

THE **BIG FINISH** MAGAZINE

VORTEX

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THEY'RE BACK! AND IT'S ABOUT TIME*

**FOUR BRAND-NEW ADVENTURES FOR
THE EIGHTH DOCTOR AND CHARLEY...**

* AND A MUMMY, SOME MOTHS... AND A WRITHING MASS.

ALSO INSIDE

DOCTOR WHO: FORTY

**WE MARK FOUR DECADES SINCE THE FIFTH
DOCTOR FIRST TOOK CONTROL OF THE TARDIS...**





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EARTHBOUND

WE'RE HEADING back to Moonbase Alpha in February for the second **Space: 1999** audio box set. With Mark Bonnar as Commander John Koenig and Maria Teresa Creasey as Doctor Helena Russell, the survivors are *Earthbound* in a new trio of tales: *Mooncatcher* by Marc Platt, *Earthbound* by Iain Meadows and *Journey's End* by Nicholas Briggs.

Producer David Richardson says: "We're making another visit to Moonbase Alpha! This time we have an original story from Marc Platt and then a loose two-part adaptation of the television episode *Earthbound*."

"*Earthbound* marked a pivotal moment in the TV series and we felt strongly that it deserved to be expanded, embellished and rewired. These are dark times on Alpha and along comes an opportunity to return home to Earth. For one of the Alphas, this is the end of their journey..."

Writer and director Nicholas Briggs adds: "In this box set we start to get to grips with the emotional impact that being torn away from Earth has had on the Alphas. We also delve deeper into the relationship between Commander Koenig and Dr Russell. And along the way there are alien threats, personal tragedies, strange attractions, action and high adventure." **VORTEX**

SPACE: 1999 EARTHBOUND

- RELEASED: FEBRUARY 2022
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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EDITORIAL

IS IT REALLY 21 years since Paul McGann and India Fisher were united on audio for the first time? I couldn't sleep the night after it was announced that the Eighth Doctor was returning to life with Big Finish as I just couldn't wait to hear it!

I loved this pairing from the word go. I wrote a fanzine about them (*The McGannzine*), such was my enthusiasm for them, and I really enjoyed their original run of four stories: *Storm Warning*, *Sword of Orion*, *The Stones of Venice* and *Minuet in Hell*.

I've always wondered what happened to Deeva Jansen from *Sword* after she was left floating in space having saved Charley's life. And we're going to find out soon in the **Charlotte Pollard – The Further Adventuress** episode, *Heart of Orion!*

Is it really 40 years since Peter Davison became the Doctor? I was nearly seven when Tom Baker regenerated into him. He was a big part of my life in my formative years, and from his audio adventures with Big Finish, this Doctor has proved he has a sense of humour which wasn't always as apparent on television. It has made me fall in love with him all over again. We'll be celebrating four decades of the Fifth Doctor with stories from across his timeline in *Forty*.

And is it really 50 years since Peladon first appeared on our screens? I was less than three months away from being born when *The Monster of Peladon* part six aired – Peladon's last TV appearance. But through a repeat of *The Curse of Peladon* on TV in 1981, original novels and Big Finish's own *The Prisoner of Peladon*, it feels as if it's never gone away.

January 2022 really is a month for celebration – now where's the cake?! **VORTEX**

Kenny

IMAGINE THERAPY BECAUSE SHE'S MADE THEM TERRIFYING!



THE DOCTOR AND CHARLOTTE POLLARD REUNITE FOR MORE...

PIECES OF EIGHTH

IN JANUARY 2001, Big Finish released its first Eighth Doctor story, *Storm Warning*, bringing Paul McGann back to the part of the Doctor for the first time since the television movie five years previously.

In January 2022, Big Finish is releasing its first Eighth Doctor retrospective box set, bringing Paul McGann and India Fisher back together to reprise their roles as the Doctor and Charley in a series of full-cast dramas for the first time since the 2007 release, *The Girl Who Never Was*.

The pair make their return in **Charlotte Pollard** – *The Further Adventuress* (did you spot the extra ‘s’?), with four new adventures in space and time.

Producer Emma Haigh says: “It’s been wonderful working with Paul and India for the first time bringing the Doctor and Charley back together. What better way to celebrate 20 years of their adventures at Big Finish than having them meet mummies, moths, writhing masses and an old adversary!”

Speaking to *Vortex* about returning to the part of Charley, India Fisher says: “I remember that Big Finish was planning something for Charley and the Eighth Doctor back in 2019 but then the COVID-19 pandemic happened and I put it to the back of my mind.

“It’s just amazing that Big Finish has been able to carry on through everyone working remotely – it’s a superb set-up. But I really miss seeing

people’s eyes! We did four recordings in a week back in the day and so you really got to know everyone – we were like a little repertory company. You don’t get that when you only hear someone’s voice recording from home. You have a great time still and we had lovely casts, but I felt that I didn’t know everyone as well as I would have done if we had been able to banter in the green room. I Googled everyone at the end of the day to see what they all looked like!

“It’s great to be back playing Charley, get her shoes back on and interact with Paul as the Eighth Doctor.

“And I love the title – *The Further Adventuress* is brilliant! Whenever I read new Charley stories I sense the writers are as pleased to get back to her as I am. The scripts



Above: India Fisher
Below: Rakie Ayala

WHENEVER I READ NEW CHARLEY STORIES I SENSE THE WRITERS ARE AS PLEASED TO GET BACK TO HER AS I AM. INDIA FISHER

are always done so lovingly and she has some really beautiful moments. I'm very grateful."

THE FIRST adventure of the set is *The Mummy Speaks!* by Alan Barnes (who also wrote the Eighth Doctor and Charley's debut episode, *Storm Warning*.)

The TARDIS lands at the Carnaval de Paris, 1841. Amid the sideshow tents, the Doctor and Charley discover something truly novel: an Ancient Egyptian mummy that speaks – despite being dead for more than 4,000 years!

Alan, who also script edited this box set, admits: "It was very pleasing



writing for the Eighth Doctor and Charley again. The only thing I didn't like was 'celebrating' the fact that it's been 20 years since *Storm Warning*. Twenty years, how come?!

"Charley will always be my darling, so coming back to her is always a delight. Obviously, when you haven't written for a particular character for a while, at the back of your mind you always wonder, 'Will I be able to recapture that whatever-it-was, that *je ne sais quoi* again?' But Charley always has something to say, whatever situation you put her in. On the first page of the first scene in the first play, she's walking with the Doctor beside the Seine in 1840s Paris and I didn't even have to think about what she was going to say – she just blurted the first joke onto the page automatically and from that moment I knew it was all going to be OK!

