

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX



THE

THE EPIC ADVENTURE MARKING 60 YEARS OF DOCTOR WHO IS GETTING CLOSE TO ITS CONCLUSION...

DEGENERATION

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INTELLIGENCE FOR WAR
THE THIRD DOCTOR, LIZ AND THE BRIGADIER ARE BACK FOR ANOTHER EPIC ADVENTURE!

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MISSY: BAD INFLUENCE

THE TWELFTH Doctor's arch foe, or perhaps best friend, returns for another box set of adventures next year. Just as we're about to hear Michelle Gomez's Missy encounter David Tennant (a good month for fans of Scottish actors playing Time Lords!), it's been revealed that she will return in a fourth set of her own escapades.

Missy: *Bad Influence* is due for release in April 2024. *Missy... alone, unleashed, and unfettered. What does she get up to when the Doctor isn't around? Sometimes, Missy isn't the only bad person in the room. Sometimes, she meets others with their own naughty plans. And whoever they might be – medieval thieves, wayward students, renowned assassins – Missy will bring out the worst in them.*

The set features three adventures: *The Time Assassin* by David Quantick, *Bad Apple Brigade* by Freddie Valdosta and *The Baron Robbers* by Lou Morgan.

Producer Noga Flaishon says: "We had such a blast creating this box set, exploring more of Missy's past and future and all the mayhem she gets up to on her own. This box set is a pure delight as we follow our favourite villainess as she brings the absolute worst out of everyone around her." **VORTEX**

MISSY: BAD INFLUENCE

- RELEASED: APRIL 2024
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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EDITORIAL

IT'S TIME to get really excited as Big Finish's 60th anniversary story for **Doctor Who**, the epic *Once and Future*, is moving towards its conclusion. So far we've had the Fourth Doctor meeting the Meddling Monk, the Fifth Doctor colliding with the Curator (in a form similar to his sixth incarnation), the Seventh Doctor's dodged the danger of Davros and the Daleks, and the Tenth Doctor has managed the menace of Missy.

And now we're about to have two adventures released in a month (with one more, *Coda*, to be released next year), as we find out just what's been happening and why the Doctor's been changing forms up and down his own timeline. I've read some fun and interesting theories online about it all, and... I shall say no more! Spoilers!

As well as this exciting brace of stories, we can also look forward to the return of **The Paternoster Gang** for a new series of four box sets. Vastra, Jenny and Strax are a superb dysfunctional family who are captivating in their relationships with one another, but it's especially entertaining hearing how Strax views the world in which he now lives.

We also have more of **The Third Doctor Adventures** as Tim Trelor, Daisy Ashford and Jon Culshaw perfectly capture the Doctor, Liz and Brigadier dynamic.

And I'm delighted to see the return of **The Omega Factor** – the spooky horror series which began on television and was loathed by Mary Whitehouse. I'm good friends with Natasha Gerson whose father Jack created the series, and she's delighted that it continues to thrive on audio. What's coming is best listened to in the dark, now the nights are drawing in. It won't disappoint. Guaranteed! **VORTEX**

Kenny



BIG FINISH'S EPIC ADVENTURE MARKING 60 YEARS OF DOCTOR WHO IS GETTING CLOSE TO ITS CONCLUSION...

BACK TO THE FUTURE

OVER THE past few months we've joined various incarnations of the Doctor as he's been injured in the Time War, and jumped from body to body as he battles against the effects of a weapon used by an unknown foe. What we do know is that it's not the Meddling Monk who's responsible as he told the Fourth Doctor, way back in the first adventure in this series of seven, that it wasn't him. So who could it be? The Doctor is desperately trying to find out. Having last been seen in his tenth incarnation, he drops back by one body and Christopher Eccleston takes centre stage in the next release, *Time Lord Immemorial*.

The Ninth Doctor is not alone, however, as he comes face to face with himself – but from another universe. Indeed, it's Big Finish's much-loved Unbound Doctor played by the late David Warner.

Vortex asks producer David Richardson what convinced him to bring Chris's Doctor together with David's **Unbound** incarnation?

He says: "It was inspired by the friendship between Chris and David. They have known each other well for some years and it was a treat to bring them together in the studio. To benefit from these two greats acting opposite each other was irresistible.

"We're heading to the endgame when the pieces will start to come

together. At times the arc has been light because as monthly releases these needed to also work as individual events. But when heard together in succession, the pieces complete a very satisfying jigsaw."

Script editor Matt Fitton continues: "The Doctor's degeneration has taken a strange turn after the events of *The Martian Invasion of Planetoid 50* where he's jumped into a future body. And he wonders now what fate might appear next? Here we've got him as the Ninth Doctor, and he's getting closer to tracking down the components of the degeneration weapon and what might have caused his predicament. In the course of events, he finds that not only is



Above (l-r): Robert Powell and Christopher Eccleston

this universe under threat, but every universe is in danger, which brings him into contact with the Doctor from another reality.”

THE UNBOUND Doctor isn't the only familiar face who will encounter the ninth incarnation, as Matt explains: “I know Chris loves Lisa McMullin's writing, so when Chris said that he wanted to do one of these 60th anniversary adventures, we immediately got her on the job, and threw together some more old friends as well.

“We have Nicola Walker turning up as Liv, and Gina McKee as the Lumiat. The Lumiat is Lisa's creation who is, in a way, the Master's version of the Valeyard in that she's the opposite of everything the Master stands for. The Lumiat is an insufferably good version of the Master or Missy!

“It's an amazing cast – Chris Eccleston, Gina McKee, Nicola Walker and David Warner. I was a massive fan of *Our Friends in the North*, which

WE'VE GOT ROBERT POWELL, JESUS OF NAZARETH HIMSELF, WHICH WAS JUST INCREDIBLE.

LISA McMULLIN

was Chris's breakthrough television role – it also starred Gina McKee.

Writer Lisa says: “I'd already written another script *Two's Company* for **Once and Future** and then this one came about some 18 months later.

“By this point, Chris had just started recording as the Ninth Doctor, and was loving it. I said to somebody the other day that I feel like my job is writing fan fiction, because when I was ‘just’ a fan and didn't write, you'd make up things in your head, for example that you wished that this character and another character could meet, and you would want them to interact and go on adventures.

