

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX



ISSUE 182
APRIL 2024
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THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S 7 TARRANT

THE WORLDS OF Blake's 7 is returning with a new box set featuring Del Tarrant. *Tarrant* sees Steven Pacey return to the role he first played from 1980 to 1981 in the original **Blake's 7** television series. The three full-cast stories focus on the fearless Del Tarrant across various stages of his life, from his early days as a Federation pilot to his time as a member of the *Liberator* crew. The stories in this box set are:

The Authorised Version by James Goss. *Gamblers, lovers, presidents. All have sought out the Dream-Makers demanding they decide their future. Del Tarrant has come to ask them to help decide his past.*

Behemoth by Andy Lane. *When hunting down Blake and the *Liberator*, Commander Del Tarrant's Federation pursuit ship encounters a vast abandoned space vessel. What dark secrets does it contain about the Federation and alien life? And can Tarrant save his crew and himself before it's too late?*

Bomb by Gary Russell. *Tarrant and Dayna's rendezvous in an abandoned Federation refinery puts them in unexpected danger when their broker changes the terms of the deal. Can they survive until the *Liberator* returns for them? And why is an old nemesis lurking in the shadows?*

Producer Peter Anghelides says: "What a treat to have Steven back in studio as Tarrant! I wrote his very first **Blake's 7** story for Big Finish in 2013, and have long wanted to involve him in **The Worlds of Blake's 7**."

Steven says: "I've learned a lot more about Tarrant through these audios. It's been great to concentrate on his psyche to a greater degree than was allowed or possible in the TV series, I'm enjoying it very much." **VORTEX**

THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S 7 TARRANT

- RELEASED: JUNE 2024
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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EDITORIAL

IT HAD to happen, didn't it? Slowly but surely, River Song has been interacting with all the Doctors, encountering various incarnations in series such as **The Diary of River Song** and **The Eighth Doctor Adventures: Doom Coalition**. And this May, River has three adventures with Christopher Eccleston's Doctor in **The Ninth Doctor Adventures: Star-Crossed**, but there's a very different dynamic between the pair than we're used to.

That's the thing about regeneration – the Doctor's changing personalities affects the relationships with his friends. Just look at the difference between the Eleventh Doctor and Clara compared to the Twelfth Doctor and Clara. Or the Fifth and Sixth Doctor with Peri. And recently Big Finish has been looking at the Third Doctor's relationship with Sarah Jane Smith in the fantastic audio novel *The Box of Terrors* where Sarah herself notes the differences in Doctors.

Also out for release in May, the Doctor, Liv Chenka and Helen Sinclair are back on their travels in **The Eighth Doctor Adventures: Echoes**. This is one of my absolute favourite Big Finish ranges. I've been invested in the Eighth Doctor at Big Finish since the release of *Storm Warning* back in 2001 (and with the BBC Books range before that), so for me his adventures have always felt like a new ongoing series – even though I know how they will ultimately end.

And then there's **Torchwood One's** latest release, *I Hate Mondays*. Even though we only got a brief glimpse of the team on screen in *Army of Ghosts/Doomsday*, Big Finish has gone on to fully flesh out Yvonne Hartman's team with Ianto Jones and Tommy Pierce at her immaculately-turned-out side. If you've not listened to this range yet, I heartily recommend it. **VORTEX**

Kerry

THE EIGHTH DOCTOR
RETURNS FOR A TRIO OF
TALES IN TIME AND SPACE...



ECHO SOUNDING

HAS IT really been nigh on a year and a half since last we joined the Eighth Doctor, Liv Chenka and Helen Sinclair on their travels? Happily Paul McGann, Nicola Walker and Hattie Morahan are back in the TARDIS this May for three new adventures in **The Eighth Doctor Adventures: Echoes**.

As the Doctor, Liv and Helen explore the universe, they come across lost souls, troubled minds and long-kept secrets. From a lonely world with birdsong but no birds, to an English university whose undergraduates tell ghostly tales, and a distant galaxy where a utopian society lives in the shadow of enormous creatures – the TARDIS crew are haunted by echoes of past, present and future...

Producer David Richardson says: "It's been a while since we last heard from this TARDIS team. But here they are again encountering the

most extraordinary, wondrous and dangerous life forms and events.

"These stories are by turns creepy, scary, spooky and awe-inspiring, and it was great to welcome the very experienced writer Dan Rebellato to the Big Finish fold. *Slow Beasts* is a stunning **Doctor Who** debut."

Script editor Matt Fitton says: "We're back with the Eighth Doctor, Liv and Helen exploring the universe, continuing their adventures after 2022's **The Eighth Doctor Adventures: Connections** where we dropped in on some old friends and family.

"This is a box set which has more of a ghostly theme to it. It's full of the strange and alien. Generally with the single, standalone stories it isn't always easy to pick out a theme, but with these three they're fantastic in their use of sound and the soundscape."

BIRDSONG BY Tim Foley opens the set. *The TARDIS arrives on an empty world where two scouts await the rest of their colony. Except this world may not be as empty as everybody thinks.*

There's a figure in the woods – and a strangely familiar sound...

As the Doctor and his friends learn more about the planet's inhabitants, the birdsong they hear becomes a deadly chorus.

Matt reveals: "*Birdsong* sees the TARDIS crew landing on a strange world, apparently empty of life apart from the colonists. But there is something stalking them and there's a sound, familiar from Earth, which starts to play a greater and greater part in the story. It's a really good use of the soundscape which suits the audio medium really well. Tim is brilliant and a master at this kind of storytelling – building tension



Above (l-r): Holly Jackson
Walters, Dan Starkey, Derek
Griffiths and Maya Saroya

I OFTEN CRAFT MY AUDIO STORIES IN THE SOUNDSCAPES I WANT TO DESCRIBE.

TIM FOLEY

and scares – whilst having a real emotional heart to it all as well.”

Tim tells *Vortex*: “I asked if I could write a few more adventures for the Eighth Doctor after my brief brush with the range in *Stranded*, and so Matt let me pitch a whole range of stories. He was looking for something a bit spooky and otherworldly, and I had just the tale!

