

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX

ISSUE 184
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THE FIFTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES

GOTHIC REVIVAL

THE NOVEL ADAPTATION
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THE DEATH AND LIFE OF RIVER SONG

YOU DIDN'T really think that the adventures of River Song were over at Big Finish, did you? When it was announced that **The Diary of River Song**, which ran from 2015 to 2023, was coming to an end, happily it didn't mean the end of the adventures of Alex Kingston's titular character.

From August this year, Alex reprises her role as River in **The Death and Life of River Song**, a brand-new range of full-cast audio dramas.

Set after the events of the TV episode *Silence in the Library*, the first of the new box sets *Last Words* has been written by Robert Valentine. It begins with River, after settling down to an afterlife in the Library's computer core, finding herself waking up in Earth's future, her consciousness having been temporarily transferred to a new body.

Alex tells *Vortex*: "I was actually really surprised when this box set came my way, and that we are now so far advanced in the history of Earth that River is able to be brought out as data and put into a cloned body. So very, very clever!"

Producer David Richardson adds: "When every single day during the recording your leading actress says, 'This script is brilliant', you know you're onto a good thing. Even better, at the end of the last day, Alex popped the script in her bag and announced that she loved *Last Words* so much she was taking a keepsake home to treasure it." **VORTEX**

THE DEATH AND LIFE OF RIVER SONG LAST WORDS

- RELEASED: AUGUST 2024
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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EDITORIAL

BACK IN the days before Big Finish (yes, hard though it is to believe, there was such a time!), **Doctor Who** fans had to rely on print to get their fix of new stories.

In the 1990s, I was a big fan of the Seventh Doctor in Virgin Publishing's *The New Adventures* and subsequently *The Missing Adventures* which featured the first six Doctors. I've recently been taking a trip down memory lane reading some of them again, and have absolutely loved it.

What triggered all this was the upcoming release of *Goth Opera*, which I read again to refresh myself with it before speaking to Paul Cornell – the original author – and Lizbeth Myles who's adapted it for audio.

The book is so alive with a great story at the heart of it – superb characters and genuine scares – all of which have been captured beautifully in the audio. I am genuinely excited to hear Peter Davison, Janet Fielding and Sarah Sutton exactly 30 years after I bought the novel (in the now sadly closed Inverurie Bookstore in Aberdeenshire).

There's more stepping back in time in this month's *Vortex* as we encounter the **Torchwood: Soho** team in the 1950s on another dark adventure – see the **Torchwood Soho: Ascension** preview on page 16.

And we have drama set in the 1940s with *Operation Werewolf* as the **Lost Story** is finally brought to life, along with *Deathworld* – the original version of what became the TV episode *The Three Doctors*.

Who says time travel doesn't exist?! **VORTEX**

Kerry



The Doctor Who novel adaptation with plenty of bite...

GOTHIC REVIVAL

BETWEEN 2012 and 2016, Big Finish adapted various **Doctor Who** books from Virgin Publishing's *The New Adventures* and *The Missing Adventures* ranges, many by authors who would go on to write for the Doctor on screen when the series returned in 2005.

The Novel Adaptations range includes adventures from original stories written by Russell T Davies (*Damaged Goods*), Mark Gatiss (*Nightshade*), Paul Cornell (*Love and War*) and Gareth Roberts (*The Romance of Crime*, *The English Way of Death* and *The Well-Mannered War*).

This summer sees the first book from *The Missing Adventures* range, *Goth Opera* written by Paul Cornell, become a three-part audio drama – exactly 30 years since its original publication.

The tale features the Fifth Doctor travelling with companions Nyssa and Tegan, and takes place in both Tasmania and Manchester. Peter Davison, Sarah Sutton and Janet Fielding all reprise their regular roles.

It's Manchester, 1993. The Time Lady Ruath, an old friend of the Doctor's, arrives on the planet to inform Earth's vampires that the arrival of their legendary messiah

is imminent. His rising will herald an age of endless night where the undead reign supreme. All that is needed is the blood of a Time Lord.