“This particular set was a real gift because I got to make two characters that you might not expect to be able to interact because they're in different universes, and then

converge those universes and have them collide. There's a whole heap of fun where they're trying to decide which universe they're in. The Ninth and Unbound Doctors were so much fun and a joy. They worked together really well, and bounced beautifully off each other.”

How did Lisa feel when being given a list of established characters to include in her script? She explains: “Every time I get a commission from Big Finish, it's like a little gift box. Can you imagine what it's like being asked: ‘Do you want to write for the Ninth Doctor and David Warner's Unbound Doctor, and then put them together in an adventure?’ And after you've said,



Above (l-r): David Warner and Christopher Eccleston

‘Okay, why not?’, they then throw in a load of other characters into the mix. Your little brain just goes... ‘boom!’

“It was quite difficult finding a way for this particular group of characters to come together. It was challenging but the way to do it was to consider the fact that this is connected to the arc of the main story.”

Lisa also had to start bringing together the finale of the overall **Once and Future** story, unlike her earlier script. She explains: “By now the self-contained adventures are sort of dropping away and everything is building towards the resolution of the 60th anniversary story arc about the degeneration.

“All of our characters find themselves hijacked, in a way, by these creatures which are golems but they're of the grains of the sands of



Above (l-r): Robert Powell, Gina McKee, David Warner, Jane Slavin, Christopher Eccleston and Helen Goldwyn

time. They've brought together the Doctors, Liv Chenka and the Lumiat in a timeless place where all time and no time converges. And here, they come into contact with a being called the Time Lord Immemorial..."

Lisa was delighted to write a return for the Lumiat, previously introduced in a *Missy* box set. The writertells *Vortex*: "I was so happy to be able to bring her back. She's one of my favourite little creations. I made her up, but until now I haven't had her meet the Doctor in any adventure. So, at last, she gets to meet two of them – two for the price of one!

"Getting to write for Liv Chenka again was fun too, I loved being able to play with these characters. I couldn't believe it when they told me who they'd got to play the Time Lord Immemorial. When I heard, it almost made me pass out, faint and disintegrate! We've got Robert Powell, Jesus of Nazareth himself, which was just incredible. I've been so lucky with such an amazing cast, with Chris, David, Nicola, Gina and now Robert."

TIME LORD Immemorial marks the final appearance of the Unbound Doctor in a Big Finish release, following David Warner's passing last year. In recent years, he had returned to the role he first created in 2003 alongside his partner in real life, Lisa Bowerman, for **The New Adventures of Bernice Summerfield**.

WHEN I WAS OFFERED THE JOB AT BIG FINISH, THE FIRST THOUGHT IN MY HEAD WAS, 'WHAT DO I DO IF I MEET DAVID WARNER?'

DAVID RICHARDSON

Big Finish listeners were united in their outpourings of love for the actor who has appeared in virtually every Big Finish series over the years bringing charm, villainy, humour and incredible emotion to all of the roles that he played. David [Richardson] tells *Vortex*: "Here's something I've never told anyone. When I was offered the job at Big Finish, the first thought in my head was, 'What do I do if I meet David Warner? What will I say?' I'd followed David's work for years; if he was in a film, then I'd go and see it. I was so in awe of him that I was terrified at the thought of actually meeting him.

"Ultimately, I did meet David and worked with him many, many times. And he wouldn't allow you to be in awe of him – he was so modest, so self-effacing, yet filled

with all of that astounding talent. I have many happy memories: the journeys in Lisa's car to and from the studio, David and I sitting in the back and he casually sharing stories of working in Hollywood (again, with utmost modesty).

"The times at the studio he would take me aside and tell me just how much he loved Big Finish and its ethos, and how he would turn up just for the smallest role (and true to his word, he'd do that if asked). Not that you'd want him for the smallest roles – this was David Warner, and he deserved mighty parts! With his passing, we lost greatness, not just a great actor but also a great human being." **VORTEX**

ONCE AND FUTURE: TIME LORD IMMEMORIAL



■ RELEASED: OCTOBER 2023
 ■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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Sergeant Andy Davidson is on the trail of possibly his strangest case yet...

A SHAGGY DOG STORY

SOMETIMES INSPIRATION

for Big Finish stories comes from the strangest of places – picking up on a line from an obscure **Doctor Who** story, wondering what would have happened if someone had done something other than what they did do, or even... a dog in a pub! The latter is the idea behind *Dog Hop*, the latest release in the **Torchwood** monthly range starring Tom Price.

Andy Davidson has stumbled across the last proper pub on Cardiff Bay. Sticky carpets, cut-glass mirrors, eccentric regulars and absolutely no food. He gets chatting to the bar manager Nia, who has a strange tale to tell. A tale about bizarre experiments on the local dog population, about booze-hounds transplanted into real hounds. And the weirdest thing is, Andy might be starting to believe her.

The script has been written by the husband and wife pairing of Stewart Pringle and Lauren Mooney. Stewart says: "The inspiration for *Dog Hop* all started when I used to run a small theatre in a pub in Islington and working behind the bar was

the very keen **Doctor Who** fan [and future Big Finish writer], Tim Foley.

"We became friends and one of the jokes we had whilst we were working in this strange place was that we thought that the landlord was swapping places with the pub dog – we would talk about that quite a lot!"

Lauren adds: "It was quite a gnarly old pub under the theatre, and quite a sad old dog! And that's almost exactly the plot for this. Unlike a lot of other things, this one comes from real life and is completely true – they were swapping places, of course!"

"We have a slightly rambling style as writers but on **Torchwood** we've had to train ourselves out of that and find out how to be learned to be more led by plot. We have to be more driven by 'a burning rollercoaster' as James Goss, our script editor/producer, has advised us – and we've found that really useful and instructive. *Dog Hop* has quite an unusual story structure and it was very interesting to allow it to be this weird, shaggy dog story."

Stewart continues: "The thing that we were really excited by was how

can you put someone in an absolutely totally improbable situation and gradually convince them that it's true? And what would it take for someone who's experienced strange things, like Sergeant Andy, to believe that something absurd like people are jumping into dog's bodies?"