"*The Mummy Speaks!* – with an exclamation mark – started when I saw a clip on Twitter of some strange scientific project to model the larynx of an actual mummy in order to synthesise their original voice. But all you could hear was this terrifying screech-bark, and that went straight into one of my ideas notebooks. There's a bit of Edgar Allen Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* in there, too. (Well, when I say a bit, I mean a lot!)"

THE ONLY newcomer to writing for Charley in this series is Lisa McMullin, with the second story of the set, *Eclipse*. Alan says: "*Eclipse* – what a brilliant title. And it turns out I didn't know that an eclipse is the collective noun for a group of moths. So Lisa's given us giant space moths even though she told me she was a bit phobic about moths. Maybe it's therapy because she's made them TERRIFYING!"

When the chittering, nightmarish Hellstrung descend from the forest canopy of planet Pteron, they threaten to snuff out the lives of the human settlers below.

Lisa says: "It's lovely getting to write for a range that you haven't done before as it's the perfect excuse to have a cheeky little catch-up with it, and get to know the voices again. I had so much fun listening to the Charley audios to get a really

good feel for the era and get my head into that time at Big Finish.

"The scary thing in this story is the thing that I'm most frightened of – my biggest phobia – moths. I can't stay in the same room if there's a moth in it!

"I created a monster that's based upon the thing that I hate, and I don't know if I'll be able to actually listen to it because even the thought of the flapping sound of their wings scares the wits out of me!

"With most of the scary stuff in **Doctor Who** there's not much that I genuinely mind – I reckon I could face down a Dalek and run away from the Cybermen – but a flapping moth... that would do it for me!"

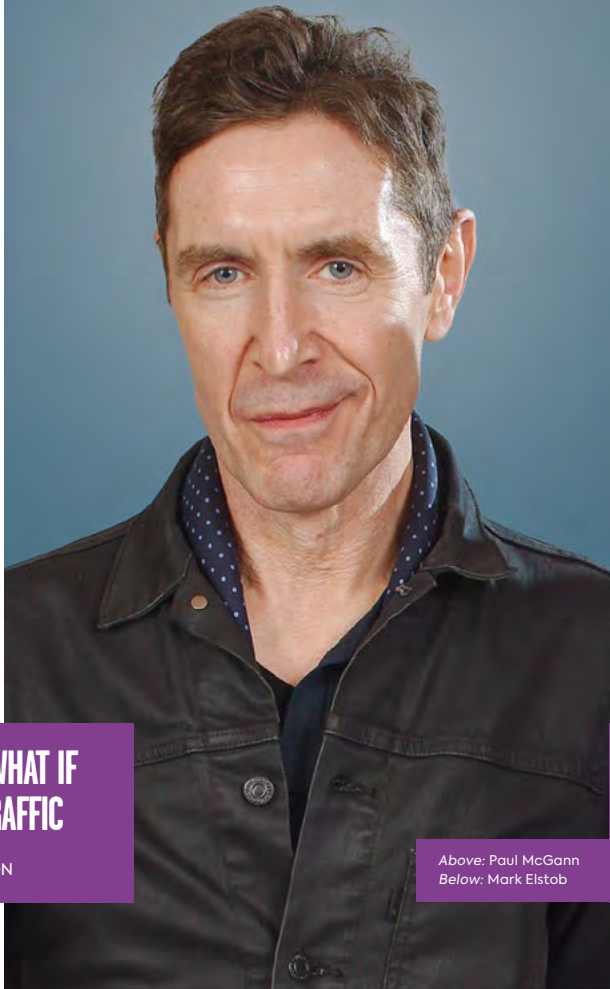
THE SLAYING of the *Writhing Mass* by Eddie Robson is the third adventure in the set. *The Doctor and Charley are trapped in a temporal traffic jam caused by time tourists come to witness the pivotal event in the history of the planet Ileiko: the Slaying of the Writhing Mass, the alien entity that enslaved the Ileikans in their infancy.*

MY STARTING QUESTION WAS, 'WHAT IF THE TARDIS GOT STUCK IN A TRAFFIC JAM IN THE VORTEX?'

EDDIE ROBSON

Alan explains: "*The Slaying of the Writhing Mass* is Eddie doing the brilliant thing Eddie does which is to take future space people and make them completely real – living, breathing characters who you immediately sense exist beyond the 60 minutes (or whatever) of the play in question."

Eddie – who also wrote *Memory Lane* for Charley's original run – says: "When I got asked for a pitch it was around the time of the first lockdown and as a displacement activity I'd been filling all the gaps in my *Doctor Who Magazine* collection. I'd started reading through the first year or so of the **Doctor Who** weekly strip, and I was of a mind to write something in that vein. I really like how those strips clash the cosmic, the mundane and the slightly silly. So my starting



Above: Paul McGann
Below: Mark Elstob



question was, 'What if the TARDIS got stuck in a traffic jam in the vortex?' and I worked outwards from there, building the story around how and why that might happen."

How much fun was it coming back to this earlier Eighth Doctor?

Eddie replies: "Up until Lucie's departure I think the Doctor is fairly consistent, though he does go through a lot, so I was more or less writing the Eighth Doctor as I've always written. But we really are going back to the beginning here. These stories are set when the Doctor and Charley haven't been travelling together for very long, and it was great to pick them up at a



Paul McGann (l) and India Fisher (r) back in the day...

OF ALL THE STORIES
IN THAT FIRST
SEASON IT WAS THE
ONE THAT BEGGED
TO BE REVISITED IN
SOME WAY.

ALAN BARNES

point where they're not too familiar with each other yet, when they don't automatically know what the other's going to do in any given situation."

ANOTHER WRITER from the original run returns for the last story in the set, *Heart of Orion*, as Nicholas Briggs writes a sequel to his previous Cyber-story, *Sword of Orion*.

Alan says: "A *Sword of Orion* sequel was number one on my list when the idea of a 20th anniversary box set came up. I felt of all the stories in that first season it was the one that begged to be revisited in some way. I love the Garazone Bazaar in particular and I knew I wanted to get the Doctor and Charley back there. So I basically badgered Nick to write it!"

The TARDIS intercepts a strange signal, returning the Doctor and

Charley to the Garazone System – and find the Orion War is far from over.

Nick says: "Alan wanted to focus on the Garazone Bazaar. The real backbone of the story is the whole notion of the android versus humans war, which is what *Sword of Orion* is really about. The Cybermen, in that story, were just being used as a potential army for use by either the humans or the androids, whoever foolishly thought they could control them.

"But since – spoilers! – the android character Deeva got left drifting in space I began thinking that, being an android, she was probably still alive. And what if the android high command managed to beam a message into her head? So I ended up with a story about a secret agent who's conflicted about their mission, compelled by a command signal – our villain is an unwilling one."