“We’re on an empty world that’s being prepped for colonisation but it’s haunted by song... I’m actually useless at knowing specific birdcalls but luckily my partner could help there! I do like to think about the audial aspect of Big Finish stories – they are audio dramas after all! So it’s about painting a spatial landscape in sounds, having characters move around spaces, into different spaces, outside, inside, talking through doors, calling over to each other. I love thinking about the different textures, everything from creaky barn doors to the rustling of forests, so I often craft my audio stories in the soundscapes I want to describe.”

Tim enjoys writing for these

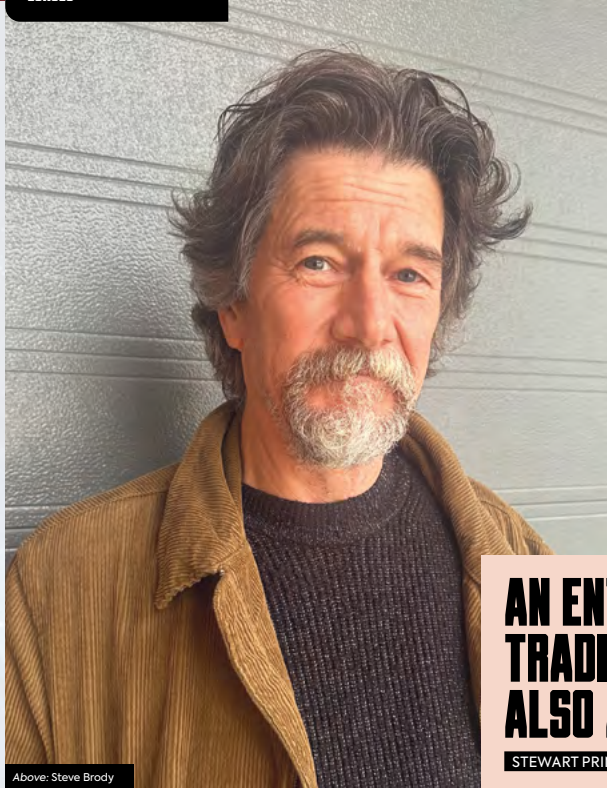


Above: Jane Asher

TARDIS travellers in particular. He says: “I love this gang. I love that the actors love this gang as well. I can see them travelling together for centuries to come! You can tell I adore characters when I get them all to sit down and have a meal. That’s the kind of scene that can subtly move the plot along, but really it’s just an excuse to have characterful moments in a domestic setting.

“The tricky part is how to bring out new aspects of characters we know so well. That’s definitely something Matt wanted us to be conscious of. Liv gets to discuss her time in *The Robots*, and Helen gets to follow up on a family member first mentioned in *Doom Coalition*, so there’s a nice bit of progression for them I think.”

As for his highlight of *Birdsong*, Tim



Above: Steve Brody

it's actually the young M.R. James that the Doctor, Liv and Helen end up having an adventure with."

Stewart tells *Vortex*: "We had such fun writing *The Dalby Spook* for **The Eighth Doctor Adventures: What Lies Inside** which was our first audio **Doctor Who**. We learned so much doing it, and it's been great to be able to put those lessons into practice. I had the sense that we'd done a lot better with Liv and Helen than we had with the Doctor himself, in that story, so I was keen to correct that this time around. They are the most brilliant TARDIS team, and they've been together for so long, they have a wonderful shared history. We're absolutely in love with Helen and the way her story just keeps expanding onwards and outwards. We'll come back anytime, just try and stop us!"

AN ENTHUSIAST, A TRADITIONALIST, BUT ALSO A BIT OF A REBEL...

STEWART PRINGLE

concludes: "I have no real favourites but Jane Asher being in another of my plays is amazing. She's such a brilliant and precise performer. I remember the green room when she did my **Torchwood** and she can talk about so many different things, she's lived such an interesting life. I'm a big fan."

LOST HEARTS by Lauren Mooney and Stewart Pringle is the second adventure in the set. *Michaelmas term, 1903.*

In one of England's ancient universities, strange apparitions float between quads and cloisters.

While Liv and Helen protect a naïve undergraduate from a sinister society, the Doctor finds a ghost-hunting ally. One who happens to be the era's foremost chronicler of things that go bump in the night...

Matt says: "I keep asking Lauren and Stewart to write for me because they're so good and they specialise in ghostly tales. *Lost Hearts* is set in a university town, and an



Above: Fiona Button

Lauren adds: "One of the very earliest ideas for this story involved the trio being stuck undercover in a 19th century college with poor Liv having to pretend to be a college nurse, watching people get sick or even die from things she knew were deeply preventable. M.R. James lost a close friend to appendicitis. That would be a kind of torture I think. But in the end there wasn't really space in the story for that beat."

Stewart continues: "We were briefed that the rest of the box set was on alien worlds, and perhaps we could consider an historical Earth story, which is generally our preference anyway. We've been itching to do something with M.R. James in it for ages, and this seemed like an exciting fit. We're both huge fans of *The Unquiet Dead*, so this was a kind of celebration of that, and obviously M.R. James is one of our biggest inspirations as writers.

"His stories are timeless, both as literature and in those marvellous *Ghost Stories for Christmas* films,

undergraduate who tells ghost stories becomes embroiled in a haunting around the college and the surrounding area. It turns out this will be one of literature's most famous ghost storytellers because



Above: Hattie Morahan

but as a man he's fairly unknown. A Cambridge don, unmarried, fastidious. He merges with the subjects of his stories, the scholar who looks too deeply into forbidden knowledge. But really he was quite a fun sort of chap. I love his book *Eton & King's*, which is a reflection on his school life and university career, you get a real sense of him as a person: an enthusiast, a traditionalist, but also a bit of a rebel, a questioner of ancient authorities. You get the sense that he and the Doctor would have been mates, and now they are!"

THE PAIR have selected another good setting for a spooky story – do they have personal experience of creepy university buildings?

Stewart explains: "I have quite a bit of knowledge of them. I did my undergrad at Merton College, Oxford and my Masters at Jesus College, Cambridge which are both chock full of ancient quads and spooky

THERE WERE CORNERS OF OUR STUDENT UNION THAT WE THOUGHT WERE UNSETTLING AFTER DARK...

LAUREN MOONEY

staircases. The mystery in *Lost Hearts* was specifically inspired by a story I was told at Jesus College by a don, about a club whose members would return every year to sign an ancient ledger, a kind of tontine that carried on after death. It was told to me as a true story about a thing that actually happened, but years later I found out it was a ghost story called *The Everlasting Club* by the fairly forgotten writer Arthur Gray, who wrote

under the pen-name 'Ingulphus'.