The story features Tom Price's own dog, Phoebe on the cover.

Tom says: "An adventure involving dogs! I mean what could possibly go wrong? This is the moment where the lines between me and Andy are finally, completely abolished and I'm just Andy running around with dogs (which is what I do in my spare time). Lauren and Stewart have done an amazing job on this script. It is funny, it's snappy, it's interesting. I've really enjoyed it." **VORTEX**

TORCHWOOD: DOG HOP

- RELEASED: OCTOBER 2023
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN



The Third Doctor, Liz and the Brigadier are back for another epic adventure...

.....





Above (l-r): Tim Treloar, Daisy Ashford, Tom Bell, Jon Culshaw, Nicholas Briggs, Issey Walton, Yasmin Mwanza and Jason Forbes

DOCTOR WHO'S SEVENTH SEASON FEATURED A TRIO OF TALES THAT RAN TO SEVEN EPISODES – AND THE LATEST THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES RELEASE FOLLOWS THE SAME FORMAT.

EDDIE ROBSON has written *Intelligence for War*, which sees Tim Treloar, Daisy Ashford and Jon Culshaw back in the leading roles. Director and script editor Nicholas Briggs says: "My brief requested a seven-part Third Doctor, Brigadier and Liz Shaw adventure. I wanted Liz's life to be a major focus of the story, and for her to be in some sort of trouble. One of my ideas was for us to start with her locked in a cell.

"I also asked for some kind of governmental conspiracy, a *Quatermass 2* vibe, where you can't be sure who the good guys are. Eddie took all this and processed it through his unique Robson Brain Machine, and came up with something rather delightfully labyrinthine."

Producer Heather Challands says of the new box set: "It's quite the ride! There are a lot of isolated aspects that really appealed to me whilst reading it; it's mind-bending. We've got alien technology, university life, an isolated English village and a bit of army politics. Liz is at the heart of this story

and she gets into a fair bit of bother."

Nick continues: "It was a real highlight for me to work with Eddie again. I've never forgotten how he really fired my enthusiasm back in 2006 with his brilliant Lucie Miller and Eighth Doctor Cyberman script, *Human Resources*. And frankly, he's never disappointed me since. He's been off doing all sorts of other exciting things and I was worried he'd be too busy to come on board.

LIZ HAS FALLEN UNDER SUSPICION OF SECURITY BREACHES, AND VERY SOON NO ONE IS SURE WHO THEY CAN TRUST.

EDDIE ROBSON

He was busy, but when I asked for a 'season seven-style story' he managed to fit the project in to his schedule. And boy, did he deliver!

"It's also brilliant to be working with Luke Pietnik again on the sound design. I've composed the incidental music, and Luke and I always have a good time working together. He's one of the kindest, most polite people I've ever encountered. His work is almost always perfect on the first draft."

EDDIE WAS delighted to write his first full Third Doctor adventure. He tells *Vortex*:

"Having written quite a few **Doctor Who** stories, it's always nice to be invited to do something you haven't tackled before, and I've done very little writing for the Third Doctor in any medium.

"I'm extremely fond of the Pertwee era – several stories were among my earliest VHS purchases and I've watched them a lot. *Inferno*, *Terror of the Autons*, *The Claws of Axos*, *The Three Doctors* and *The Pertwee Years* tapes are all deeply embedded in my brain.

"The main thing Nick wanted was something Liz-centric, and he gave me the notion of her coming under suspicion of working against UNIT somehow, and I liked that idea a lot. We already know she's not a military person by nature and she's from an academic background – and she could easily have come into contact with the protest movements of the sixties and/or seventies depending on when you think the UNIT stories are set. There's already tension between her and the military life in the stories on television, and I could easily imagine that being pushed a little further.

"It's a very Earthbound TV episode thriller which begins with the Doctor and Liz investigating apparent time-slips in a Norfolk village. But Liz has fallen under suspicion of



Above (l-r): Jon Culshaw, James Howard, Daisy Ashford, Nicholas Briggs and Tim Treloar

security breaches, and very soon no one is sure who they can trust.”

Daisy Ashford, playing Liz, says: “Liz is in a spot of trouble! But she gets to be a bit of a hero in her own right, and ultimately saves the day. There’s something joyous about that, this strong female character really stepping up. Obviously with the help of the Brigadier and the Doctor, but I loved playing a really meaty part in this one.”

Eddie continues: “When I was working out what to base the story around, I looked at what was going on in the UK at the time. The government was seeking to sell arms to South Africa, breaking a United Nations embargo, and that sparked some ideas.

“I also wanted to explore Liz’s Cambridge background, and so for 1970s university culture I drew on *The History Man* – I’d seen the feted TV adaptation from the 1980s but never read the novel, so I did. That’s where the sociology stuff comes from, and I studied that at A-level so I know the basics. The institution in *The History Man* was more progressive and radical than Cambridge would have been at the time, but I did check sociology was offered at Cambridge in the 70s!”

Eddie particularly liked writing for Liz. He explains: “I really enjoyed writing the more isolated Liz in this story. I can’t say too much without spoilers, but I got to put her through



Above: Daisy Ashford

the wringer while also letting her drive the action for much of it. There are some confrontations between the Brigadier and the Doctor that I felt worked well – they still don’t know each other much at this stage.”

DAISY SAYS of playing Liz:

“I’m finding that it’s becoming more familiar now and I’m able to make Liz my own a bit more. At the beginning I was very aware of wanting to sound as much like my mum as possible, for the fans. They’ve been so fantastic and supportive of what I’m doing, I feel I can start relaxing into it now and put

more of myself into Liz, so she’s becoming more of an amalgamation of my own performance and Mum’s.”

Vortex asks if this brings her and her mum closer together, in a way? Daisy agrees: “It really does. It’s so immensely special to be able to play the part of Liz. It’s almost as if I’m sharing the role with Mum, which is so lovely now that she’s not here. I’m still able to do something with her which is really wonderful.”

Daisy has found working with Tim in Jon Pertwee’s old role to

IT’S ALMOST AS
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SHE’S NOT HERE.

DAISY ASHFORD

be a delight. She says: “I love Tim. Tim and I go back a long way. As everyone probably knows, I did my first theatre job with him so there’s a lovely friendship there already.