In Tasmania, the Doctor, Tegan, and Nyssa are enjoying the sun and plenty of cricket. When they are attacked by vampires, they escape unscathed, except for Nyssa who suffers two small puncture wounds to her neck. Compelled by her attacker to remain silent, she can tell no-one what she's turning into.

Why is Ruath so determined to see the descendants of the Great Vampire rise to power? If only the Doctor knew the truth, she's certain he would turn



ABOVE (l-r): Matthew McQuinn, Sarah Sutton, Micah Baifour, Janet Fielding and Natalie Gurnede

THE FIFTH DOCTOR WAS MY FAN FICTION CHARACTER, AND THE ORIGINAL VERSION OF WHAT BECAME TIMEWYRM: REVELATION WAS ACTUALLY A FIFTH DOCTOR STORY...

PAUL CORNELL

to her side, and help to secure the future of Vampire kind, no matter how much humanity must suffer.

Goth Opera has been adapted for audio by writer Lizbeth Myles and is produced/directed by David O'Mahony.

WRITER PAUL – whose *New Adventure* story *Love and War* has already been adapted by Big Finish – recalls his commission for *Goth Opera*. Paul says: “Peter Darvill-Evans, the editor of *The New Adventures*, told me that they were going to start a new range called *The Missing Adventures* and asked if I’d like to be the first to write one, which was a great honour.

“I’ve always felt a great affection for the Peter Davison years so that’s where I wanted to start, especially with the cricket angle – I’m a huge cricket fan.

“The Fifth Doctor was my fan fiction

character, and the original version of what became *Timewyrm: Revelation* was actually a Fifth Doctor story, rather than a Seventh. I’ve always liked the team of the Fifth Doctor, Nyssa and Tegan, which doesn’t actually last that long on screen.”

Goth Opera built on the vampire world created by Terrance Dicks in *State of Decay* and tied in with *Blood Harvest* in *The New Adventures* range.

Paul adds: “I was struck by the

sheer amount of world building Terrance does in *State of Decay* and the parallels between Time Lords and vampires. There’s the resurrection stuff, and the fact that they seem to have been polar opposites in the distant past of the universe with Rassilon versus the Great Vampire stuff. That struck me as sheer gold and mining that gives you so much to play with – time travel allows you to move a vampire from day into night into day, things like that. And I always wondered if you could kill a Time Lord by putting a stake through both hearts... I think there’s far more in common between the two than one might think.”

The audio adaptation, however, has excised the content linking *Goth Opera* with *Blood Harvest*.

Lizbeth tells *Vortex*: “When it came to adapting this, I had already written quite a few new plays for Big Finish so I felt fairly confident

about writing an audio script based on an existing novel – it was exciting to have something that built on a skill I already had.

“It wasn’t terrifying in the way that so many things are. It was fun to do, actually, as I wasn’t responsible for the plot which was already there. But I had to make it

afraid that had to be cut. It was one of the biggest disappointments in doing the adaptation. But I couldn’t figure out an effective way to get the flying baby on audio without it sounding like exposition.

“There are several crucial scenes in the book when the baby was there. You could include it in a

didn’t work. In the end, I felt I could get the same information from a vampire who could talk to her. It’s very frustrating and annoyingly disappointing because it’s such a great image. It’s one of the most memorable moments in the book, so it was a difficult decision to let it go.

“The major change that listeners



Above (l-r): Ewan Goddard, John Schwab, Lydia Wilson, Sarah Sutton, Nathan Jonathan, Natalie Gurnede, Lionelle Nzarhaza and Mizah Balfour

WHAT I WAS GETTING AS MY STARTING POINT WAS ALREADY VERY POLISHED. MOST OF THE DIFFICULT STUFF HAD ALREADY BEEN DONE.

LIZBETH MYLES

work for the different medium.

“Because the story had already been edited, what I was getting as my starting point was already very polished. Most of the difficult stuff had already been done. What I had to do was learn how to turn something that was visual on the page into something on audio. Obviously you’re limited to dialogue and a soundscape, so learning how to translate that was a new challenge for me.”