"We mashed up a lot of M.R. James stories for this, but we didn't want to do that annoying thing where you're like, 'M.R. James was inspired to write all of these stories by meeting the Doctor', which fellow writer John Dorney rightly points out robs a great artist of their autonomy and squashes their brilliance, so we formed the central mystery around Gray's story instead. And named a Professor after him in tribute!"

Lauren adds: "I went to Liverpool Uni, which is much less old and haunted than Oxford or Cambridge although weirdly there were corners of our student union that we thought were unsettling after dark – our drama club did a ghost walk down there. But the scariest element I can recall was definitely 'improperly blunted knives being wielded by teenagers'. Sorry to disappoint! School, however, is another matter... I ran a relatively popular ghost-hunting club when I was six and we were absolutely convinced our primary school was haunted! But then every school I went to had rumours about fires and hauntings and kids who'd thrown themselves out of tower windows. There's a lot of misery swirling around in those buildings so I guess ghost stories aren't very surprising."

SLOW BEASTS by Dan

Rebellato concludes this set.

The Doctor takes Liv and Helen to see one of the Wonders of the Outer Galaxy – to Ran-Zoan, where immense alien figures loom over the plains and settlements of the Renn.

But the Slow Beasts hide a secret – a secret that, once unleashed, spells doom for this entire world.

Matt explains: "The third story is *Slow Beasts* by a new writer to us, Dan Rebellato, who is an established writer for radio. He approached director Ken Bentley at an audio drama meeting and told him how keen he was to write for us, because as well as being a well-known audio writer, he is a huge **Doctor Who** fan and knew Big Finish's work.

"I got in touch, Dan pitched a few different ideas and we went for this one. It's something that uses the medium in a really clever way. We have creatures that exist on an alien world but who



Above: Dan Starkey

live at an immensely slow pace compared to the rest of society.”

Dan confirms: “I’ve written radio drama for the BBC since the late 1990s and I’ve been interested in writing something for Big Finish for a while. And then I was on a panel talking about writing for radio alongside Ken – he put me in touch with Matt and away we went!

“I’ve been a fan of **Doctor Who** since 31 January 1976, which is the date when my parents relented and agreed to buy a television, a small portable black and white. And after spending what felt like forever adjusting the aerial, we looked in the paper to find out what was on – and it was **Doctor Who** – the first episode of *The Seeds of Doom*, in fact. (There can’t be a much better initiation into **Doctor Who** than episode one of *The Seeds of Doom*!) I was, of course, absolutely terrified, watching from behind a cushion, had nightmares, all that. My mum didn’t let me watch episodes three and four because I’d been so freaked out by the first two, but

MY MUM DIDN'T LET ME WATCH EPISODES THREE AND FOUR BECAUSE I'D BEEN SO FREAKED OUT BY THE FIRST TWO...

DAN REBELLATO

after endless pleading, I watched five and six and I was hooked...”

Matt’s brief to Dan was: “Pretty open. Matt said Big Finish was interested in standalone stories for the Eighth Doctor and this TARDIS crew. That suited me very well because I enjoy the challenge of pursuing a complete narrative in an hour, finding the variety in it, the twists, the tension, the world building. I pitched a handful of ideas and – happily – he and David picked the one I was most excited by

(it doesn’t always work like that!). I’ve heard quite a few stories over the years with that team and really enjoyed their dynamic – and who wouldn’t want to write for Paul McGann, Nicola Walker and Hattie Morahan?

“Helen and Liv are a bit jaded. Having seen so many extraordinary sights, the Doctor’s last trip didn’t really do it for them. So the Doctor, determined to impress, takes them to Ran-Zoan to see one of the Wonders of the Outer Galaxy. Liv and Helen are shocked and astounded to see, strung across the horizon of this desolate planet, hundreds of mile-high statues. Except... they’re not statues. They’re the Slow Beasts, living creatures whose metabolism is a millionth the speed of ours. They move but imperceptibly so the Renn – a noble, scientific, democratic settler people – are able to coexist with them, because if the Beasts ever come towards their settlement, the Renn will have months, even years, to move their dwellings from their path. All seems well until someone brings about a sudden change in their metabolism and the Slow Beasts begin to speed up. As they thunder towards the Renn across the plains of Ran-Zoan, the Doctor and companions must try to avoid destruction and reveal the terrifying secrets of this dark planet...”

Dan adds: “The best single moment working on this script was writing the words, ‘The TARDIS materialises’. I actually laughed out loud, sitting at my desk. It just felt like the most ridiculous, brilliant, thrilling thing ever!” **VORTEX**

THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES ECHOES



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DOCTOR WHO SISTERS OF THE FLAME/ VENGEANCE OF MORBIUS



HE'S MAD, he's bad and he's very dangerous to know – we're talking about Morbius, the dreaded former Time Lord president. The character returns in the new **Dark Gallifrey** series with Samuel West – a big **Doctor Who** fan who loves the television episode *The Brain of Morbius* – reprising the role.

Sam first got the chance to play the tyrannical despot in **The Eighth Doctor Adventures: Sisters of the Flame/The Vengeance of Morbius** in 2008 when executive producer Nicholas Briggs and script editor Alan Barnes decided to resurrect the character on audio.

Nick recalls: "We actually picked Morbius out of the **Doctor Who** episode guide. When Alan turned the page to *The Brain of Morbius*,

WHEN ALAN TURNED THE PAGE TO THE BRAIN OF MORBIUS, HE LOOKED UP IN A SORT OF 'AHA!' WAY

NICHOLAS BRIGGS

he looked up in a sort of 'Aha!' way, and just said, 'Morbius!' It was divine inspiration, like doing the Master but fresher because Morbius has been so underused.

"We were initially stumped for a Morbius actor. We tried everyone. I was away in the Channel Islands doing a BBC promotional thing, and casting director Barnaby Edwards was in touch all the time. 'So and so's said no,' he'd tell me about every half an hour. It was very frustrating. I even texted David Tennant and Mark Gatiss for suggestions but none of their recommendations were available.