“I don’t know how he does the part because Jon’s voice is so different from Tim’s actual voice. It’s quite astounding when I’m in the booth listening and I can’t see him, it really is like Jon’s there. It’s extraordinary. He’s so good at it.”

NICK HAS been delighted with the response to Daisy’s work. He tells *Vortex*: “I’m over the moon. I knew her mum, Caroline John, quite well. She and I would

always laugh like idiots when we met up or worked together. And I remember when I first worked with Daisy, with her playing Liz, I was rather moved at how much certain aspects of Daisy’s performance really reminded me of Carrie.

“I remember saying, ‘When you shout and laugh, it sounds just like your mum’, but actually, now, there’s so much more about Daisy’s sunny disposition that takes me back to all those fun times with her mum.

“And Tim is a lovely fella. He’s slightly bamboozled by *Doctor Who* and its fans, including me, but has fully embraced it. Although he’s always booked professionally through his agent, Tim and I know each other well



Above: Tim Treloar

enough for me to give him the nod personally when it comes to discussing the scripts, dates etc. We often send each other silly messages and enjoy a similar sense of humour. I'm also always amused when he proudly tells me about a new Third Doctor TV adventure he's watched as though it's some kind of amazing achievement. I always tell him I watch them every week, which is more or less true!"

Nick has assembled a fantastic cast for *Intelligence for War*. He explains: "It was lovely to be in studio with the regulars again. This is the first Third Doctor, Liz and Brig adventure where we've all been there in person. And we had far too much fun!"

"The supporting cast were amazing. I've been trying to work with Jason Forbes for ages, but he's always so busy. And he does a brilliant job here playing

the rather earnest student, Lincoln. So it was great that he was available. Tom Bell is someone whose work I've admired for a long time and it was fun to discover he's a proper **Doctor Who** fan – he's hilarious as Brian the idealist, slightly creepy sociologist.

"James Howard is another actor I've tried to get in for a while and this time, thankfully, our dates aligned. He has such an authoritative voice so he was perfect as Colonel Matthews, the head of the rather sinister Pinpoint Division.

"Issey Walton is just out of drama school and this is her first professional engagement. She sent some really impressive audio clips in a while ago, on spec, and I made a note of her in my personal casting directory. I wanted someone who sounded very young but who had a

real intensity that could occasionally give way to a kind of nervous energy. She was ideal as the wannabe investigative reporter, Glenda.

"Georgina HELLIER is someone I worked with years ago on a Fourth Doctor story. I bumped into her when she was working for us on *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright*, *Heart of Empire* being outstandingly brilliant! I introduced myself and she later informed me I'd worked with her before but I'd completely forgotten! So, she went on my list of 'actors I must work with' and I finally managed to get her in here to play the holiday-maker-with-a-secret, Denise.

"Yasmin Mwanza is someone I've worked with a lot. The moment I read the part of 'Sylvie-or-Sylvia' as she's amusingly known in the script for a while, I knew she'd be able to convey the right amount of innocent intrigue.

"Then we had two brilliant actors joining us remotely, via the internet, providing a variety of smaller part voices. Imogen Church, who I'd gladly have in every production I direct. She's so versatile and plays a clutch of interesting characters in this. And Keith Wickham, a really skilled voice artist recommended to me by former Big Finish sound designer Martin Montague, supplied us with a record number of voices with his most featured part being the thoroughly down-to-earth pub landlord, Ken!"

Heather concludes: "The recording was a hoot. We holed up in Tunbridge Wells for a couple of days and the cast were all a very funny bunch. Very game, and it was great to work with Tim, Daisy and Jon again." **VORTEX**

THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES: INTELLIGENCE FOR WAR



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MANOEUVRING

WE'RE RETURNING TO THE TIME WAR TO WITNESS THE EVENTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF GALLIFREY...

WE'VE BEEN in the Time War a fair bit recently, but it's been a while since we saw what was happening back on the planet of the Time Lords. **Gallifrey: War Room** is back for a second set in *Manoeuvres*. Heather Challands took over as producer of the ongoing **Gallifrey** series with the first **War Room** set and was pleased with the reaction to it. She admits: "It was a great relief! I definitely felt the weight

of it following on from Scott Hancock and feeling like we were taking a bit of a risk with so many new characters and the loss of Romana and Brax. But the reaction was really lovely within Big Finish, and when it came out, to get such a positive reaction from fans – some who had been with the **Gallifrey** series from the start – was the icing on the cake."

With four new stories on the way, Heather tells *Vortex*: "Our first and last episodes by Katharine Armitage are real bookends to one another. The first episode, *Collaborators* brings back Narvin and the Resistance who are placed in a race against the War Room and Leela's feeling the bite of being a double agent. It really returns to Gallifrey's political roots and explores the value of trust.

"Episode two by Georgia Cook is

called *Remnants* and the General, Rasmus and Veklin are on the hunt for survivors on a Time Lord station but are being hunted themselves by a Berserker Dalek. There's lots of action in there as well as something else that puts the General in an emotionally compromised position. Some will seek to take advantage.

"Episode three, *Transference*, is by Fio Trethewey who wrote our series one finale, and true to form it's an emotional reunion for Narvin and Leela again as she finds him some place he really ought not to be! Ollistra is also at her most controlling and our new character, Cresta, begins to see the War Room for what it is.

"And then our finale *Ambition's Debt* – which is one of the coolest titles I've had the pleasure of reading – is when people start to make their move and hideous truths



Above: Louise Jameson

come to light. I don't want to spoil too much but it's safe to say the War Room will never be the same!"

KATHARINE TELLS *Vortex* about writing *Collaborators*: "It was rather daunting as I was entering this realm characterised by a complex history and politics, and where there's a lot of established lore that you can't mess with – but you really want to! And these characters live very long lives so they react in a different way which takes some getting used to.

"It's a real privilege to be given the opportunity to get a story going, see where the other brilliant writers take it and then pick it up again to find it's grown and morphed into something new and with massive momentum. It's like getting to write one big crescendo, working with all these other minds and the wonderful established world, and trying to keep everything moving and building right up to the end."