PART OF the translation process from prose to audio script meant that some elements have been lost, such as the memorably horrible image of the flying vampire baby. Lizbeth explains: “Yes, I’m

comic book. You could include it in a book. You could have it on film. But you just can’t do it on audio.

“The closest I got to an idea that I might find acceptable was Nyssa telepathically being in contact with the baby which meant she could explain things more, but it

will notice is cutting the section on Gallifrey with Romana which connected *Goth Opera* much more heavily to *Blood Harvest*. It was easy enough to do, though, as you can get the information of what happened on Gallifrey from other characters.

“I don’t feel bad about that one because you’re not only streamlining it, you’re also not suddenly shifting from England and Australia, and then to Gallifrey, and having to explain events from *Blood Harvest*. That’s not welcoming to someone who’s never heard of *Goth Opera* before.

“There is far more in the book than you can fit into three hours of audio, so in adapting it you’re always having to cut stuff, and losing Gallifrey and Romana made narrative sense.”



Above: Peter Davison

LISTENERS WILL be delighted to know that the other major characters from the original book have been retained. Lizbeth explains: “Regarding the other characters, I think everyone is in there. I don’t think that people who remember the book will notice anyone has gone apart from Romana. It was very pleasing to be able to do that, to keep most of the existing characters. “There are certain other bits which could have been cut but I loved them too much! There is some very cool stuff on the Moon, which technically speaking has very little to do with the plot. I just thought it was really neat and wanted to keep it in, so hopefully that will still be there

when it’s edited. You always know that things can run over and some scenes will be slightly cut down.”

Lizbeth is a good friend and podcast partner of Paul Cornell. Paul believes that the audio script has tightened up his 1994 novel.

He explains: “When I look back at the shapes of some of my *New Adventures*, with some of them I would like to do another draft. Lizbeth has actually improved the shape of *Goth Opera* quite a lot, going through it and thinking, “This doesn’t quite work, and this would make more of an impact like that.”

“Subsequent versions of books often improve on the original. I think that about the audios of *Love and War* and *Goth Opera*, and now love

them more, and definitely with the TV version of *Human Nature*. I read Lizbeth’s audio script with delight.

“Chairman Jason Haigh-Ellery had asked if Big Finish could release *Goth Opera* and I said, ‘Well, obviously I’d love Lizbeth to adapt it,’ because we’re podcast partners and she’s one of Big Finish’s key writers.

“I knew that she had both an understanding of my work but also some distance from it. She’s always given me the respect of being quite critical about some of it, and that’s really important to me, that she’s not going to just provide an homage. She would do her own thing with it, and that’s what I would seek from anybody who adapts my work.

“I read the first draft and had a few notes, but there was nothing huge.”

DID LIZBETH feel any pressure in adapting Paul’s work? She says: “It’s a very faithful adaptation that’s limited by certain things that just don’t work on audio and the time frame you’ve got to work with. I did make the odd tweak, but apart

SUBSEQUENT VERSIONS OF BOOKS OFTEN IMPROVE ON THE ORIGINAL. I THINK THAT ABOUT THE AUDIOS OF LOVE AND WAR AND GOTH OPERA, AND NOW LOVE THEM MORE...

PAUL CORNELL

from taking stuff out and streaming it down to basically make it smoother, very little has changed.

“There were one or two tiny bits of characterisation I adjusted based on very clear things from the TV series. One of these, which I did mention to Paul, was from *The Five Doctors* where Tegan at one point is asked to get everyone tea or coffee and her reaction is not positive. In Paul’s novel, Tegan is asked to make tea by the Doctor three times and she agrees three times, and I thought that was very out of character. So the differences that I have made here include Tegan volunteering to make the tea or coffee, and we also have the Doctor offering to make them too. And Paul was happy with these changes.