"I can't actually remember how Sam's name came up but possibly from my director friend Ellie Jones who had worked with Sam at the Crucible in Sheffield for a year or two. I'd met Sam quite a few times and naturally we'd chatted about **Doctor Who**. Sam once said to me, 'There's only one person in Equity who knows

more about **Doctor Who** than me and that's David Tennant.'

"So when we thought of Sam it was a real, 'D'oh!' moment. And I knew he'd be good but he was 100 per cent better than I'd even dared to expect. All that stuff in the final scene scornfully laughing at the Doctor about 'puny females' still makes shivers go up and down my spine."

The story ends with Lucie Miller (Sheridan Smith) recalling the Doctor is dead. Nick recalls: "Since we knew we were building to the Doctor's 'death', we wanted to have a story in which we were with Lucie almost all the time. We got very close to her hopes and fears and identified with them, so that when the nasty ending came we really felt with her. I still can't listen to Lucie's tirade against the Time Lords without shedding a tear. Sheridan genuinely broke down when she recorded that bit, and so did I. We were in pieces after I said, 'Cut' and I went into the studio and we hugged and blubbed like a right couple of soppy idiots!"

Musician Andy Hardwick adds: "The final scene where Lucie thinks she's lost the Doctor perplexed me as Sheridan's performance literally had me sobbing just listening to the raw dialogue recording – I didn't think that there was anything I could do musically to match that. In the end I simply placed a few random piano chords in the distance just to try and maintain the atmosphere." **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO SISTERS OF THE FLAME/ VENGEANCE OF MORBIUS

- RELEASED: JULY/AUGUST 2008
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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THE NINTH DOCTOR AND HIS FUTURE WIFE HAVE SOME DATES WITH DESTINY...

WRITTEN IN THE STARS

“NO OFFENCE, but I’m steering clear of archaeology – and archaeologists. For now,” said the Ninth Doctor at the end of his last audio adventure, *Ancient History*.

But events don’t always go as planned as he’s about to run into his future wife in the next box set of adventures, *Star-Crossed*. Get ready for *Swipe Right* by John Dorney, *Face of the Apocalypse* by Lizzie Hopley and *Archipelago* by Tim Foley.

We’re going from the Doctor meeting one time travelling archaeologist in Professor Bernice Summerfield, to another in

Professor River Song. So when did the idea of bringing the Ninth Doctor and River together come to producer David Richardson?

He says: “It felt like a natural progression although, of course, Benny and River have distinct characters. They’re both archaeologists that travel through space and time but there the similarities end. And the relationship each of them has with the Doctor – especially the Ninth Doctor – are very different.”

It also brings together Christopher Eccleston and Alex Kingston, ticking another incarnation off of

River’s list of Doctors she’s met.

David adds: “Chris and Alex were both in the TV series *Dodger* so it was a bit of a reunion for them. We are very lucky to have these two actors at the height of their powers in our production. It was great to do a Ninth Doctor and River Song set, working out how these two characters could come together and then come apart.

“It’s hard to choose a highlight from this rich trio of stories. Certainly there’s powerful stuff in here – some of the most devastating Doctor/River scenes there have ever been.”

Script editor Matt Fitton adds: “The Ninth Doctor meeting River Song



Above (l-r): Nadia Albina and Christopher Eccleston

was always going to happen. Once Chris was on board, and we had an ongoing series of **The Ninth Doctor Adventures**, it made sense that River would eventually run into him.

“But theirs is quite a different relationship to the others in that this Doctor really doesn’t want anything to do with her. He’s not won over by her charm in the same way that some of the other incarnations are.

“In a way, River sees that as even more of a challenge. It’s as if he’s playing hard to get, so she’ll try harder to get him. But she’s also aware this is a really vulnerable point in the Doctor’s life. He’s come out of the Time War. He’s battle-scarred, he’s damaged and isn’t really ready to be her Doctor yet.

“So, with this set, the idea was that they would have three different encounters across their timelines, and they would gradually edge towards each other, back away and then come to terms with what their relationship is at this point in their lives. It was a really lovely one to work on.”



Director Helen Goldwyn says: “Alex Kingston is just lovely – so wonderful, warm, genuine and obviously brilliant in the role, and always enthusiastic about playing River. She’s excited to be in studio and you get all of the things that you would want from any actor with her.

THERE’S ABSOLUTELY NO WAY THAT HE WOULD BE MARRIED TO THIS PERSON!

HELEN GOLDWYN

“I’ve been listening to the edits and from Alex’s scenes with Chris, they’re great together. This is the first time that River has met the Ninth Doctor, and there are a lot of references to that in the scripts, but there’s also lots of scope for humour and emotion as well because River has this pre-knowledge that the Doctor doesn’t.

“He’s a complete novice in this relationship and he’s very much in denial – there’s absolutely no way that he would be married to this person! But by the end of the series, we can hear that the connection is there.

“It’s a very profound love that they discover. It’s not flirtatious, it’s not even romantic. It’s a joining of souls which is more profound, probably, than any of

the connections River has with the Doctor’s other incarnations. It’s pure love based on soul connection.”

OPENING THE

set is *Swipe Right* by John Dorney. Matt explains: “*Swipe Right* is about dating on a world where, if you get too many rejections or you reject too many of your matches, the app sees fit to pull you from the population. This is something the Doctor is looking into, and as it happens, River is investigating too. So, of course, they come up as a match on the system.”

John continues: “This box set feels different because the others contain standalone stories with the Ninth Doctor. This set was more fun because there was a sense we could be quite collaborative with it.

“Myself, Tim and Lizzie had a big Zoom meeting where we talked through our ideas, and we felt it might be interesting if we got to a structure that mirrored three stages of a relationship.

“Mine ended up being the first date, in effect, Lizzie’s the mid-period and Tim’s was potentially old age. I don’t



Above: Alex Kingston

know how much of that we actually kept in the end, but it gave us the initial impetus to get us started.”

John found inspiration in an idea he'd previously had but not used.

He recalls: “I ended up writing the first one because I remembered that I'd written an outline, or started an outline, for a story in the **Donna Noble Kidnapped!** box set that I'd called *Swipe Right*. It was partially called that as a joke in response to the TV episode *Turn Left!*”

“It was about an evil dating app but I hadn't really got that far with it because it ended up clashing with Jacqueline Rayner's opening story *Out of This World* which had a lot of speed dating stuff. I didn't want it to become a Donna box set which was all about dating people! So it went on the back burner and here it is now, and the idea of a story about dating apps—which everyone who's single hates but feels obliged to use—was quite appealing to me. It

felt like a fun way of addressing the relationship between the characters and what you could do with them.”