Vortex queries what was in the brief for what became *Collaborators*? Katharine explains: "It was about taking things down a notch, action-wise, and really getting embroiled in the politics. I was told

I WAS TOLD TO THINK OF IT AS THE WEST WING BUT ON GALLIFREY...

KATHARINE ARMITAGE

to think of it as *The West Wing* but on Gallifrey and have fun delving into the shifting loyalties, deals and promises made. To be honest, I found it quite a challenge as politics has never been my strong point! But it was a really enjoyable challenge and the situation I was picking up from was already so rich in tension, compromise and secrets it made it a really interesting world to jump into.

"It's the Resistance versus Gallifrey as both sides try to secure an alliance with a planet rich in the resources required for the war effort. All the while, everyone is vying for more leverage and more power, making this poor planet little more than a pawn in the political scheming."

WRITER OF episode two, Georgia, is another newcomer to the series. She says: "The *Gallifrey* series was the first thing recommended to me when I started listening to Big Finish. I love the diplomatic intrigue winding through its narrative, and as a fan it's been such fun getting to write these characters for myself – and help introduce some new ones.

"My brief contained a few too many spoilers to mention here but we wanted this episode set off-world from Gallifrey and to properly introduce Cresta to the horrors of the Time War. A horror I think we've achieved. Both sides of the Time War discover more than they bargained for on an Academy-run research base."

Georgia reveals her highlight of working on *Remnants*: "On top of simply being able to add to the Gallifrey universe, I really enjoyed writing the political sparring between the General and Rasmus, both at such precarious narrative points following the last box set, not to mention a certain well-loved *Doctor Who* enemy. Everyone has their own motivations and self-interests, and it's such a joy."

Transference by Fio continues



Above: Carolyn Pickles

the story. They tell *Vortex*: “Whilst my first Gallifrey was very precise, this one not so much. I knew I had Narvin and Olistra to play with and I wanted to do something Gallifrey-focused as we don’t tend to spend a lot of time there. So I thought it would be interesting to explore what it’s like for those who live outside of the Citadel and I did some research on the Capitol’s closest settlement – Low Town.

“This was my second time writing for the series and I’ve learnt to lean into what I want to express emotionally. I wanted to go for something different to the last story, but I also wanted to bring in the same level of emotion.

“I’ll try to be careful with spoilers but in summary, when a scientist is attacked during a presentation Leela is sent on his trail by Ollistra but things start to get more complicated because nothing is as it seems and there’s everything to fight for.”

Fio adds: “Narvin is probably my

favourite **Doctor Who** character, which might be a bold statement when Ace is right there, but he really is an amazing and complex character who has grown throughout the series. I was fortunate enough to be trusted with adding some lore to his background, and not only lore but to give him kin – and that made me very happy indeed!”

VORTEX ASKS Katharine about the set’s closing tale, *Ambition’s Debt*. Having written the opener, did she set up anything to resolve later? Kat says: “Yeah, just a bit! I wanted the closer to act as the repercussion to the opener: for every action there is an opposite reaction, but also building on everything that all three of us writers had put into the set. There’s some obvious stuff that pays off and some more harder-to-spot links.

“*Collaborators* is all about politics: the theory. *Ambition’s Debt* is all about the practical, how all that politicking

and planning plays out. I had a pretty open brief for both adventures with one very important plot point to hit – but that’s the one thing I can’t reveal!

“Tensions are running high in the War Room with everyone’s deals, plots and promises reaching breaking point. A whole world has gone missing, the Daleks are being far too quiet and something new lurks in the shadows...”

Things are continuing to get dark on Gallifrey. Heather agrees: “It’s the War Room! Things are always going to be heavy! There’s a certain moral darkness that comes with this set, on top of Berserker Daleks, battlefields and destruction, which as a producer really appeals to me.

“All of our characters, it could be

IT’S THE WAR ROOM! THINGS ARE ALWAYS GOING TO BE HEAVY!

HEATHER CHALLANDS

said, are on the same side. They want to stop the Daleks. But each character has a very different perspective, there are different lines that they don’t want to cross or are happy to vault straight over. That creates friction, backstabbing, treachery and greyness, even between friends. In a bid to win a war, what are you not prepared to do? For some... the answer is ‘nothing!’” **VORTEX**

GALLIFREY: WAR ROOM MANOEUVRES

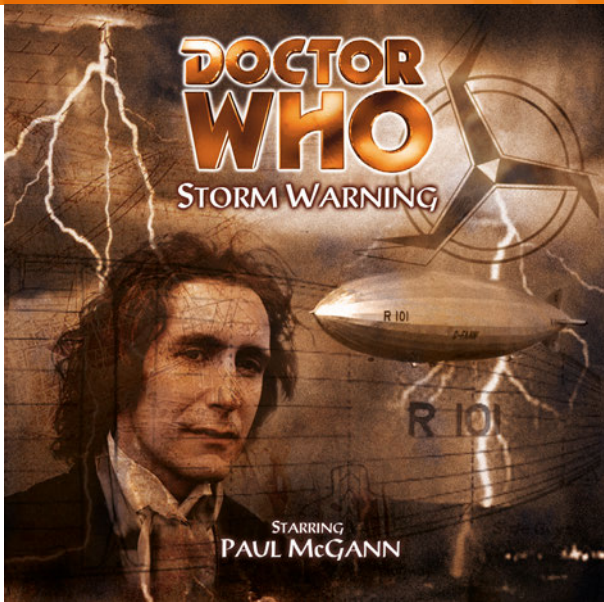


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PIECES OF EIGHTH

With the 25th anniversary of Paul McGann's work with Big Finish coming up in 2026, I thought I'd get in there and say that we fans of your Eighth Doctor range would LOVE LOVE LOVE a nice glossy colour book celebrating these tales. Imagine a kind of 'Guide to the Eighth Doctor'. All the companions, the baddies, the stories, the covers, the ranges, the cross-overs, the behind-the-scenes stuff, the script writing, the music, the actors, the lunch menus... nice pics of the casts, the covers... There is so much to say and yet nowhere we can turn to find all this material drawn together. Every other Doctor has books something like this. You know you want to! I bet it would sell.

