TV series, had to be able to stand alone, and to focus on a couple of the characters – all pretty standard from the first series. As Scott and I refined my pitches, it became clear that we were both interested in something that would really delve into a character in a way we hadn't seen in the past.

"Without giving anything away, I'd say it's sort of a Coal Hill take on a high school rom-com. Kind of. I'd like to keep writing for Big Finish, so I won't say any more!"

Sweet Nothings by Michael Dennis concludes this set. He says his brief was: "A fairly loose one

Recasting's a tricky process because people become familiar with a particular actor, and you don't want to ask a performer to actively imitate what came before as that can often prove more distracting.

SCOTT HANDCOCK

relating to how many characters we could use, as I recall, and that it must sit within the span of the TV series. Other than that we were encouraged to do whatever we wanted. I pitched a couple of ideas and *Sweet Nothings* was the one Scott liked most. Working with Scott has been a delight. His enthusiasm, encouragement and precise and

clear notes were a boon." Michael sums up the plot of *Sweet Nothings* succinctly: "Miss Quill: after dark!"



CLASS – VOLUME Four opens with *Mock*, by Alfie Shaw. He tells us: "Scott gave me an incredibly detailed brief. The mock exam setting, the lead characters we were featuring, the mechanics of the resolution – all the tricky stuff! It was so helpful as it meant I could get on with the fun bits, like the dialogue and the character relationships. I've got a couple of friends who are teachers, so I got in touch with them to help colour the brief with what happens in an exam when you've not got your head down actually doing the thing."



Above (l-r): Greg Austin and Sophie Hopkins



Above (l-r): Greg Austin and Jordan Renzo

I've a strong sense of what the Creeper looks like, but the lovely thing, especially with Big Finish audios, is the expertise in the sound design. Anyone listening can create their own Creeper.

LIZZIE HOPLEY

"Everyone's stuck doing a mock exam, which no one's particularly enthused about. Quill especially hates it as she's stuck invigilating. Things start going south when she begins hearing voices, and they keep descending downward, throwing up a school romance, the phrase 'socio-economic situation' and muscular baristas along the way..."

We then encounter *The Creeper*, by Lizzie Hopley. She says: "I was told it should be self-contained, and that they wanted something with Matteusz and Quill. I was really excited about getting these

characters to interact as I hadn't seen much of them together on screen.

"*The Creeper* could be anything I wanted, and I just adore writing characters like that. We all love characters that turn out to be something very different from what we expect. They wanted a haunted house, so I took it and ran with it! That was great; part of it in the school, and part in the house. It was a lot of fun – who doesn't love ghost stories at Hallowe'en?"

"The name kind of suggests that this person, the Creeper, isn't what they seem. I love the idea of playing

with audio, creatures you create with your voice. There's an aspect to them that the listener can fill in from the sound effects such as what they are doing – and then you can picture it in your mind. I've a strong sense of what the Creeper looks like, but the lovely thing, especially with Big Finish audios, is the expertise in the sound design. Anyone listening can create their own Creeper. I hope they have a lot of fun with it."

Queen of Rhodia by Blair Mowat concludes the set. (Yes, Blair Mowat. THAT Blair Mowat, who wrote the music for both the



Above: Dervla Kirwan

TV and the Big Finish series!)

Scott explains: "I've known Blair for years through his work on **Torchwood** and other projects, and we were having a catch-up in London one night after a recording. Blair happened to mention how he'd be interested in trying to write an audio drama having heard so many, but he would want to try it on a range that he was familiar with. Naturally, having scored the original television series and our first round of audios, he's lived and breathed **Class** since its conception, and so was very happy to pitch a few ideas. And the resulting *Queen of Rhodia* fills a very peculiar space in **Class** continuity. It's really quite a bonkers celebration of the series and the Quill/Charlie dynamic especially, and it feels like a very fitting story."

Blair says: "I wrote and directed a few short films at university and did a module on screenwriting in my masters degree over a decade ago, but I've been concentrating on composing ever since then. Lots of

ideas for stories popped into my head over that time though, so I sent a few ideas to Scott to see if he'd be up for me writing a script for the next volume of **Class**. He liked one of them so I worked it up and we pitched it to **Class** creator Patrick Ness and the BBC who gave it the green light. I hadn't written for a long time but I knew the world and cast so well that it felt like the perfect place to start again."

How did Blair find putting words into the mouths of characters he'd known for so long? He admits: "Honestly it came very naturally to me. Patrick did such a good job of establishing these characters and I've gotten to know them so well through writing music for them so I felt very prepared. Though my story is quite a different setup in that regard, as people will find out!"