Don't expect a flirty relationship between this Doctor and River, though.

John explains: “In *Swipe Right* there's certainly a different dynamic with River. This Doctor doesn't particularly subscribe to romance so he's not going to react to her in a terribly positive manner. It's feisty. That's probably the way I would describe it, as it's a little bit argumentative, but you can have that in relationships that have been going on for a while.

“It's lovely and it's unique for the Doctor/River relationship. It's always fun to hear how characters react to each other in a different way from the way we're used to. It brings something new to the table.

“There are aspects of comedy to

SHE EFFECTIVELY BECOMES THE EPITOME OF BEAUTY THROUGHOUT HISTORY...

MATT FITTON

it too, and I was very keen to cover some of the themes of love, the pressures that go with being in a relationship and certain aspects of sexuality that we don't really cover that often. It's quite a personal thing for me. There are some areas I wanted to deal with, and there's a lightness of touch and a certain degree of delicacy that hopefully people will take in the way they're intended.”



FACE OF the Apocalypse by

Lizzie Hopley continues the adventures. Matt says: “Lizzie comes up with these absolutely crazy concepts with so many ideas thrown out there!

“This one boils down to a mystery around River's face appearing all through history. She becomes the face of Helen of Troy. She becomes the face of the Mona Lisa. She effectively becomes the epitome of beauty throughout history and the Doctor starts to uncover this, wondering what on earth is going on.”

Lizzie picks up: “Starting on a new partnership is like putting two

chemicals in a jar and seeing how they interact as you write. I've written for River a lot and I felt I got under the skin of the Ninth Doctor in **The Ninth Doctor Adventures: Lost Warriors – The Curse of Lady Macbeth**. Chris brings such a childlike innocence to his Doctor, I was cautious not to make River turn maternal towards him but it didn't work out that way. They had their own chemistry based on her still being a mystery to him – and an annoying one at that!

"I felt that the different nature of this pairing didn't really need to be spoken and that's the point River makes. In terms of, 'It's not me, it's you', she was more, 'It's neither of us. We're fine.' Because she knows, as do we, that this is the best relationship ever. Whatever happens, whenever it happens, they are always fine. Saying that, there was a tension between this 'reluctant Doctor' and a kind of flirty sadness from River that came out. It nicely



Above: Francesca Mills

complements what they have going on in the episodes on either side."

Lizzie enjoyed working with Matt and the other writers. She explains: "Matt wanted to go for something slightly different with their relationship. River senses he's maybe more wary of her so responds to that. She knows this Doctor needs a hug more than any of them but she's careful of getting too close while he's still so raw. I love briefs like that as you know you're being directed to explore a deeper psychological level.

"My treatment went through so many changes. I had planned a story about the later years of Helen of Troy, a Helen who was having marriage difficulties. I liked the idea of River and the Doctor who weren't in a typical River-Doctor relationship, having to counsel another couple in order to save a timeline. But I was asked to steer clear of Greeks so I invented my own legend and that did the trick! I used



Above (l-r): Paul Rayne and Christopher Eccleston

SHE KNOWS THIS DOCTOR NEEDS A HUG MORE THAN ANY OF THEM...

LIZZIE HOPLEY

a tiny bit of tech from John's script to carry into mine which was a fun link.

"It starts on a high security banking planet where the security system only recognises one face – River's. The Doctor assumes she's robbing the bank but she is actually a victim of identity theft and her face becomes a virus that begins a series of high-profile arrests. This launches a threat to one of the most important peacekeeping cultures in the universe and River getting her own IT stalker!"

ARCHIPELAGO BY Tim Foley

brings the Ninth Doctor's exploits with River to an end. Matt reveals: "*Archipelago* is about the end of a relationship.

It's like old age, where people have been together a long, long time but finally have to part. It reflects where the Doctor and River's



Above (l-r): Trevor Cooper and Christopher Eccleston

relationship is by this point as well. As always with Tim, it's beautiful, emotional and heartfelt. He paints pictures of relationships and characters, and draws you in and makes you fall in love with them – and sympathise and empathise. It's a lovely piece of work."

Tim says: "This is the wrong Doctor for River... and we thought it would be really fun to explore what that actually meant. Unlike the other incarnations she's met, she struggles to click with the Ninth Doctor. But why is that? Is this Doctor too wounded from the Time War? Too different from River's conception of the Doctor? There are lots of exciting possibilities here.

"More than any other **The Ninth Doctor Adventures** box set, this one felt like a little mini-series, and for the first time he's got a 'companion' figure in this tale. That's definitely something he pushes against.

"Matt gave me a wide brief and supplied me with lots of great suggestions – but the one I really took and ran with was to make this the most romantic 'unromance' I've ever written. And I hope I did just that! It's one of those stories that takes a turn in the middle so I was pretty nervous about handing a first draft in, but Matt as ever was great, and helped me make the story the best that it could be.

"River has one last request for the Ninth Doctor. If he does this for her, she'll never bother him again. But it's a task that might mean far more than the end of their relationship... We're on the planet Fortuna and there's an old captain who needs his help."

Tim adds: "I received lots of lovely messages from the cast and crew about this script, which really means a lot. It's definitely a bit different from my other **The Ninth Doctor Adventures**, so I hope everyone really enjoys it."

DIRECTOR HELEN concludes:

"It's a wonderful experience working with Chris and getting to know him as an actor and as a friend. It's also been great getting to work with all the people who want to act with Chris! It's such an easy series to cast.

"Chris knows who he prefers to work with, so being on these is a lovely endorsement for me as a director. I think we have a lot of mutual respect and a similar work ethic. It's a real privilege to work with someone this talented and be a part of the **Doctor Who** universe.

"Chris genuinely cares that he does the best performance he possibly can. If he turns up a little bit late because the traffic's been bad he's always hugely apologetic. He doesn't have that attitude of, 'I'm the big guy, I'm the celebrity,' there's none of that going on. He just wants to be treated

CHRIS GENUINELY CARES THAT HE DOES THE BEST PERFORMANCE HE POSSIBLY CAN.