Returning as Deeva is Michelle Livingstone who tells *Vortex*: "I knew at the end of the first story that Deeva has been left floating around in space and I thought there was a possibility she could come back as her fate was left unknown... so I was chuffed to bits when Nick told me he was doing a sequel.

"I'm really happy to be back but it was very strange – I think I was more nervous the second time doing it, being thousands of miles away rather than being in a studio all together. It was probably easier not being able to see anyone though the sound was so fabulous they could have been in the next room.

"I gave *Sword of Orion* another listen beforehand and I kept saying, 'Hello, Doctor...', over and over, to find the voice again. I think I was able to capture the same Deeva... though even androids mature!"

Nick adds: "I did have an initial hiccup on this one where I'd worked out the plot way in advance but, unfathomably, then lost the document. It's a total mystery as to what happened. When I came to write the script I had to really search the hard drive of my brain, as it were, and re-invent the story. But I think this helped me to look at it from a fresher perspective."

For anyone wondering about continuity and where these stories fit, Alan concludes: "We've not been totally specific about the placing in the scripts themselves because I've learned you should always give yourself wiggle room wherever possible, just in case you want to occupy a specific gap for a specific reason later. But it would be reasonable to assume that this set is placed between the first two Charley seasons." **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO



CHARLOTTE POLLARD: THE FURTHER ADVENTURESS

■ RELEASED: JANUARY 2022
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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FORTY NOT OUT

IT'S TIME TO MARK FOUR DECADES SINCE THE FIFTH DOCTOR FIRST TOOK CONTROL OF THE TARDIS...

IAS FANS of *Doctor Who*, time travel is a concept with which we are all familiar. We understand how the TARDIS can dematerialise in one era and then appear in the next, with literally seconds having passed for those inside it while centuries can occur outside. And, quite incredibly, 40 years have now passed since Peter Davison became the Doctor.

Many Big Finish listeners will have been there at the time, watching the era of the Fifth Doctor 'live' in

its original broadcast. And now, because we all love celebrations, this is the perfect excuse to mark the event in the form of the brand new release, *Forty*.

Two box sets – with the second volume, a six-part epic by Tim Foley, to follow later in the year – will be released in celebration of Peter Davison's era featuring many of the regulars from his time as the Doctor.

Producer David Richardson says: "Can it really be 40 years since Peter Davison stepped into his cricketing gear and brought a whole new zest and energy to *Doctor Who*? This anniversary of the arrival of the first young Doctor deserves to be celebrated and the party lasts over two box sets in a lavish celebration of 40 years of the Fifth Doctor.

"Why is the Fifth Doctor travelling along his own time stream? What strange force is pulling the Doctor forwards through his incarnation? All will be revealed in a surprise-filled arc, and many old friends are back alongside some of the show's best-loved foes.

"It's always fascinated me that the television episode, *The Tomb of the Cybermen*, isn't an adventure that definitively ends. There's a loose strand of story left floating at the end of episode four – and that strand of the story launches us straight into *Forty*.

"The mystery will (probably) be solved, but along the way enjoy spending time with Tegan, Nyssa, Adric, Turlough and Alistair Gordon Lethbridge-Stewart. As birthday parties go, this is going to be a spectacular one!"



Above: Peter Davison
Below: Sarah Sutton

THE DOCTOR HAS
TO NAVIGATE BEING
STUCK IN THE WRONG
PART OF HIS LIFE AND
AVOID DISRUPTING HIS
OWN TIMELINE.

MATT FITTON

We met up in London and chatted through these box sets to create a celebration of the Fifth Doctor's era, and we each get to play with different TARDIS teams.

"John had the central conceit of the Doctor being bounced around his own timeline so we get a taste of all the different bits of the Fifth Doctor's era. I've got the Doctor, Nyssa and Tegan post-TV episode *Earthshock*, but I've also got the starting point of the whole adventure just after TV episode *Four to Doomsday*, and Adric is there at the very beginning – so I got to write a few pages of Adric!

"On TV we see Nyssa collapsing from the effects of what they think is the Urbankan virus and we begin with the Doctor suddenly collapsing too. When he wakes up he's in his

own future and Adric is no longer there and he doesn't quite know why. As well as dealing with the oncoming adventure the Doctor has to navigate being stuck in the wrong part of his life and avoid disrupting his own timeline."

Matt confirms

that the story picks up after its 1967 predecessor: "The little

thread left hanging at the end of *The Tomb of the Cybermen* that David noticed was a Cybermat scurrying off across the desert, so the beginning point for the story is where did it go and what did it get up to next?

"Initially, the TARDIS is trying to find some stability and jumps back down its own timeline and finds refuge on the rocket ship that's just left Telos. As well as Professor Parry, Captain Hopper and a few other assorted crew members, there's an unexpected guest onboard in the form of the Cybermat.

"It was great that we could revisit some of these great characters as well. Parry's lovely: the Second Doctor met quite a few dotty explorers or scientists and Parry

THE SET begins with *Secrets of Telos* by Matt Fitton. Professor Parry's expedition to the tombs of Telos was hardly an unmitigated success. The handful of survivors limp home in a spaceship... unaware that the deadly peril they faced from the Cybermen is not yet banished.

Into this situation stumble the Fifth Doctor and his friends Nyssa and Tegan – and they're soon in a deadly fight for their lives. Except things aren't quite that simple – something odd is happening to the Doctor. He's suddenly in a different part of his own timeline inhabiting his future self with no idea of why or how this has happened.

Who is bouncing him through time? And what could they possibly want?

Matt says: "I got together with script editor John Dorney and the other writers, Sarah Grochala and Tim Foley, just before lockdown.





Above: Janet Fielding
Below: Nicholas Briggs



THEY ARE NEVER
DOING GOOD THINGS
FROM A HUMAN POINT
OF VIEW — BUT THEY ALSO
HAVE A STRONG SENSE
OF HONOUR.

SARAH GROCHALA

return of the Ice Warriors. The second story of the set is *God of War* by Sarah Grochala.

The Doctor is still being jolted through his own timeline and has now found himself with Nyssa, Tegan and Adric in ninth century Iceland near a Viking settlement on the edge of a volcano. A settlement whose leader has just found a god in the ice.

The TARDIS crew are soon in a battle with the fearsome Ice Warriors. There are a lot of lives to save, and not just those of their new friends.

The Doctor's about to find that his biggest battle may be with his own conscience.

Of being invited to join the Forty party, Sarah says: "It was really exciting to be asked, and also to do something which involved a bit of thinking between the four of us, about what the overall story would be.

"I really enjoyed the whole process. I've been writing

The Robots

where you are feeding off other people's storylines so they all meet up, but this was the first time I'd sat down with other writers and had a coffee (just before the lockdown!) to thrash out an over-arching

storyline about what's going on across several different stories. Popping into different moments in the Doctor's timeline was really interesting as was working to tie up moments from other stories.