As well as writing the script, Blair also scored the story. He smiles: "Characters' themes or certain emotive tones of music often pop into my head, and

sometimes I listened to my own **Class** soundtrack whilst writing. Very occasionally I'd even write in stage directions for how the music might be used in the scene and where there could be a pause for a crescendo etc. Aaron Sorkin believes dialogue is like music and I completely agree – every sentence has its own internal rhythm and certain phrasings just sound better. I think a comma really can make all the difference to something landing perfectly." **VORTEX**



CLASS: THE AUDIO ADVENTURES

VOLUME THREE

RELEASED: APRIL 2020

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CLASS: THE AUDIO ADVENTURES

VOLUME FOUR

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EVERYONE'S FAVOURITE SPACE DISCO ROBOTS ARE BACK – AND THEY'RE TAKING ON THE COUNTER-MEASURES TEAM...

ROOM TO MANOEUVRE



THE MOVELLANS made their first appearance in the television episode, *Destiny of the Daleks*. We next heard about their battles with the Daleks in *Resurrection of the Daleks*, and briefly saw them at war in *The Pilot*... and that was the end of the Dalek v Movellan conflict.

That is until now, when the heady mix of cyborg blob vs disco robot is coming to Earth, as the **Counter-Measures** team come into contact with both species.

Two new adventures, *The Movellan Manoeuvre* and *The Dalek Gambit*, will bring back the winning combination of Sir Toby Kinsella, Group Captain Ian Gilmore, Professor Rachel Jensen and Dr Allison Williams, just when we thought that they had gone into retirement.

Producer David Richardson says: "The **Counter-Measures**

range had ended: the standalone episode, *The Hollow King*, was the final episode. Or so we thought!

"There was such an outcry for more **Counter-Measures**, and ending on an excellent but not final-in-feeling story in *The Hollow King* felt increasingly wrong. So we decided to have a 'final' reunion for Rachel, Allison, Gilmore and Toby back where it all began with the Daleks. And this time the Movellans are also in the mix, going out in style with the fate of the world hanging in the balance. But the story is paramount, and I think we should prepare to say goodbye here."

Roland Moore, who has written *The Dalek Gambit*, says: "The plan was to bring the Movellan-Dalek war to Earth and to have the **Counter-Measures** team stuck in the middle of it, without help from the Doctor. What would they do? What could

they do to stop the planet being destroyed as collateral damage?

"David Richardson suggested that John Dorney and I tackle these as, effectively, a two-part play – although John's story is pretty much self-contained. John went for the Movellans and I went for the Daleks."

Writer John says: "When we were creating the second series we ended up with an extra episode, *The Hollow King*. One of the things we considered at the time was releasing another box set which would have included it, and we had initial ideas about extra hooks for that set – one of which was the Movellans. Then, of course, things changed and *The Hollow King* was released on its own. So when I was asked to write *The Movellan Manoeuvre*, I already roughly knew where we were going, as we had worked it out a couple of years ago."



Above (l-r): Cyril Nri, Hugh Ross, Pamela Salem, Simon Williams and Karen Gledhill

How did Roland find putting Daleks against Rachel, Allison and Gilmore again? He grins: “Wow, what an honour to write the ‘rematch’! There’s so much affection for *Remembrance of the Daleks*. But quite early on, it was decided that this wasn’t really a sequel to *Remembrance* – the idea was that it was the **Counter-Measures** team alone. I did get to write a line of dialogue where Rachel says she never wanted a rematch with the Daleks, but that’s probably one of the few references to that earlier story. For the characters, it’s been over a decade since they fought the Daleks at Coal Hill School.

“The robotics experts and scientists who helped the Movellans are being assassinated, one by one, so the team set out to find out who is responsible. Soon they realise that a deadly old enemy has followed the Movellans to Earth – and Sir Toby, Rachel, Allison and Gilmore find themselves in the middle of a desperate and destructive alien war. The finale includes a ticking clock, an epic battle and a harrowing, tragic decision for one of the **Counter-Measures** team...”

John adds: “One of the things I was very keen to do was feature

the mighty evil villainy of Lady Suzanne Clare, one of my favourite characters. Lady Clare is back and she’s... working hard, shall we say. She has developed a house cleaning robot that’s like a motorised biscuit tin. **Counter-Measures** are aware this is quite advanced technology and they are not entirely sure of what she’s doing, how she’s involved, and it’s all a little worrying for them. She’s in a very dangerous place.”

Back once more as Allison Williams is Karen Gledhill. Speaking to *Vortex*, she says: “Someone like Lady Clare is clearly of this Earth but she has alien contacts, and I really quite like the stories that she’s in.

“In the episode that we did recently, there’s something beguiling about her. I like Carolyn Seymour as well, and it was the same when we had Philip Pope with us playing Templeton. He wasn’t very nice at all – Templeton that is, not Philip!