HELEN GOLDWYN

like a working actor and makes sure that everybody else is feeling comfortable as well. He'll go out of his way to introduce himself. That all sounds like basic stuff but that's not always the case, so it's lovely to see how happy everyone else is to be working in that environment." **VORTEX**

**THE NINTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES
STAR-CROSSED**



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- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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VORTEX MAIL



MAKE A BOOKING

I was quite excited to hear that **The Novel Adaptations** range is coming back with *Goth Opera*. I do have a question about possible future adaptations. All of the previous adaptations were from books from the Virgin New and Missing Adventures. If there are more adaptations to come, is there a possibility there could be adaptations made for any books from the BBC Eighth Doctor or past Doctor adventures ranges? It would be cool to hear some of the Doctor's travels from those books adapted, as well as possibly hearing Matt Di Angelo back as Fitz Kreiner, as well as other companions from the books like Sam Jones.

ADEN SMITH

*Nick: Hi Aden, apologies, but **The Novel Adaptations** range is not coming back. *Goth Opera* is a one-off release proposed by Scott Handcock as a long-held ambition, which I also thought would be a*

*great thing to do. Then when he left Big Finish to work for Bad Wolf, *Goth Opera* passed to David O'Mahony. It was originally going to be part of **The Fifth Doctor Adventures** range but **The Novel Adaptations** range seemed a better home for it.*

SERVICE WITH A SMILE

Can you thank everyone in sales and the warehouse for shipping CDs and books? Everyone at Big Finish does an excellent job, from the quality of writing to well directed and acted stories. However, the 'back room' people sometimes get overlooked. Thank you for the well packaged and swift delivery of the orders.

ANTHONY HEATON

Nick: Thank you, Anthony. They are brilliant. Lovely people doing great work.

NOVEL EXPERIENCES

I was wondering about the future of the extended audiobook series

like **The Audio Novels**. Do you have any plans to produce a second series of audio novels now that the current run has wrapped up? Or could you maybe tackle other ranges in the audiobook format like some more **Jago & Litefoot** (which I feel worked incredibly well in this style) or perhaps even **Torchwood**?

JAMES BELCHER

*Nick: There are plans to do more in **The Audio Novels** range but not currently for **Jago & Litefoot** or **Torchwood**. Ideas worth bearing in mind, though. Do you prefer audiobooks to audio drama, James?*

VORTEXTRA?

After the release of *Dalek Universe* I wrote in requesting special *Vortex* publications where existing *Vortex* articles would be packaged together as a handy reference guide. Now, with the brilliant **The Eleventh Doctor Chronicles** coming to an end I feel compelled to write in again and make another plea for such a *Vortextra* magazine. With Jacob Dudman now stepping away from **The Doctor Chronicles**, such a publication would give an opportunity to act as a review of his time playing the Doctor on audio as well as collecting his mid-series seven series. I will miss his portrayal of the Eleventh Doctor, but at least his Big Finish run had a big finish.

MICHAEL TOATES

*Nick: That's an interesting and exciting idea, Michael. We've often discussed doing *Vortex* specials, but ultimately we're an audio production company. We see *Vortex* as more of an evolving product catalogue for customers to find out information about what's coming up. Producing special *Vortex* publications would be fairly labour-intensive and costly to make, given that it is essentially a free magazine. **VORTEX***

It's never just another day at the office when you're at **Torchwood One**...



SWITCHED TO OVERLOAD

YVONNE HARTMAN and her Torchwood One team are back for their latest trio of adventures in *I Hate Mondays*. Tracy-Ann Oberman reprises her role as Yvonne Hartman with Gareth David-Lloyd as Ianto Jones and Timothy Bentinck as Tommy Pierce – each

episode in the set taking place on a different Monday.

Producer James Goss says: "If you hate your office, you'll love **Torchwood One!** What if the people saving the world worked in an office every bit as dysfunctional, bureaucratic and infuriating as the one you work in? And yet,

somehow, they manage it anyway?

"Torchwood One knows how awful work is, how terrible your colleagues are, how no-one ever seems to get anything done. But, despite the meetings, the stationary orders and the alien death machines, someone's got to save the human race..."

"Which is why Yvonne exists."



Above (l-r): Timothy Bentink, Gareth David-Lloyd, Lu Corfield and James G. Nunn

THESE ARE PEOPLE YOU'LL RECOGNISE FROM YOUR WORKPLACE. THEIR PROBLEMS ARE JUST A BIT WEIRDER THAN YOURS!

JAMES GOSS

Helped by her personal assistant Ianto and hindered by her head of research Tommy, she's the last person standing between planet Earth and total annihilation. She's amazing, and she's terrifying.

"You don't need to know anything about **Torchwood One** or even **Torchwood**. These are people you'll recognise from your workplace. Their problems are just a bit weirder than yours!"

DINNER FOR *Yvonne*, the first tale in the set, has been written by James from a story by Joseph Lidster and himself.

A cloud of psychic plasma is sweeping over Salisbury Plain towards London. Unfortunately, it's Yvonne's night off and she's throwing a dinner party. Will London perish before she can serve the artisanal cheese board?

Joe tells *Vortex*: "James said, 'Let's meet up for a drink.' I thought it



was just for a social drink and didn't expect to talk about **Torchwood**! But he told me the concept for the box set which was that it would be set on three Mondays. James likes playing around with the idea of **Torchwood One** being a corporate office environment which is what sets it apart from Torchwood Three and UNIT.

"I made a suggestion which I felt was an important event in the lives of these characters – it hadn't been done yet and needed to happen at some point." [*Vortex* won't reveal what this event is but it features in *Dinner For Yvonne*.]

Joe continues: "We built it up by working on it together. Its basic premise is Yvonne having dinner with friends and Ianto and Tommy invading it. It's so good. It's

a funny, clever script played by three absolutely brilliant actors.

“Something that I really like about **Torchwood One** is that we’ve created this character, Tommy, who to me feels equal to Yvonne and Ianto. He doesn’t seem like a brand-new character – it’s like he’s always been there.

“I suggested to James that we should have more people in this one so it’s the three Torchwood regulars plus four other characters. We went back and forth a bit about who the dinner guests would be. Who would Yvonne be trying to impress?”

“James wrote such a funny script – effortlessly amusing and clever. What I pushed for was asking about the element in Yvonne of how damaged is she? How professional, how corporate?”