“Of course I didn’t want him to



Above (l-r): Sarah Sutton, Peter Davison and Janet Fielding

hate my adaptation – obviously, that would be terrible! It's been a couple of years now since I actually wrote it, so looking back at it now it's very much through rose-tinted glasses, but I remember it was easier to do than I expected. And I had a great time working on it, there was no stress or panic."

Lizbeth was delighted with the fan reaction when *Goth Opera* was announced. She explains: "The response to the announcement was great, it's still a popular adventure and well regarded. A lot of people have great memories from having read it. I thought that before but it became much more pointed after it was announced.

"Paul has been very reassuring. He didn't read any of the script as I was writing it, although I would occasionally ask him questions. I did ask him some cricket questions

SARAH FINALLY GETS TO BE VAMPIRE NYSSA WHICH IS SOMETHING I'VE WANTED TO HEAR FOR THE LONGEST TIME.

PAUL CORNELL

– and he's never been happier to have a conversation with me!

"Paul reading the script and telling me he was happy with it was a great relief. It was a little nerve wracking to do but everything was fine!"

JOINING PETER Davison, Sarah Sutton and Janet Fielding in the cast are Natalie Gumedje (*Jekyll and Hyde*) and Micah Balfour (*The Gold*). Richard Armitage also reprises his role as Rassilon to read the story's prologue.

Paul adds: "Sarah finally gets to be vampire Nyssa which is something I've wanted to hear for the longest time. It's such a powerful image because it really gives Nyssa a new dimension and I hope it gave Sarah some stuff to do that lets her enjoy a different playing field for a while.

"And it's really interesting that, back in the day, I was a fairly militant atheist: I wrote a very negative stereotype of an evangelist. These days, I'm a person of faith and still don't feel tremendously fond of a certain brand of evangelism. I think this brings a more nuanced take to that, and it's not as nasty as it was before. There was a certain cruelty to it which has gone in this audio version, although it still packs a punch in all the right places."

Producer David O'Mahony concludes: "*Goth Opera* has got everything: vampires, superpowers, blood, guts and gore, and of course Peter Davison's Doctor along with Tegan and Nyssa. It's also set in and around Manchester which gave us a lovely opportunity to bring in young and exciting northern actors.

"Lizbeth has brilliantly adapted Paul's novel and, with an incredible voice cast – including the wonderful Richard Armitage giving us a Rassilon prologue – it's a vampiric romp through the Whoniverse not to be missed!

"Richard is actually a neighbour of mine but his section was recorded before the rest of the production by Scott Handcock – I'm gutted I didn't get to work with him on this one!" **VORTEX**

THE FIFTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES GOTH OPERA



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BLAKE'S 7 DEVIL'S ADVOCATE



DEL TARRANT is a figure with an interesting past, some of which is explored in the second series of full-cast *Blake's 7* audios from Big Finish.

And this is especially the case in *Devil's Advocate* by Steve Lyons.

When Del Tarrant joined the Liberator he thought he'd left his past behind him – the gallant Federation officer with friends in high places. But the past has a habit of catching up on you. A man the Liberator crew thought dead crosses their path, now a fugitive on the run.

Producer Cavan Scott says: "When planning the series we made a conscious decision very early on to move away from Federation-type politics. We'd done a lot of that already and also, if you watch the original TV show, things have moved on there as well.

"But we also knew we had to bring back Hugh Fraser as the President. He'd gone down so, so well in the previous audios, fitting

in just brilliantly with the cast. Setting this during Series C of the original show gave us a chance to tell a different kind of story."

Script editor Justin Richards adds: "You don't ever see the President in the TV series. He's referred to, he's a presence off screen, which of course screen writing courses will tell you, you never do because you mustn't talk about characters before they're introduced. (The first episode of *The West Wing* rather brilliantly subverts that!)

"He's a terrific character and having got such a good actor to play him, it seemed a shame not

TARRANT IS A GOOD, OLD-FASHIONED HERO, BUT HE'S NOT WITHOUT HIS MOMENTS.

CAVAN SCOTT

to find some way of bringing him back. Doing that and building up Tarrant's background at the same time works very well together."