"My first Doctor was Tom Baker and I was a big Romana II and K9 fan. They were my team so I was obviously sad after they all left and the Fifth Doctor came along. However, I remember that first series of the Fifth Doctor really clearly.

"I spent my weekends with my dad and the week with my mum. Normally I'd have watched **Doctor Who** with my dad on Saturday but when it moved to weekday nights I had to bargain with my mum to stay up late and watch it. My mother didn't watch **Doctor**

is from that tradition so it was interesting to bring him up to date in the Fifth Doctor's era.

"Of course, the first thing the Doctor has to do is convince him he's the same man he's just left behind outside the tombs! As for Captain Hopper, he appears as a dashing American pilot figure who's rather dismissive of the female characters in *The Tomb of the*

Cybermen though of course Tegan won't let him get away with that!"

IN THE 1980s, producer John Nathan-Turner was keen to give the show's loyal following some fan-pleasing moments by bringing back old monsters and character's from **Doctor Who's** past, and our Fifth Doctor celebration continues by doing just that with the



Above: Matthew Waterhouse

Who so it was also odd seeing it on my own for the first time. I had really visceral memories of watching the Fifth Doctor debut season when I reviewed it for this."

BEING GIVEN the Ice Warriors was particularly exciting for Sarah as she explains: "I don't get to play with pre-existing aliens that often so it was lovely to have the Ice Warriors. I was really excited to write for them plus the Vikings. It was a bit of a surprise to me that in all the years of **Doctor Who** no one has ever put Ice Warriors and Vikings together before, it seems like such a great combination.

"The Ice Warriors are often villains within the story – they are never doing good things from a human point of view – but they also have a strong sense of honour which I find really fascinating.

"The first time I saw the Ice Warriors was in the *Cold War* TV episode of new **Doctor Who** – the story set on the submarine. I really liked the idea of someone who's woken up thousands of years later to discover that their entire civilisation – everything

they knew, everything they were living for – has gone. I loved thinking about how that would make you feel and what it would make you do.

"I really enjoyed writing for the Fifth Doctor and this set of companions – such great personalities. I enjoyed the competition between Nyssa and Adric as they are both super clever in their different ways but both very young.

"I also really enjoyed writing Tegan at this point in her storyline. After she rejoins the TARDIS in the second Fifth Doctor season, she loves it much more and has developed a sense of adventure. But I liked her during the time she's first travelling with the Doctor, with the contradiction between the fact that she's visiting all these amazing places but at the same time she desperately wants to get back and board her plane so she can begin doing her dream job. I also relished the antagonism between Tegan and Adric.

"The other really interesting thing to write was the Doctor having to navigate his feelings

about Adric's death. He knows what Adric's ultimate fate is and he has to deal with his feelings about that within the story – it was really lovely to play with that part of the narrative as I was writing it."

Adric – played of course by Matthew Waterhouse – was delighted to be back in the role. He tells *Vortex*: "It was fun recording the story for the collection *Forty*. Most of us worked from home because of COVID-19 though I went to the Audio Sorcery studio near Tunbridge Wells – socially distanced, of course!

"Because most of the cast were at home I assumed we'd breeze through the recording and finish by lunchtime. Wrong! Various connection issues made it probably the single longest day I've ever had with Big Finish!

But all the problems were solved in the end with the help of Audio Sorcery's excellent studio manager.

"It seems incredible that the TV episode *Castrovalva* is now 40 years old – and even more incredible that I am still playing a cerebral teenager all these years later! And it was great for

that cerebral teenager to meet the Ice Warriors who were seriously scary in Patrick Troughton's day!" **VORTEX**

I ASSUMED WE'D
BREEZE THROUGH THE
RECORDING AND FINISH
BY LUNCHTIME

MATTHEW WATERHOUSE

DOCTOR WHO



FORTY

■ RELEASED: JANUARY 2022
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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IT'S TIME TO RETURN TO A POPULAR ALIEN WORLD WHICH MADE ITS DEBUT IN 1971...

FIFTY SHADES OF PELADON

PELADON. A member of the Galactic Federation. A world with its own royal line, regularly visited by an assortment of alien species including a certain Time Lord. Once a world of intrigue and adventure, as the years pass industrial exploitation and deadly political games are taking their toll on the planet.

In celebration of five decades since the planet's first appearance in television episode, *The Curse of Peladon*, Big Finish is marking its creation with a special box set release appropriately titled, *Peladon*. Producer David Richardson tells *Vortex*: "Fifty years of Peladon... that's definitely something to celebrate! I loved the Peladon stories on TV: it was such a completely formed world created by Brian Hayles, full of a

whole galaxy of alien races. It was, if you will, an alien *Game of Thrones* many decades ahead of its time.

"And so we return there in January 2022 to meet King Peladon again... and then journey through the generations to discover what happened to the planet, the alien races and the Galactic Federation. It's a huge tapestry – and one that will feature many familiar friends, foes and heroes."

Looking after the stories in this release is script editor Rob Valentine. He reveals: "I loved script-editing this set. It was a chance to take a long view of Peladon's society, examining 250 years of its struggles with not only the Galactic Federation and its people's own sense of identity, but also charting the environmental toll of its political intrigue and rapid industrialisation.

"David's brief was to devise a generational saga not unlike *The Crown*, so the first thing I had to do was write up a potted history of Peladon taking into account both TV outings, the established Big Finish stories and other details I could glean from print media. This then became the guide rope for all the writers and a really useful tool for me to keep track of where we were."

When *The Curse of Peladon* and *The Monster of Peladon* were broadcast, the United Kingdom was undergoing a huge amount of political turmoil with miners strikes and the imminent accession to the Common Market, later known as the European Union. With the UK having left the EU under Brexit, it seems a Peladon story couldn't be more relevant.

Rob explains: "Peladon is a very well-realised world in Pertwee-era **Doctor Who** and because it's somewhere the Doctor returned to, it's a setting where his presence has ongoing consequences. As simple a dramatic concept as that is, it's not something **Doctor Who** did all that often. The other thing, I think, is that the Peladon setting is and was a political allegory for the UK so any story set on Peladon is really a story about the real world. For the purposes of this box set, the real-world issue which a generational saga could explore most effectively is the way that industrialisation and a lack of political will to challenge it is destroying our environment."

THE ORDEAL of *Peladon* by Jonathan Barnes and script editor Rob begins the adventuring. Rob says: "The first story in the set is about pollution, religion, the growing

THE PELADON SETTING IS AND WAS A POLITICAL ALLEGORY FOR THE UK... ROB VALENTINE

fault lines in a previously ordered society and the extent and limits of King Peladon's power. With David Troughton returning to play King Peladon near the end of his reign, it's the perfect way to reintroduce the listener to that world while reminding

them that time is marching forever forward. I won't say much more but as well as the return of King Peladon, a couple of other familiar faces also make an appearance."