“And I think this script explores that a little bit without going too much into it. I’ve listened to the story with her mother in a previous box set, but this questions why Yvonne needs to show off to these people at dinner? Can someone like Yvonne have friends? It’s a



THIS QUESTIONS WHY YVONNE NEEDS TO SHOW OFF TO THESE PEOPLE AT DINNER? CAN SOMEONE LIKE YVONNE HAVE FRIENDS?

JOSEPH LIDSTER

little thread that flows through the box set, which is really lovely.”

BY ROYAL *Appointment* is the second tale, written by James with Joe acting as script editor.

Poppy Greenleaf arrives at Torchwood, claiming to

be their new Royal Liaison. In the middle of an intergalactic incident and an invasion, Poppy is the last thing Torchwood needs.

Joe says: “James wrote such a good play it barely needed any script editing. I just slightly pushed him to go a little further with the character stuff.

“He’s created a guest character who is technically an antagonist for Yvonne but he realised he’d actually made her really likeable. So we have Torchwood, but especially Yvonne, having to deal with this nice person who wants to change things. She talks a lot of sense. She’s out of her depth completely but she’s actually really quite lovely!”

“It adds a little element because when you think about it, Yvonne isn’t a goodie. She is an antagonist when she appears in **Doctor Who**



Above (l-r): Shai Matheson, Tracy-Ann Oberman and Isabella Pappas

on television. In **Torchwood One** she's actually our protagonist.

"I think that's a great setup and such a fun story. Tracy-Ann is just astonishing in this as she always is, you can tell she really enjoys doing the audios. I went to see her in *The Merchant of Venice* and she was brilliant in that too."

NERVES IS the final story in the set, written by Joe.

Another Monday morning, another mission for Torchwood. Ianto and Tommy have to transport a canister of deadly Euphorian nerve agent to an underground bunker in the South Downs. It should be an easy straight-forward job but

other forces are gathering...

Joe tells *Vortex*: "I'm very grateful to James because he allowed me to do something that's quite different to any **Torchwood One** story that's been done before. I don't really know how to describe it, actually!

"There's a bunch of people who are damaged, in the way that many people are, coming together and we see what happens next. It's not the most complicated plot, it's actually quite simple, it's just about these characters.

"In lots of ways it's Tommy's story because basically it's him and Ianto on a road trip and we're finding out how they work together. They're constantly fighting the fact that they do have a bit of a father-son

relationship, which obviously Tommy would hate and Ianto would think, 'No, no, that's not true.'

"The thing that's always on my mind when writing for **Torchwood One** is just how young Ianto is. He must be 21 or 22, if you work it out.

THE THING THAT'S ALWAYS ON MY MIND WHEN WRITING FOR TORCHWOOD ONE IS JUST HOW YOUNG IANTO IS.

JOSEPH LIDSTER

If he joined **Torchwood One** around 2005, he'd be very inexperienced. I've enjoyed exploring that a little bit here, and I did that in my first **Torchwood One** script *New Girl* too where we literally meet a new girl in the office.

"Yvonne and Tommy are seasoned veterans but Ianto hasn't got the knowledge he has by the time he gets to **Torchwood Three** in Cardiff. He's by far the least worldly-wise of our main characters, and may not always be up to dealing with everything they face." **VORTEX**

TORCHWOOD ONE I HATE MONDAYS



- RELEASED: MAY 2024
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/monday



VORTEX CONTINUES ITS IRREGULAR SERIES TALKING WITH THE PEOPLE WHO BRING AUDIO ADVENTURES TO LIFE IN MEET THE MAKERS — WITH HELEN GOLDWYN.



Above (l-r): Helen Goldwyn and Christopher Eccleston

WHEN IT comes to people with long-standing connections to Big Finish, there aren't many who can beat Helen Goldwyn.

Her first Big Finish credit came in an acting capacity way back in 2000 with three small roles in the ninth **The Monthly Adventures** story, *The Spectre of Lanyon Moor*. Since then, Helen has been one of the leads in the much-missed **Tomorrow People** range, and in more recent years turned her hand to directing especially for **The Doctor Chronicles** and **The Ninth Doctor Adventures**.

Vortex asks Helen how she made the transition from performer to the other side of the recording studio? Helen says: "I actually asked if I could direct. I wrote an e-mail to executive producer Nicholas Briggs

THERE'S NO CONCISE HANDBOOK TO BEING A DIRECTOR, YOU HAVE TO PICK IT UP AND LEARN FROM EXPERIENCE.

HELEN GOLDWYN

because another project that I had been devoting myself to had come to a quite a bitter end, and I had a blank page in front of me, career wise. So, I asked Nick if Big Finish would

consider me as a director. I was quite scared to do that because they knew me solely as an actor and I thought, well, if they think, 'No, we don't want to work with her as a director,' are they going to then be embarrassed to offer me a part again as an actor?"

"It felt like it was potentially burning some bridges. But Nick wrote straight back and said, 'Oh, what a great idea. Why didn't we think of that?' And I was really delighted!"

"I'd done a lot of work as a training consultant specialising in customer service, good communication skills, and leadership and management skills. I've experience of teaching other people how to do all that, and as a director that really ties in with how I approach my work. I am strategically working out how best to interact with everybody on the project and I think that really helps with the studio dynamic."

HELEN'S INTRODUCTION

to directing came on a 2018 release of **The Doctor Chronicles**. She recalls: "I was a bit daunted at first because there's no concise handbook to being a director, you have to pick it up and learn from experience. I shadowed Ken Bentley directing for three days, so I did know how it all worked, but I had to find my own way to plan the day, which is probably the best way, really. Everyone's brain works in a different way, so you have to find your own path that makes sense to you.

"I was sent the script but had no template for scheduling it. It's pretty complicated and it took me a long, long time to create that very first schedule! I can't remember if this is what I did then, but what I do now is put the scenes in chronologically, then put in how many pages they are, how long that will take to record – generally four to five minutes per page. Then you put in all the character names and all the actor's names once they're cast. Having done that, in another column, I'll put notes about who's on a break, who's got 20 minutes off, who can stay in the studio, who can pop out for a cup of tea, who can do a pick-up line here and then have a break.