Cavan continues: "In *Devil's Advocate*, the former President is a man in exile. He's been deposed by Servalan and is wanting to wrestle power back at any cost.

"And of course, we have Steven Pacey as Tarrant, a former Federation officer. So, we started to ask the 'what ifs'. What if Tarrant had

links to the ex-President, and what if the ex-President thought he could use that to his advantage?"

Speaking at the recording in 2014, Steven admitted: "This is kind of like visiting an old friend, to be honest. I'm delighted there's interest enough to warrant more *Blake's 7*, and I'm very pleased to see all the old gang again. I remember Tarrant very well. I think these scripts are incredibly faithful to the original.

"We find out that he worked for the President at the time, so there's certainly a question mark over him, really, about how good a man he is. But I think he explains it, doesn't he? I think he has a kind of moral stance on it – he was hoping that it was going to be a force for good. It might have been naive, but that's what I think he imagined. I don't think he suddenly turned into a baddie."

Cavan concludes: "I started watching *Blake's 7* during the third TV season so it's personally very exciting for me to have Steven in the studio. Tarrant is a good, old-fashioned hero, but he's not without his moments. That's why I always liked him. He likes to ruffle feathers on the flight deck – certainly Avon's!" **VORTEX**

BLAKE'S 7: THE CLASSIC ADVENTURES DEVIL'S ADVOCATE



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TWO MORE PLANNED FOR TELEVISION BUT NEVER MADE DOCTOR WHO STORIES ARE ON THEIR WAY...

LOST WORLDS

BIG FINISH'S range of *Lost Stories* always attracts extra interest from fans who are intrigued by the possibilities of the never-weres and might-have-beens. Since the range began, it's featured stories adapted from fully written scripts or developed from approved detailed outlines that never made it to the script stage – in some cases from just rough outlines.

Each of the first seven Doctors have starred, but the latest two releases feature something that hasn't been done before – a multi-Doctor story – as the First, Second and Third Doctors take centre stage in *Deathworld* and the Second Doctor appearing in *Operation Werewolf*.

Deathworld is based on the original treatment written by Bob Baker and Dave Martin for what later became the tenth anniversary TV serial *The Three Doctors*. The script is very different to the story that ended up on screens, however. There's no Omega here, and instead the Doctors become caught in a temporal game of chess played between the President of Gallifrey and Death itself.

The audio adaptation is written by John Dorney with the First, Second and Third Doctors voiced by Stephen Noonan, Michael Troughton and Tim Treloar. Producer (and actor in this one) David O'Mahony says: "After Bob Baker and Dave Martin submitted the idea for *Deathworld* in 1972, the script went through

multiple rounds of rewrites and changes to characters, locations and actors to the point that *The Three Doctors* was completely different to the adventure first conceived.

"John and script editor Simon Guerrier wanted to go back to the original concept and explore what that idea had first been. *Deathworld* is the epitome of a **Lost Story** – taking a great idea and being able to fulfil it without the time and budget constraints of when it was pitched for television."

John says: "*Deathworld* has been on the backburner for many years. We've always wanted to make it, we were going to record it and I was going to write it. But, for whatever reason, we never quite got round to making it



Above (l-r): Katy Manning, Stephen Noonan, Joe Shire, Tim Treloar and Dianne Pilkington

YOU CAN SEE THE IDEAS AND HOW THEY LED TO WHAT WE ACTUALLY SAW ON TV IN THE THREE DOCTORS...

JOHN DORNEY

happen until now! And it was really good fun – I’ve not really done a multi-Doctor story before, so getting to play in that sandbox was exciting.

“It was an intriguing one as well because, obviously, we’ve seen the Doctors interact on TV in *The Three Doctors*, which meant we really didn’t want to repeat those kind of beats.

“I don’t think I have any lines like, ‘Oh, you’ve redecorated. I don’t like it!’ Well, maybe I do... I wrote it so long ago! I have tried to avoid repeating things we get in *The Three Doctors*, though.”