ROBIN PARRY

Nick: Lovely suggestion, Robin. We don't have a licence for Doctor Who

books, but the idea of celebrating the Eighth Doctor is something we'd certainly like to do.

A REALLY BIG FINISH

Back in November 2015, I decided to re-listen to every Big Finish *Doctor Who* and *Who*-related CD and download I've bought since 1998, starting with Bernice Summerfield's *Oh No It Isn't!* and continuing steadily through everything in strict release order. As of the end of May 2023, I am delighted to announce that my mega marathon is complete to date, and that I'm now listening to new releases as and when they appear! I have to say that there wasn't a single one I didn't enjoy!

PAUL CASTLE

Nick: This is such an uplifting message to read, Paul. I feel as though we should have it printed as a big banner

to hang in front of everyone who works for Big Finish... and beyond!

A 'TERRIBLE' IDEA

I just want to say a big thank you, and to say how much I enjoy Tom Baker's adventures as the Fourth Doctor. But may I ask Nick Briggs a question? We've never had a story about the unseen villain, the Terrible Zodin. I presume the character is owned by Terrance Dicks, as she was mentioned in *The Five Doctors* by the Second Doctor when talking to Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart. The character has never been described or properly utilised so there are endless opportunities. I would really like this idea to come alive in a Big Finish audio.

TOM DOUGLAS

Nick: I had the strangest feeling that we'd already featured Zodin, Tom, but it turns out that my mind had just dropped into an alternative dimension. I'll keep this idea on the back-burner. You never know, an opportunity may arise.

DAVID'S STEEL

Thanks for the CD *Once and Future: Artist at the End of Time*. I cannot wait to hear how the series will play out. In *Vortex 172*, the article 'Slip of the Mind' mentions *Sapphire & Steel*, which starred the late David Warner but which are no longer available from the Big Finish catalogue. Would you be able to re-release them as downloads to celebrate David's life? I remember the TV series (and have a copy on DVD) and would like to add the audio adventures to my collection.

ANTHONY HEATON

Nick: We'd love to do that, Anthony, but sadly these matters are all about licence agreements. The kind of grown-up stuff that often spoils the fun, frankly. **VORTEX**



PREPARE YOURSELF FOR WHAT'S GOING TO BE A HALLOWEEN...

SPOOKTACULAR!

BIG FINISH'S supernatural series **The Omega Factor** is making a welcome return with *The House That Wasn't Haunted*. Based on the BBC Scottish television series created by Jack Gerson, Big Finish has carried on the story of Department 7 investigating the unknown, with Louise Jameson reprising her starring role. This new tale has been written by Tim Foley.

Producer David Richardson says: "Executive producers Jason Haigh-Ellery and Nicholas Briggs felt that it would be nice to do a one-off special for Halloween this year. And the idea of getting the team

back together was just irresistible!

"Tim is just a genius. I asked him to pitch a storyline and he came up with the most audacious concept – the only house that *isn't* haunted. But the reason why it isn't haunted is the scariest reason of all. His script is immaculate and rich and terrifying and perfect. We all loved it."

This release marks the first Big Finish 'audio movie' which David defines for *Vortex*: "For me it means you can turn off the lights but still see the cinematic pictures. If we've done our work properly, it's a fully immersive experience for the senses. An audio movie should propel you totally into

the story world and never let up."

Natasha Gerson, who played Morag in the TV show and subsequently on audio, is very happy that her father's creation continues. She says: "I'm so pleased Big Finish are doing more of **The Omega Factor**. I'm delighted with the way David and the writers have brought it to life in the 21st century."

Writer Tim very much enjoyed becoming immersed in **The Omega Factor** world. He says: "I was delighted! I'd seen bits of the TV show but not had the chance to experience the audios. So when David approached me about a spooky feature length story, that gave me a great excuse to binge the lot!



Above (l-r): John Dorney and Louise Jameson

imagine what a ghost story would look like in a post-pandemic world.

"We're picking up with Adam and Anne many years after the last story. They both have their separate lives, but Anne needs Adam's help one last time. There's an unusual property, Hawthorne House, that's the key to the future of Department 7."

Barnaby Kay has directed *The House That Wasn't Haunted*. He says: "I really enjoyed it. It's fun to do something creepy! I've been working on the sound edits on jump scares and trying to squeeze in one or two, and I think we've achieved it. What's good is

I'VE BEEN WORKING ON THE SOUND EDITS ON JUMP SCARES AND TRYING TO SQUEEZE IN ONE OR TWO, AND I THINK WE'VE ACHIEVED IT.

BARNABY KAY

"In the audio version, it's absolutely about the relationship between Anne and Adam. Louise and John Dorney are phenomenal together. I remember one brief exchange where they're discussing what fish and chips to get, and even there they are electric – there's an ease and a familiarity in the way they bounce off each other. That chemistry is key."

John who plays Adam Crane, is delighted to be back. He says: "It's always great to work with Louise – one of the major highlights of doing *The Omega Factor*. I don't get that much of a chance to see her these days because she's largely up north doing *Emmerdale*."

"Ironically, a few weeks ago, I had a screen test for *Emmerdale* which I ended up not getting, but I met up with Louise afterwards. One of the main reasons I was quite keen to get the job was because there would be more of a chance to work with her."

"Louise is one of the nicest humans you could ever possibly meet, and she's also very, very talented and amazing at her job."



Above: Natasha Gerson

LOOKING AT the story itself, Tim says: "It was a wide brief – a two-hour story that would scare the living daylights out of people in time for Halloween! I love haunted house stories so I went away and thought of an original approach to them. I also wanted to

that it makes me jump even though I already know what's coming!

"One of the big thrills of directing is casting. *The Omega Factor* is a very dark world and Tim has devised some really interesting characters."

"I knew I wanted Philip Hurd-Wood to play Mr Sears. I've worked with Philip before and I was hoping to use him again because he's an excellent actor. It's the perfect character for him, playing a kind of stuffy old MI5 type."

"I also really wanted Selina Cadell who taught me at drama school. I've worked with her a few times over the years but she's very hard to get – I had to go on the charm offensive! I love Selina's voice, there's nothing she can't do. She is meant to be playing this very straight, very strict MI5 boss, but she's got the vulnerability noted too, which is excellent. Selina's got such a comic ear that she knows how to land a line."