“It’s always great to come back and do more **Counter-Measures**, seeing the others again. It was a real surprise though, as I thought we had finished for good!

“We recorded *Remembrance of the Daleks* almost 32 years ago – I’m going to be 60 this year. Even though there’s a gap of about a decade

THE NEW COUNTER-MEASURES
THE MOVELLAN MANOEUVRE
THE DALEK GAMBIT

between **Counter-Measures** and **The New Counter-Measures**, I think Allison would be in her mid-30s by now. I’m still playing someone at least 25 years younger than me!

“I haven’t worked on other Big Finish productions, but there’s always a great atmosphere in studio on our series. I don’t know if it’s like that all the time on other recordings with David Richardson and Ken Bentley. We all like each other so much and we’re so pleased to see each other, it’s just lovely.” **VORTEX**



THE NEW COUNTER-MEASURES

THE MOVELLAN MANOEUVRE

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FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD



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THE DALEK GAMBIT

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THE SIXTH Doctor is back and travelling with companions Philippa 'Flip' Jackson and Constance Clarke in a trio of **The Monthly Adventures**. When we last encountered Constance she was going through a traumatic event (no spoilers here – go and listen to *Static!*), but now the friends are continuing their travels in space and time in three fantastic new adventures.

Over the next few months they'll meet Ice Warriors, head to the end of World War II, and encounter writer HP Lovecraft. Producer, John Ainsworth, tells Vortex: "These are three stories that are very much self-contained. The listener needs no prior knowledge of either Flip or Constance's previous adventures to understand and enjoy what's going on.

"A little time has passed since *Static*, and at the opening of *Cry of the Vultriss*, the first of these three new stories, the Doctor and Constance do have a brief conversation about what happened to her and

but the Doctor is suspicious of their apparent peaceful intentions, and the Vultriss are concealing a secret which could threaten the universe. "We are very excited that Adele Lynch, who played the Ice Warrior queen in the television episode, *Empress of Mars*, has joined us to play the leader of the Ice Warriors in this story, and Nicholas Briggs provides the voices of the other Ice Warriors."

Writer, Darren recalls: "John gave me a very loose brief, which was basically to use the Sixth Doctor, Constance and Flip, plus the Ice Warriors. And that was it! Great to have that amount of freedom. I came up with three story ideas, which were all quite different, and *Cry of the Vultriss* is the one Big Finish decided to go with.

"The story is part political drama, part disaster epic. The Doctor, Constance and Flip crash-land on an alien planet and they don't know why. While the TARDIS begins to repair itself they set off to discover the cause of the crash, but very quickly become embroiled

FLIP & SIX

how she is feeling about it."

Miranda Raison, who plays Constance, says: "It must be over two years since I've been Constance in a Big Finish audio because the last time I was in studio I was eight months pregnant – and now my daughter is over two years old!"

And Lisa Greenwood, who brings Flip to life, adds: "It's great to be back! I love playing Flip and it's lovely to be working with Miranda and Colin again."



LOOKING AHEAD to the stories, John says: "April's release, *Cry of the Vultriss* by Darren Jones, is an exciting adventure on an alien world inhabited by a race descended from birds. The Doctor, Constance and Flip make a crash-landing and find that they are not the only off-worlders to pay a visit to Vultriss. The Ice Warriors arrive

in the on-going political crisis of the Vultriss – a bird-like species who rule the planet. If that wasn't enough for the Doctor to deal with, a group of alien ambassadors arrive – the Ice Warriors. And he discovers the Vultriss are hiding a centuries old secret that may have terrible consequences for the galaxy."

The writer loves this TARDIS team, saying: "I do love the Sixth Doctor and companions dynamic. My main highlight was writing for the Doctor, Constance and Flip. The characters have a lovely relationship which feels effortless. And that's a lot to do with having three actors who spark off one another. It was a pure joy.

"But there's also a lot of action going on in this story, and that was brilliant to do as well. It's a little harder to convey on audio as opposed to TV, but I like a challenge and I think it will come across well."

Flip out and satisfy your Constance craving – the Sixth Doctor and his friends are back...



Above (l-r): Miranda Raison, Colin Baker and Lisa Greenwood

It must be over two years since I've been Constance... the last time I was in studio I was eight months pregnant – and now my daughter is over two years old! MIRANDA RAISON



THE NEXT release is *Scorched Earth* by Chris Chapman in which the TARDIS lands in a French village at the end of World War II. The Allies have arrived and the Germans are being driven out. But amidst the celebrations the friends hear screams and realise something darker is happening, something which could force Flip and Constance to find themselves on different sides of the war beyond the war.

John tells us more: “*Scorched Earth* sees Constance confronting the truth about the end of World War II as France is liberated from German occupation. It also sees Flip and Constance at loggerheads with each other when the locals take justice into their own hands. Meanwhile, the Doctor becomes aware that a dangerous alien entity is at large.”