David Troughton adds: "It's a long time since I played King Peladon but the lovely thing about this new script is that there are a lot of elements of who he was before – the writers carried over certain characteristics, his naivety and basic wanting to be loved by everyone. It was a pleasure to do."

THE SECOND adventure in the set, *The Poison of Peladon*, gave Lizzie Hopley the chance to soak in the seventies as she researched the original TV stories. She admits: "I knew virtually nothing about Peladon to start with! It was in a pocket of original **Doctor Who** episodes that I either didn't remember or hadn't seen. This is the beauty of writing for



Above: David Troughton
Opposite: Nicholas Briggs



Big Finish, you get to watch this classic stuff as research!

"The rich variety of characters struck me in particular. Alpha Centauri, the Arcturan Ambassador is a fabulous creation. And Peladon itself has been so strongly imagined as a world with its monarchy, Aggedor mythology and geo-political structure, it was an ingenious place to revisit. It was great having that striking visual world in my head throughout.

"I hope I play homage to the original episodes by honouring

all the things people love about it, but of course I have the wonderful River Song thrown into the mix. Her reveal at the start is fun and her relationship with Alpha Centauri is delicious! We have an older Queen Thalira in my story too so seeing how she's coped with her father's legacy is an interesting factor. What I wanted is to create a real mystery about who River can trust and indeed if people can 100 percent trust her!"

Asked for her highlight, Lizzie grins: "Writing a scene for King Peladon himself of course! An utter honour and lovely to have that link



Above: Ariyon Bakare
Below: Moyo Akandé

WHO DOESN'T WANT TO WRITE LINES FOR ALPHA CENTAURI?

LIZZIE HOPELY

to the original episodes. And who doesn't want to write lines for Alpha Centauri? That was an added bonus."

THE THIRD episode, *The Death of Peladon* isn't Mark Wright's first script for a tale set on the planet as he co-wrote Companion Chronicle *The Prisoner of Peladon* with Cavan Scott released in September 2009. How did he find returning to the world?

Mark admits: "It was great fun. I felt on comfortable territory although *The Death of Peladon* is set decades later than *The Prisoner of Peladon*. There are a couple of little nods to *The Prisoner of Peladon* in the script. Nothing that impacts on the story as such, but something thematic that links the two stories in a lovely way.

"Peladon is a complete world. Even though on TV we see very little outside the Citadel and the mines, you sense a society in the background that feels real and authentic just from the glimpses and hints we get. I was keen to step outside the walls of the Citadel and show a bit more of Peladon life in *The Death of Peladon*."

Mark was left to his own devices beyond the story's initial brief.



He reveals: "There was nothing much to know except it was a Sixth Doctor and Mel story set at a particular point in Peladon history in relation to the other three scripts. And that things had to be pretty grim, perhaps bringing Peladon to the brink of something terrible. I also had the choice of whether to

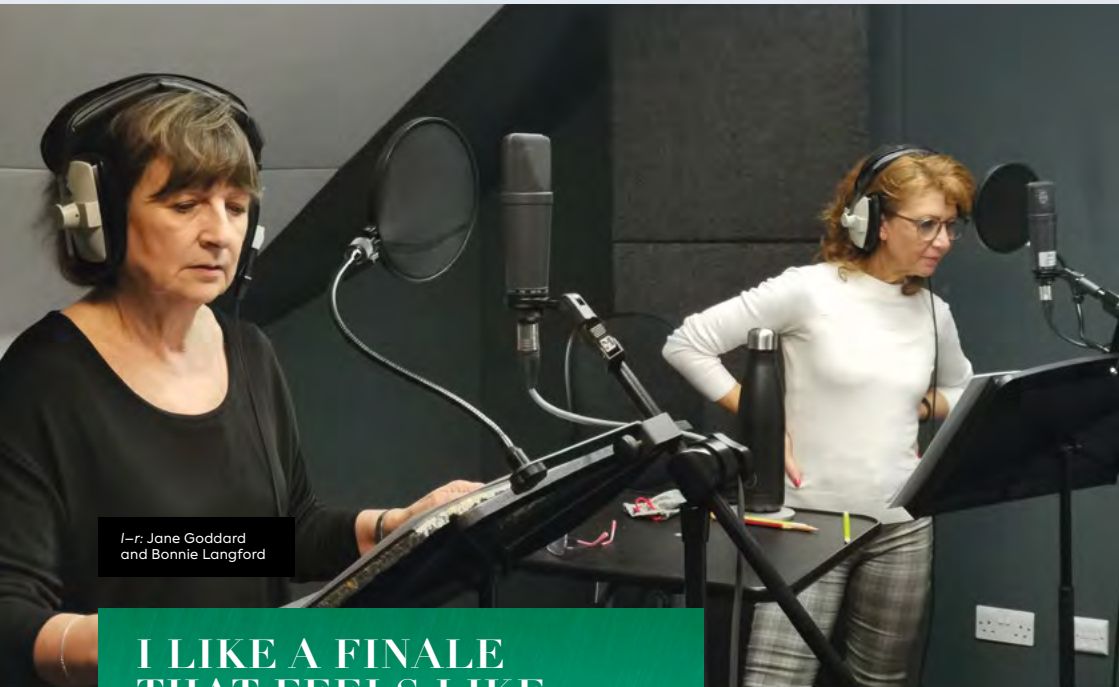
include Alpha Centauri or not – and how can you resist having such a brilliant character in your script.

"I've wanted to write for Mel for so long as I adore Bonnie Langford, she is one of **Doctor Who**'s greatest assets. And writing for the Sixth Doctor feels a bit like coming home as that's how it all started for me. I was writing *The Death of Peladon* not far off the 20th anniversary of co-writing the audio adventure *Project: Twilight* and that felt highly appropriate."

THE TRUTH of *Peladon* by

Tim Foley concludes the set, and he admits it was:

"Extremely exciting! Other than Gallifrey and Skaro, **Doctor Who** doesn't tend to have alien planets it revisits regularly and I've always thought there was so much to explore with Peladon. I also loved the idea of writing for a box set that passed a baton between stories, picking up on themes and incidents from different points of its history.



l-r. Jane Goddard
and Bonnie Langford

I LIKE A FINALE THAT FEELS LIKE THE CULMINATION OF MISTAKES MADE ALONG THE WAY... TIM FOLEY

"I had to end this box set. Wrap it all up! I had a lot of freedom about the kind of finale I wanted to write so instead of going for a rousing climax I chose to approach it as a small, intimate story from one particular character's point of view. I like a finale that feels like the culmination of mistakes made along the way, and it was great fun exploring just how dark the future of Peladon has become..."