"It's a really, really great group of people in a story with lots of scares. But there's also some humour in there, just like real life!"

David adds: "It was great to be back together, and to be making



Above (l-r): Reice Weathers and John Dorney

more of **The Omega Factor**. I speak to John all the time because we're working on other projects together. Louise is one of my besties, so we see each other socially. But to have everyone together in the same place, working with Barney who balances detail, energy and fun as a director, it was just a blast."

JOHN IS best known as a writer for Big Finish, but here he's in front of the microphone. He says: "I love that. I think, from the very first series, just acting in **The Omega Factor** was something I kind of insisted on.

"There have been a lot of things I've worked on where I've had another role as well as being an actor such as writer or script editor. But with **The Omega Factor** there's a real freedom to come in, with one hat on as an actor, without having to worry about

any of the other processes of it.

"I've never particularly relished the idea of being in something I've written as well. I've have done so a couple of times but there's always this slight worry that as the actor you will mess things up for the writer, and vice versa – so I largely prefer to keep them separate wherever possible.

"Adam can be an exhausting role to play as a lot of the time he gets quite intense. I think he's pretty much in every scene of this story. I joked to Tim that I wasn't going to get much time in the green room, which I'm not complaining about to be honest! The day goes really quickly when you're in most scenes, and I find if you've got loads of free time to sit outside you can never quite get into anything. The material is pretty dark. Often some of the imagery in this is truly horrible."

Tim's debut in **The Omega Factor** world was a real delight. He explains:

"The fun of these is always the people you get to work with along the way. David gives me so many glorious opportunities – I swear he's too good to me. And script editor Robert Valentine is the King of the Spooks. He was suggesting great reading references from the off, and has such a good head for both character drama and terrifying moments. And then the actors – Louise, perhaps one of the finest actors on the Big Finish roster. And I've worked with John

ADAM CAN BE AN EXHAUSTING ROLE TO PLAY AS A LOT OF THE TIME HE GETS QUITE INTENSE.

JOHN DORNEY

behind the scenes for many years now so the chance to write some actual dialogue for him was fantastic.

"But my main highlight is the fact we're giving the listeners another full-cast **The Omega Factor** adventure. They deserve having that rich world revisited. And I love the concept of an 'audio movie' – I hope we see more of them in future."

David concludes: "I think the house's secret is a real highlight, but you'll have to listen to discover what that is!" **VORTEX**

THE OMEGA FACTOR
THE HOUSE THAT WASN'T HAUNTED



■ RELEASED: OCTOBER 2023
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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BOOK CLUB

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THE ADVENTURES OF LUTHER ARKWRIGHT

David Tennant plays the leading man, adopts an English accent, says “Rose”, and travels between worlds. Yes, we’re talking about *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright!*



Above (l-r): David Tennant and Paul Darrow

BIG FINISH released Bryan Talbot’s eponymous hero in this alternate universe adventure in 2005, where Luther fights the Disruptors in a country that did not see the monarchy restored after the English Civil War.

The adventure was adapted for audio by Mark Wright. He recalls: “I had read the original years before the audio came about. I was a big fan of Bryan Talbot going right back to his *2000AD* work and he had written some amazing stuff for *Batman*, *The Legend of the Dark Knight* with Bruce Wayne in a hospital.

“I was talking to executive producer Jason Haigh-Ellery and he told me he had just got the rights to make *The Adventures of Luther Arkwright* on audio. I

THE SCOPE OF IT, THE SCALE OF IT. IT’S AN AMBITIOUS UNDERTAKING...

DAVID TENNANT

nodded and smiled and said, ‘Oh, yeah?’, then he told me he’d really enjoyed *The Church and The Crown*, so would I like to adapt it? I just

laughed at him and said, ‘It can’t be done – it really cannot be done.’ Jason said, ‘Have a think about it’.

“I got a collector’s volume and read it again and still thought no, there’s no way to do it as it’s so fragmented – narratively it’s everywhere. So I

said to Jason, ‘No!’ He said, ‘Have another read,’ and then I suddenly saw this pattern, where there is very much a clear three-act kind of structure. We could do it in three parts across three discs, and we sketched out an adaptation.”

The cast features India Fisher, Paul Darrow and a host of Big Finish regulars – and of course, David Tennant. David said at the time of recording: “It’s not something I had much knowledge of before, and it’s a whole world. It’s a real kind of epic sweep.”

When first handed the script the actor was taken aback, “It’s the scope of it, the scale of it. It’s an ambitious undertaking, actually, that I think – hopefully – will come off. It sort of reminded me of *The Matrix*. That kind of different realities working and also the speeding up and slowing down of time which goes on...”

David enjoyed the chance to play something a little bit different, and said: “He’s an out and out hero, Luther Arkwright. I mean that’s not the sort of thing I tend to play. I’m usually cast as the slightly more off centre characters – either the nutters or the psychotics or the mavericky types!

“Luther is a right down the middle kind of hero. And it’s quite challenging to do that in a sense, because it’s difficult to make it interesting, to make it human, although I think the character is written with enough foibles to give you something to latch onto. But the good guys are always difficult to make breathe I think.” **VORTEX**

THE ADVENTURES OF LUTHER ARKWRIGHT

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THE GANG'S

ALL HERE

THE PATERNOSTER GANG RETURN IN THEIR LATEST SERIES TRESPASSERS AND THE FIRST BOX SET, ROGUES GALLERY.

VICTORIAN LONDON'S

most unusual 'family' are back, as the Silurian, human and Sontaran from Paternoster Row resume their exploits.

It's been a while since we last heard from **The Paternoster Gang** but Madame Vastra (Neve McIntosh), Jenny (Catrin Stewart) and Strax (Dan Starkey) make their way through the foggy streets of the British capital once more.

Producer David Richardson is delighted to have the trio back: "I do love working on stories that bring a smile to my face and **The**

Paternoster Gang never fails to do that. I laugh while reading scripts, while recording, and all over again when I listen to the edits.

"What's really lovely is that this cast is so invested in the stories. Neve, Catrin and Dan came to a Zoom meeting before we started recording this second series, and shared ideas and thoughts which we've used within the fabric of these scripts.