"So, once I've got the chronological order, then I can cluster scenes together and make sense of who I can keep in the studio for a chunk

of time, because it's silly just to have people come in and then use a completely different group of actors for the next scene. But you have to cluster the scenes in a way that keeps it chronological for each of the characters, otherwise people get confused. I mean, you can do it in a different order if you're trying to get someone away early, but it really does lose some of the context and can muddle people."



Above (l-r): Maggie Stables and Helen Goldwyn

HAVING BEEN in studio as an actor for Big Finish, Helen was aware of how actors should feel when both recording and between scenes. She explains: "I think it helps that I was welcomed into the Big Finish family from the outset, because it is a family. So much of the experience is about everyone having a great day, and that's part of the Big Finish brand – it helps with their longevity.

"Yes, of course we have actors from the television show and we've got all these things that the listeners are interested in, in terms of the content. But the way we get fantastic actors on board is because everyone has an expectation of having a really fun day – and I love giving people that. I want everyone to go away, saying, 'I had a brilliant time'.

"I also feel that I have a responsibility to try and create opportunities for people that wouldn't normally get a look in. So I'll always try, where I can, to bring in someone that hasn't done audio drama before or perhaps hasn't come through a path where

they would necessarily get this opportunity. Someone like myself who has had a musical theatre background and is less likely to get into audio or radio for whatever reason.

"That's what happened for me. Barnaby Edwards, who I had worked with in a stage production, is a dear friend and it was he who invited me in to do my first Big Finish with him and Nicholas Pegg on *The Spectre of Lanyon Moor*. That was a massive break for me

have had if I hadn't known them.

"The other joy of being a director is that I've got actor friends that haven't done voice work but who would really like to do a **Doctor Who**. It's such a joy to be able to e-mail or phone them and say, 'Hey, do you want to come in and play a small crazy character part?' For some people it's a huge thing, and it's a thrill for me making them happy in that way."

I HAD NO IDEA WHAT AUDIO DRAMA EVEN WAS BACK THEN...

HELEN GOLDWYN

HELEN SAYS that much of the job relies on gut feeling. She explains: "On the first one I directed, I was slightly anxious. But with everything that I do creatively, I have a base level agreement with myself that I will just trust that my instinct is right. It's like, if you're going to paint or make something, you have to trust that the result will be of value to you.

"Generally when I embark upon new things I'm pretty relaxed, but it's a lot to manage. It takes a lot of getting used to with all the different elements that you're juggling throughout the day. You're making sure that everybody's comfortable; making sure that you're connecting with the engineer who's recording the session; making sure that you're following the schedule and you've not missed anything out. I'm also listening carefully for technical glitches or whether somebody's fluffed a bit of a word. You don't want to miss any of those things."



Above: Helen Goldwyn

although I didn't realise it at the time. I had no idea what audio drama even was back then, but Nick and Barney introduced me to it all and gave me an opportunity that I wouldn't

WHEN THE recordings are complete, it's then time for post-production to begin with sound design and music being added. Helen explains: "I found the post-production element much harder at first than I do now. When I started directing, I was encountering people who were getting to grips with their jobs as well, so if someone was not as experienced

at sound design, for example, then it could take a long time going through, listening carefully, flagging any tiny little things that might need editing.

“Sometimes it can take hours, and sometimes it's just blissfully easy. I find I'm listening to a lovely audio drama but occasionally I'll stop, press pause and make a note to say this needs to be louder or that needs to be softer.

“Then, I have to listen to the music edit. I'll listen to the effects draft and send the designer notes, and then the music edit will come through with all of the revisions in. It's very rare that I would give any notes for change in a music draft, but on occasion I might say, can we finish that on a minor chord or a major chord or whatever.

“I get to work a lot with Howard Carter who's just a genius, as is Joe Kramer. Actually, thinking about it, every composer I've worked with has been utterly brilliant at Big Finish.

I'VE HAD MANY WONDERFUL, WONDERFUL EXPERIENCES BUT MARTIN'S DOES STICK OUT!

HELEN GOLDWYN

It just so happens that I work with Howard and Joe more than most!”

ONCE HELEN'S happy with the finished stories, they are sent to Nick as creative director for his final sign-off. Helen adds: “I don't think we've ever encountered a problem at that stage. Then, it's just a case of being sent the artwork to proofread, as do several people on the team, and it's down to me to point out that the name of an actor may have been spelt slightly wrongly or if somebody's missing – a character might have the wrong name as we've changed it on the recording



Above (l-r): Helen Goldwyn and Louise Jameson



Above (l-r): Helen Goldwyn and Martin O'Neill

day, or whatever. And that's basically the end of my director's responsibility, except I'll listen to the trailers and go through them when they're ready. We're not under any contractual obligation to share things on social media, but I do think that's a part of the job too.”

ONE OF Helen's favourite moments as a director happened during the recording of **The Sixth Doctor Adventures: Purity Unleashed** box set, when former Leicester City, Celtic and Aston Villa football manager Martin O'Neill made a brief guest appearance.

Helen tells *Vortex*: “I've had many wonderful, wonderful experiences but Martin's does stick out! I had an amazing day directing Matthew Sweet's script for the Sixth Doctor and Mel, *Broadway Belongs To Me*. I was working with an old college mate of mine, Sophie-Louise Dann who's a brilliant comedian, the hugely talented Rosalie Craig, and obviously Colin Baker and Bonnie Langford.

“Freddy, the office manager from The Soundhouse studio, came in and said, 'I'm just wondering if Martin could sit in and listen for a moment?' I asked, 'Martin?' She explained it was Martin O'Neill, the football manager who's a big **Doctor Who** fan. So, he came in. Then, within about two minutes, Matthew and I had a little chat thinking, 'Surely he could pick up a couple of lines for us?'

“So we got Martin in to the studio playing a disgruntled enemy of the Doctor! And he was brilliant. He just did a great job. He took direction well and was so happy to be a part of it. It was the most surreal moment I think I've had on a Big Finish recording. I laughed more that day than I've ever laughed on any directing project. The whole day was hysterically funny.” **VORTEX**

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ISSUE 182
APRIL 2024
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FINISH OF STORIES

THE NINTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES

STAR-CROSSED

THE NINTH DOCTOR AND HIS
FUTURE WIFE HAVE SOME
DATES WITH DESTINY...

THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES

ECHOES

THE EIGHTH DOCTOR RETURNS FOR A
TRIO OF TALES IN TIME AND SPACE...