Chris says: “I really enjoyed writing for the Doctor, Flip and Constance when I wrote *The Middle*, and I said to John that I’d like to write for this trio again as they are such a good contrast with each other. John very kindly came back to me and said he was now producing the Sixth

Doctor range, and what ideas did I have. I sent him a few, and he picked out one called *Scorched Earth*.

“It’s another story in which I’ve been plundering my family tree a bit. It’s partly based on my grandfather who was called Walter Curtis by birth, but everyone called him Bill when he was a bit older. There’s a Walter Curtis character in *Scorched Earth*. Like my grandfather, he arrived on the beaches of Normandy in 1944, and he was on D Day plus 27. He was a

mobile radar operator and he missed the fight and had this incredible journey all the way to Berlin. He travelled through many French villages, and he told me the reactions of the locals in the aftermath of their liberation. I’d seen quite a few documentaries about that and thought it would be an interesting thing to encounter. There were wild celebrations with the French kissing everyone and enjoying their freedom, but there was a darker side too with big public displays of anger.

“A lot of the smaller towns and villages targeted this anger against local people, especially those who they saw as collaborators – and it was usually women, so it was quite misogynist. Many women who were seen as having helped the Germans, or even worse having had a relationship with a German, were hauled in front of the mob. They then had their hair shaved off or a swastika branded into their scalp, so everyone would recognise them and nobody would forget their ‘betrayal’.

“I thought it would be a really interesting setting for a **Doctor Who**

story with Flip and Constance. When they were paired up, quite rightly and really cleverly in *Quicksilver*, their first story together, expectations were subverted by having the two girls get on immediately and not get all funny about each other. They had an instant bond, almost maternal with Constance keeping an eye on Flip.

“Although they get on amazingly well, they are from very different times – a woman the Doctor met in the middle of a war, and the other is a very modern woman. Although they are of a similar age, they are from different generations, and have completely different outlooks.

“I thought it would be interesting to have both of these characters witness a head-shaving, and see how they would react to it. When it happens, Flip is appalled and wants to set out and stop it, seeing it as an assault on a young woman, but to Constance, this is a woman who has helped the Nazis, and this is what people do to get justice.

“Both reactions are so believable for those characters and it provides something to make them clash which affects the whole of the rest of the story – it all starts from there.

Chris adds: “I was very keen when I was writing this one to have a balance between the characters who were on different sides, so you wouldn't assume that every German is going to be a baddie, and every person on the Allies is a goodie. I wanted to get light and shade, and try and be realistic about it.”



THIS SIXTH Doctor trio concludes with a ‘celebrity historical’. John says:

“June’s release, *The Lovecraft Invasion* by Robert Valentine, takes the TARDIS to New England in the 1930s. Here, the Doctor and friends meet author HP Lovecraft and an escaped, sentient super-weapon that threatens to release the nightmare creatures from Lovecraft’s wild imagination into the real world.”

Robert says: “John invited me to pitch three story ideas for the Sixth Doctor, Constance and Flip, and the one I really hoped he’d go for was basically ‘the Doctor meets HP Lovecraft’. It was a mash-up I’d wanted to do for a long time, and



The heading of my original treatment was, ‘*Doctor Who in an Exciting Adventure with the Cthulhu Mythos*’, and that’s probably as good a description of it as any!

ROBERT VALENTINE

quite honestly I couldn't believe it hadn't been done already.

“The heading of my original treatment was, ‘*Doctor Who in an Exciting Adventure with the Cthulhu Mythos*’, and that’s probably as good a description of it as any!”

How did Robert find the dynamic between the Doctor, Constance and Flip? He admits: “The three of them are getting on pretty well together during this adventure but they’re in the middle of a catastrophic situation from the get-go. “For

the purposes of this story, the real gift they gave me is that they each have very different sets of baggage when it comes to Lovecraft, who as well as being a hugely influential writer is also highly controversial due to the inescapable issue of his racism. Having a near-contemporary of his in Constance, a near-contemporary of mine in Flip and the longer view of the Doctor, it meant I had multiple points of attack on the thorny problem of loving Lovecraft’s work but not his xenophobia.”

Robert adds: “I’m hugely grateful to John and Nicholas Briggs for letting me write the Lovecraft story I wanted to write, as it was something Big Finish could have quite reasonably shied away from. I wanted to celebrate Lovecraft’s fiction and present Lovecraft himself as a flawed and fragile but very human being, while neither sidestepping his abhorrent views nor demonising him for them. Fingers crossed, I’ve succeeded.” **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO

CRY OF THE VULTRISS

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"But soft, what light through yonder airlock breaks?"

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