"*Rogues Gallery* is a delightful run of stories. There's something very cosy and heart-warming about being back at Paternoster Row, basking in the company of these characters. On

top of that we have new characters coming in plus some returning favourites – Ellie Higson crosses over from **Jago & Litefoot**, still serving drinks while saving the world!"

The set opens with *The Ghost and the Potato Man* by Barnaby Kay, with Lisa Bowerman guest starring as Ellie.

Script editor Matt Fitton says: "Barnaby wanted to do something quite music hall based. Previously, when Henry Gordon Jago met the Paternosters, it was more of a Christmas special rather than being set in the theatre. With this one, we embrace a Paternoster-style take on the world of the music hall, with music and magic, and they're all used to great effect in the story."

Barney tells *Vortex*: "I really wanted to write for the Gang as I love the



Above (l-r): Dan Starkey and Neve McIntosh

Victorian era with its penny dreadful-style of horrors and music halls. I knew a lot of that had been done before at Big Finish but I was hoping to have a go at doing music hall stuff.

"I had an idea where I wanted to use Strax on stage and that people would think he was funny, and the angrier he got, the funnier they'd find it. That's what my starting point was.

"I loved writing for little Annie Lee, a character in the tradition of the female comedian in music halls. There's a scene between her and Strax where he kind of falls in love, they really hit it off. They're a big success when they get up on stage together and they have a really flirty moment which Vastra is watching – and it's

THE BOTTOM LINE OF IT IS THAT IT'S A STORY ABOUT THE EXPLOITATION OF MIGRANTS.

BARNABY KAY

making her gag because it's so weird.

"I was interested in the theatre language of the time, with all the slang where you could say things and

others wouldn't understand it. Strax, of course, struggles to understand humans at the best of times so there's lots of fun to be had there!"

However, it's not all light as the story has a serious undercurrent.

Barney explains: "More seriously, I wanted to write an immigration story. The bottom line of it is that it's a story about the exploitation of migrants. We have beautiful, misunderstood creatures which are being harboured by a gangster.

"They're very powerful when they're not suppressed and are extraordinary, rather ethereal characters but they've been brought to London and misused for crime."

SYMMETRY OF Death is the second story in this set written by Strax himself, Dan Starkey. Matt says: "Dan knows these characters so well and he had a hankering to do a locked room mystery – a kind of Holmesian case, which actually is not just one case but three different crimes linked together. The Gang have to work out the connection between them all. It feels very much like a Victorian mystery story with strange families, lost inheritances and criminal deeds. And a prehistoric twist!"

Dan tells *Vortex*: "In our little meeting on Zoom I think we had an entire story arc sketched out within 10 minutes! There are literary homages in lots of the writers' scripts, and mine is no exception being very much in the vein of a Sherlock Holmes adventure. Show your workings! I won't go into too many details but I think it lays out its stall pretty clearly, and has some of the tropes you'd expect from Victorian detective fiction with wicked uncles, contested inheritances and all that sort of thing. There's also the world of gentlemen's clubs, but obviously there's a **Paternoster Gang** spin on it all.

"The late Victorian period has such an incredibly rich backdrop to exploit, as well as the whole hinterland of **Doctor Who** and how **Doctor Who** 'does' the 19th century. It's almost its own thing with **Jago & Litefoot** going on and the wider **Whoniverse** as well, which we can allude to. We're in our own little corner of it but we can take it out there, in quite surreal directions, which is great fun to do



Above (l-r): Neve McIntosh, Dan Starkey, Issy Van Randwyck, Beth Chalmers and Harry Myers

both as a writer and performer.”

Dan was delighted to be back in studio having recorded the last box sets remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

He says: “It was so good to have everyone together in person because we obviously had to record the last few episodes in the previous box set – the gripping climax! – remotely. Being able to get into the studio to just see each other, and play and bounce off each other, made a huge difference. I loved being back!”

LISA McMULLIN'S *Till Death Us Do Part* concludes the set.

Matt says: “Lisa brings back Jenny’s estranged parents and, seeing how even this pair of reprobates are enjoying married life, Jenny wonders why she can’t have the same with Vastra.

“So she wants to have a proper wedding ceremony inviting all their friends, and a familiar face turns up in the form of the Eighth Doctor. This story also really introduces the theme of the whole series, the idea of the Trespasser...”

Lisa adds: “There’s always an arc with *The Paternoster Gang* sets, but when I started writing this one we weren’t really sure



Above (l-r): Finlay Robertson and Lisa Bowerman

exactly what that arc was going to be. I had a vague idea what was going on in some of the other stories but mine is about Vastra and Jenny having their wedding.

“They always describe themselves as married but they live, on Earth, in Victorian London. You wouldn’t actually have had two women getting married then, let alone if one of them is a lizard creature from the dawn of time!

“This was a chance to look at what that wedding might be like and also to

put a little bit of antagonism between them because they’re normally really happy. That sounds a bit harsh but not every couple is upbeat all the time. I just wanted to mix it up a bit and give them a little bit of fight and bite.

“I also wanted to look at the idea of a bridezilla, but it being Jenny rather than Vastra. That would have been the obvious joke to do, as you could make a sort of Godzilla joke, so we get a bit of *Don’t Tell the Bride* stress in there.

“There’s a not too Dickensian character all tied up with weddings

I JUST WANTED TO MIX IT UP A BIT AND GIVE THEM A LITTLE BIT OF FIGHT AND BITE.

LISA McMULLIN

and Victoriana there, and I’ve a character called Miss Faversham too. It’s always good fun to look at the Jane Austen books and see what’s going on in Victorian London, then try and weave some of it in.”

Lisa adds: “Strax organises the hen do which of course leads to a bit of confusion – and chickens are involved. And we’ve got a very special guest in the form of the Eighth Doctor invited to the wedding, who rocks up ahead of schedule and causes some consternation!”

VORTEX

THE PATERNOSTER GANG:
ROGUES GALLERY



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Executive Producer:
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Editor: **Kenny Smith**
The Big Finish Team:
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PINPOINT DIVISION

...The Third Doctor Adventures...

...INTELLIGENCE FOR WAR...