"Arla Decanto is the last Great Seamstress of Peladon and she's been commissioned to make something special for the latest coronation. She needs an assistant to complete her work so she sources a new apprentice from Peladon's loomhouse – a strange man known only as the Doctor..."

Asked for his highlight, Tim said: "I had to figure out what Peladon

was when stripped of everything we associate with it such as its royals, its miners, its monsters. All we're left with are great big looming towers and empty mines, and that architectural division was a useful mission statement. The Peladon stories always have a political lens and this one is no exception.

"The real highlight though was discovering who the actors were. I literally gasped when producer David Richardson sent me the cast list!"

Rob concludes: "This quartet of stories spans several generations and I'm hoping that the cumulative effect will be to raise the question of the extent to which we ever learn the lessons of history. But also an acknowledgement that if we are to save the environment, it

will necessarily be a generational effort and not the result of a single heroic action by any particular individual. On top of all that, it's a series of adventures with a very epic sweep." **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO



PELADON

■ RELEASED: JANUARY 2022
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/royal 



NEXT MONTH WE RETURN TO THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S 7 AND ENCOUNTER...

THE REGION OF TERRIRA

ONE OF the many great things about **Blake's 7** is the worlds that Terry Nation, Chris Boucher and other writers have built up. This isn't a universe where the goodies are whiter than white and all villains wear black. It is complicated, people have morally complex decisions to make and there are people who are genuinely unpleasant because... that's just who they are.

Enter the Terra Nostra. For those who are unaware, they deal in the horrible things in every civilised world – weapons, racketeering, smuggling, assassinations, territory disputes. Their tentacles stretch and unfurl across the galaxy...

In this new box set, appropriately called *The Terra Nostra*, Jenna and Vila each learn the hard way that

they can never escape the Terra Nostra's plots and conspiracies.

Producer Peter Anghelides tells *Vortex*: "As a concept it's full of potential. The Terra Nostra are an ominous presence in the 1979 television story *Shadow* and Chris Boucher did a great job of hinting that there was more than we actually saw. We learn in that episode that they are responsible for whatever is dirty, degrading and cruel on every civilised world but the focus here is very much on their drug-running activities.

"My brief to the authors for *The Terra Nostra* was that there are other aspects or details of the Terra Nostra as yet unexplored such as contraband, people trafficking, money laundering and loansharking. *Shadow* alludes broadly to the Terra Nostra having gunships, men,

material, an Earth network among the delta grades, and so on. There's an indication of their connection to the Federation hierarchy and the President, and talk of their 'code of honour' but there's little evidence of that when you see how they behave with each other.

"Apart from our regular cast we didn't have to rely on characters who'd previously appeared on the show. That gave the writers plenty of scope for invention – and they have done that wonderfully. These are three separate adventures set during Season C with a linking thread."

THE SERIES kicks off with *Stimulus/Response* by James Kettle set after the events of TV episode *Star One*. *Jenna* has resumed her smuggling career after leaving the *Liberator* and



Above: Karl Howman
Below: Ariyon Bakare

Stor Jayden is a dream location to unload her contraband. However, the Terra Nostra have other ideas. And with a reformist president recently elected on the planet, can Jenna escape with her cargo – or her life?

Peter says: “In previous **The Worlds of Blake's 7** stories we've seen Jenna at points in her life before she met Blake, and then during her time on the *Liberator*. In James's story we see what Jenna is doing to make a new life for herself after leaving.

“We know from *Shadow* that she was fooled and abandoned by the Terra Nostra over a consignment of drugs. And that episode also debated the appropriateness of whether our heroes should collude with the villainous Terra Nostra. So what trade-offs will Jenna consider acceptable when she encounters them again?

“James's story cleverly portrays what happens when the Federation, the Terra Nostra and a fiercely independent planet try to co-exist. And it manages to be both funny and frightening at the same time.”



James admits: “While I was old enough to catch the end of the original series of **Doctor Who**, **Blake's 7** pre-dates me altogether – it was something I discovered in the early 1990s, a time when the only way you could watch it was by buying two whole episodes on a chunky VHS for about twelve quid!

“One of the first episodes I ever saw was *The Keeper* which puts Jenna unusually front and centre – you can immediately see she is a different proposition to a **Who** companion. She possesses a more slippery morality and more human frailties, aware of her own feminine power and willing to use it, and frequently exploring the limits of her loyalty to the rest of the crew as if she herself

is not sure how far they run... She's part of a tradition of Terry Nation characters that mix a capacity for violence with a more empathetic, nurturing side. I'm thinking of Abby in **Survivors**, Bettan in *Genesis of the Daleks* or even Sara Kingdom.”

Jenna's direction in life changed on the *Liberator* – did that make

CLASSIC HEIST ELEMENTS SMARTLY ADAPTED IN A UNIQUELY BLAKE'S 7 MANNER...

PETER ANGHELHIDES

her more interesting to write for as she returned to her old career? James replies: “I reckoned she'd go back to smuggling because that's what she knows – but she'd view it in a different way as a result of her experiences with Blake. I think she's more idealistic which is why she finds it hard to resist getting caught up in my story, out of a desire to do the right thing – but also she's weirdly more cynical because she has contempt for the things she has to do as a smuggler, and thus by extension feels a fair amount of self-disgust.”

ENTRAPMENT BY

Robert Valentine features a heist to rip off the Terra Nostra which requires a master cracksman. Fortunately for Kyzer Frik he's found one but unfortunately for Vila, it's him.

Peter says: “Rob's script picks up Vila's story from the events in the **Bayban the Butcher** box set. Vila is desperate to get back to the *Liberator* and unwillingly gets involved in a scheme that will pit him against both the Federation and the Terra Nostra. He never knows who to trust and yet has to put himself in their hands because he has no other option.

“Rob has adopted classic heist elements and smartly adapted them in a uniquely **Blake's 7** manner



Above: Ajjaz Awad
Below: Rebecca Sarker



in a very exciting journey across multiple locations. It's full of unexpected twists and inventive characters, with plenty of fast-moving action between a tight-knit group of distinctive personalities."

Rob reveals: "One thing I love about the world-building in **Blake's 7** is that there's more to their universe than just the *Liberator* and the Federation, and having this criminal empire spread across the galaxy is one of those things that really helps make it all feel real. It's also one of those things that makes it so un-**Star Trek**, which is that our morally-ambiguous heroes do have to deal with gangsters, smugglers and all-round villains. This is great for me because I love writing stories about outlaws.

"Even though Vila is someone with an extremely high sensitivity to danger, the guy is a career criminal and getting involved with heavy-duty villains from time to time is an occupational hazard. In heist stories especially, the reluctant team-member is a very traditional

trope and Vila Restal is the perfect fit for that. Although his preference is to steer clear of any operation that might antagonise the Terra Nostra, in this scenario he finds himself left with very little choice."

THE OFFER by Peter Anghelides concludes this set where to save himself Vila must betray the *Liberator* crew to the Terra Nostra. Peter says: "Vila's search for the *Liberator* brings him back to Space City. Vila once thought Space City was his perfect location but without his old friends to rescue him it's the last place he ought to be.

"I always enjoy writing stories that tie up connections. Previously that's been for other people's series, particularly **Doctor Who**. But here I was able to pick up on things from the brilliant writers of previous **Blake's 7** stories. My episode not only joins the dots on things in this set of three stories,

VILA IS SOMEONE WITH AN EXTREMELY HIGH SENSITIVITY TO DANGER... ROB VALENTINE

it also pays off some things we set up in the previous **The Worlds of Blake's 7** box sets. So it shouldn't be entirely surprising that psychostrategist Hinton reappears.

"I was delighted that we were also able to get Karl Howman for our cast. It's a lovely acknowledgment of the original *Shadow* episode in which he appeared. This time Karl plays a completely new character called Tudnam, and we also got him to play a second character called the Enforcer who turns up at different times in all three of these stories." **VORTEX**

THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S 7



THE TERRA NOSTRA

■ RELEASED: JANUARY 2022
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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**AN INEVITABLE DISORDER IN THE NEW
BIG FINISH AUDIO NOVELS RELEASE...**

The Daleks feature in Matthew's story. Some writers say they are tricky to give words to but Matthew says: "Their kind of icy villainy is fun to do. Putting together a 60,000 word novel of considered prose is obviously real, challenging work but I didn't find it difficult in any negative, onerous way. As a child, **Doctor Who** met my imagination halfway and perhaps those old serials – or my memory of them – still remains. I found I could nudge my story to where I wanted to go with it while still creating, I hope, the texture of a 'classic' **Doctor Who** complete with cliffhangers. A lot of writers apparently don't like cliffhangers but I really enjoy creating them."

Matthew also narrated *Watchers*.

He says: "There are sound versions of most of my novels and stories so I'm quite used to it. With *Watchers* I

WATCH AND LISTEN

A NEW adventure in Big Finish's series of **Doctor Who** audio novels comes out this January with *Watchers* – and it's extra special as it's written by an original **Doctor Who** cast member.

Matthew Waterhouse, who played companion Adric with the Fourth and Fifth Doctors, has written several short stories and novels but this is his first full-length **Doctor Who** adventure.

For Matthew, who grew up reading Target books, this was an exciting opportunity. He tells *Vortex*: "Having been associated with **Doctor Who** for 40 years this is, in some regards, artistically, the single richest experience I've had with it.

"I wrote a short **Doctor Who** story called *The Dark River* for The Target Storybook which BBC Books published a couple of years ago, and I've also written some non-**Doctor Who** novels in the past. I think someone at Big Finish put those facts together and concluded I'd be a good choice for their audio novel range!"

When the TARDIS is trapped in the Vortex, the Doctor and Adric

realise that there is something immensely powerful that is draining time itself from the universe.

Matthew continues: "*Watchers* is set between the television episodes *The Keeper of Traken* and *Logopolis*. I knew I was writing towards the incidents of *Logopolis* in some respects hence I touched on the subject of entropy.

I TOUCHED ON THE SUBJECT OF ENTROPY...

MATTHEW WATERHOUSE

Chris Bidmead and I did a panel at the British Film Institute about *Logopolis* when it came out on Blu-ray so it was still very fresh in my mind. I much admire Chris Bidmead's sensibility regarding **Doctor Who** though I have not set out to pastiche his style – I felt that I could do pretty much what I wanted. Big Finish have always been supportive of my work and they were very supportive of this."

knew all along that I was writing for my voice so that probably affected the rhythms of my prose; I was very interested in how the piece would sound. As a writer I work aloud a lot during the actual writing – actors who write frequently do – but even more than usual with this one!"

Voicing the Daleks is Nicholas Briggs. He adds: "I really loved Matthew's script. When I was sent the storyline for approval, I knew it was going to be good. Matthew has a real flair for storytelling and the plot has great energy to it. I enjoyed the many and varied Dalek voices to perform in the script. I recorded separately to Matthew but I know he's a brilliant narrator and I can't wait to hear the finished production." **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO: WATCHERS

- RELEASED: JANUARY 2022
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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TORCHWOOD

THE OFFICE OF NEVER WAS



WE'VE ALL had those days where we've been in a building that we thought was empty and we've heard a noise that's made us jump... Those creepy sounds are exactly what spooks Ianto Jones in *The Office of Never Was*, the 17th **Torchwood** monthly range release.

There's an empty office block in Cardiff. That's nothing special – plenty of businesses go under, clear out, cease to exist. All that's left behind is an empty building. But there's one office block that refuses to be forgotten about.

There have been stories about that building – strange lights, funny goings on, faces pressed up against the glass. Enough to get the locals worried. Enough to ask Torchwood to get involved.

*It's Friday night. Ianto Jones has better things to do with his time than look round a haunted building. But he goes anyway, and it turns out that *The Office* has been waiting for him.*

Writer James Goss, who is also the producer of the range, took his starting point for this story from another cult television series. He explains: "The inspiration for *The Office of Never Was* came from an episode of **The Avengers** called *The Joker* where Emma Peel is invited in to a country house. A spooky voice calls her and all sorts of things happen.

"It's such a good episode of **The Avengers** that they remade it three or four times under different titles, including one where there is a spooky lift which people walk into and fall to their deaths!

"I happened to mention on Twitter that I was watching *The Joker* and said what a great episode it is and director Scott Handcock said, 'Yes it is – there should be a **Torchwood** version of that!' And then about two weeks later, this turned up!"

Gareth David-Lloyd is one of the three cast members in this adventure, and he was delighted with this tale. Gareth says: "I haven't

seen *The Joker* but *The Office of Never Was* is brilliantly scripted and Ianto just jumps off the page. Similarly to the **Torchwood** audio *Fall to Earth*, it was a pleasure to get back into the metaphorical suit again.

"I've got loads of lines in this. That's what I usually think when I see a Ianto-centric script! It's great though it could potentially, perhaps, have been quite monotonous and boring – but the humour and character have been crafted together so well it avoids anything like that."

James also included an in-joke. He confirms: "I'm really pleased we managed to get the BBC Wales lift in! As anybody whose ever been to BBC Wales with a hangover will know, there's a lift with a creepy child voice that says '**DOORS CLOSING**' and you think you are going to die! It's a terrifying nightmare lift. And it's finally shown up in **Torchwood!**"

Scott adds: "When Julie Gardner left BBC Wales she wanted to replace the voice in the lift with one by Nicholas Briggs going from scary child voice to scary Dalek!" **VORTEX**

TORCHWOOD



THE OFFICE OF NEVER WAS

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what the Big Finish listeners make of it. At least no one's having to worry about climate change any longer, eh?"

Xanna herself wrote *The Slender Fingered Cats of Bubastis*, which features Bernice, Ruth and Jack on an alien world. Xanna adds: "It is so exciting to hear my book being recorded as an audiobook – I loved hearing Lisa narrating the my words. I always have her voice in mind when I am writing for Benny, so it all sounds exactly as I had wanted it to. Lisa does a fantastic Jack impression too! It's been quite a while since this book was first released as a hardback but I do remember that I had a lot of fun writing it.

SUMMERFIELD IN WINTER

BENNY IS BACK IN TWO NEW AUDIOBOOKS THIS JANUARY AND FEBRUARY...

BIG FINISH continues to bring its back catalogue of Bernice Summerfield novels to life with its latest audiobook adaptations. Actor, Lisa Bowerman, who has been playing the professor since 1998 for Big Finish, narrates the tenth and eleventh novels in the series with *The Weather on Versimmon* and *The Slender Fingered Cats of Bubastis*.

The Weather on Versimmon was written by Matthew Griffiths and features Bernice and her friend Ruth. Producer Xanna Eve Chown says: "This is a great adventure from Matthew Griffiths who has a PhD in poetry and climate change. He manages to bring this knowledge to bear on his other great love – Doctor Who-related fiction!"

Matthew tells *Vortex*: "When I was commissioned to write *The Weather on Versimmon* ten years ago, I was in the middle of my PhD on climate change poetics. Or in other words, about how literature and criticism can engage meaningfully with climate change. So while by day I was getting to grips with ecocritical

I WAS GETTING TO GRIPS WITH ECOCRITICAL THEORY AND READING THE POEMS OF T. S. ELIOT AND WALLACE STEVENS...

MATTHEW GRIFFITHS

theory and reading the poems of T. S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens, I was by night avoiding the college bar to take a more creative approach to my research by drafting the novel. (All right, I was going to the college bar and taking a more creative approach to my research!)

"As a critic I think a text is what its readers make of it or – in the case of Lisa Bowerman's reading – its listeners. So while I'm interested in revisiting my made-up planet after all this time, I'm also keen to hear

"I can't remember where all the ideas came from but possibly the whole thing was inspired by a joke about getting entomology and etymology mixed up... but don't let that put you off! I remember reading a review at the time that described it as 'a preposterously titled book by a preposterously named author' which made me laugh. Blame my mum for the name!

"It's had lots of good reviews and that makes me very happy. I wanted it to be a fun – and funny – adventure, and Lisa really got that and makes it all work. She even sang a folk song for one of the little book extracts that sits between the chapters. My hero!" **VORTEX**

BERNICE SUMMERFIELD

THE WEATHER ON VERSIMMON

- RELEASED: JANUARY 2022
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ECO IDEA

Vortex issue 139 had an interesting question from Ivan on CD covers. I have a question on the boxes and plastic. Will you stop issuing CDs in plastic boxes and turn instead to card? This way, you can be more environmentally friendly and keep the booklets and illustrations. It also means I'll

have more space. Great releases this year, enjoying having an expanded *Blake's 7* galaxy.

STUART

Nick: Thanks Stuart, glad you're enjoying The Worlds of Blake's 7. We're constantly assessing our options on packaging and will certainly consider using alternatives to plastic.

HARVESTING NOVELS

I know that Big Finish has adapted several *Doctor Who* novels over the years (as I've enjoyed some of them already) and I've recently read a couple more of those novels that I'd love to hear Big Finish bring to life. *The Hollow Men* (by Martin Day and Keith Topping) is a Seventh Doctor and Ace story that is a follow-up to *The Awakening*. *Blood Harvest* (by Terrance Dicks) is another Seventh Doctor and Ace story that is a terrific combination

of sequels to *State of Decay* and *The Five Doctors*. *Blood Harvest* would be a spectacular addition to Big Finish's ranges since it sees Romana returning to Gallifrey, perfectly leading into her rise through the government and her presidency that is central to so many of the stories – and even series (i.e. *Gallifrey*) – produced by Big Finish.

DANIEL KRAUS

Nick: We've no plans for any of these at the moment, Daniel, but I'd never rule them out. The novel

dramatisations we produce are well received but have not been particularly big sellers for us. It's an interesting discrepancy that we receive many requests for novel adaptations but then this enthusiasm isn't quite so resoundingly reflected when we make them, so the jury is still out...

MAKING AN EXHIBITION

I loved *Return of the Cybermen* very much and have found many a gem in the *Lost Stories* range but wondered if we could branch out into *NuWho Lost Stories* with things like *The Suicide Exhibition* for the Tenth Doctor?

DANIEL SHILLITO

Nick: I'd certainly love us to do that, The Suicide Exhibition is a great story. Many factors on rights and cast availability would have to be aligned to make this practical but it's an interesting option for the future, Daniel. Fingers crossed.

DARK THOUGHTS

With Jon Culshaw now brilliantly reprising the role of the Brigadier following in the footsteps of the late great Nicholas Courtney, would there be any chance of Big Finish producing a full-cast audio drama of the 30th anniversary lost story *The Dark Dimension*?

MARTYN LEWIS

Nick: Hi Martin. The Dark Dimension is not so much a lost story as one that was never going to happen – there are many things in it that would present casting and contractual difficulties. There's also the small matter of how, back in the day when rumours were rife, several of the Doctors went on record as saying they would not take part. The roles for the various Doctors were very disproportionate, which, aside from anything else, was quite a diplomatic blunder. And on top of all that let me leave you with a question... have you ever read it?! VORTEX

BIG FINISH

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Please note that due to factors beyond our control, Big Finish is currently operating a digital-first release schedule. Our warehouse remains open but the mail-out of collector's edition CDs and vinyls may be delayed. However, all physical purchases of new releases will unlock a digital version that can be immediately downloaded, or played on the Big Finish app, from the release date.

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"I'm a reasonable man,
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THE **BIG FINISH** MAGAZINE

VORTEX



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THE FIFTH DOCTOR FIRST TOOK
CONTROL OF THE TARDIS...

ALSO INSIDE

SUMMERFIELD IN WINTER

BERNICE SUMMERFIELD IS BACK IN A PAIR OF
AUDIOBOOKS THIS JANUARY AND FEBRUARY...

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