JOHN REVEALS that he had to be creative with the source material. He tells *Vortex*: “I didn’t have a massive amount to work from. I had a couple of pages and various things I found in other publications that suggested revisions and drafts that I couldn’t track down. So, I tried to meld them all into one. It

was fun. I’ve written a couple of *Lost Stories* before with a very similar kind of vibe, where there isn’t an insane amount of data available but at the same time there isn’t nothing either. It was a case of taking what I had and trying to find a way of making that work in a *Doctor Who* context. That was the biggest initial challenge I had.

“The adaptation was interesting because on one level you can see the ideas and how they led to what we actually saw on TV in *The Three Doctors*, but at the same time it’s noticeably different as the style is a lot more fantasy-based. There are crazy concepts like a personification of Death and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, plus various mythical creatures and beasts.

“I felt that the approach with this should be the same sort of development you would give any other story, where you go, ‘OK, let’s tweak this’. It’s still recognisably the same story but you’re allowed to develop it to certain degree. I was trying to factor in all these things and then got some excellent script editing from Simon Guerrier and producer David O’Mahony.

“I tried to incorporate everything that was included in *The Three Doctors*. Things like the flesh-

eating virus, zombies and the Seven Deadly Sins, and in particular I remember one bit that people said clearly couldn't have been done at the time because it misunderstood the show's concepts. But, I thought, 'Well, I'm going to do that then!'

"The notion of what I wanted was the Doctors fighting the Lord of Reality as opposed to Time Lords. That was the root of where it all came together."

John was also delighted to have some different character dynamics to play with, compared to the television episode. He reveals: "I was very keen to include Jamie because in at least some of the early discussions, he was going to be there. So that immediately gave me something new and different. You also get to have the



Above: Frazer Hines

relationship between Jamie and Jo, which was entertaining to play with.

"The other thing that was fun was this meant we had the Third Doctor with Jo and the Second Doctor with Jamie... leaving us with the Brigadier to join up with the First Doctor, which isn't a pairing that really got to be explored on TV. I got to put them together and it's particularly entertaining as the First Doctor has no idea who this man is!"

DAVID SAYS: "The idea of producing the **Lost Stories** really resonates with me. With *Deathworld*, what a privilege it was to have all six of those leads – the three Doctors and the three companions.



Above (l-r): Katy Manning and Tim Treloar

I SAY THIS EVERY TIME I TALK ABOUT TIM, BUT IF YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES YOU'RE LISTENING TO JON PERTWEE. IT'S UNCANNY.

DAVID O'MAHONY

"Stephen Noonan is so studious with his acting, he's very particular and does his research. He's one of those actors that will spend weeks poring over the script and thinking about every line and every nuance.

"With Michael, it's lovely to have him involved and he has that twinkle in his eye that his dad had – you can hear it on audio in his performance.

"I say this every time I talk about Tim, but if you close your eyes you're listening to Jon Pertwee. It's

uncanny. I honestly don't think Tim realises just how great he is. And he has such a lovely bond with Katy. There was one scene where she was moved to tears, which I think is testament to how good Tim is."

John adds: "I just love the craziness of it all, really. I think one of the things that really struck me reading it and then watching a lot of Bob Baker and Dave Martin's work was that it became very clear that they're really good ideas men.

"They're flinging many concepts at their stories, so, if anything, my job was just trying to marshal them into a shape.

"Getting to play in this slightly different flavour of **Doctor Who** was fun. That was one of the key things I really enjoyed with this, playing in a rather more obviously fantastical environment."



Above: Joe Shire

THE SECOND release, *Operation Werewolf*, is based on a storyline submitted to the **Doctor Who** production office in 1967 by acclaimed **Doctor Who** director Douglas Camfield and Robert Kitts. With a script by Jonathan Morris, the audio adaptation stars Michael Troughton as the Second Doctor, Frazer Hines as Jamie and Wendy Padbury as Zoe. David explains: "A combination of story elements, budget constraints and sensitivity about the recent Second World War meant that *Operation Werewolf* was shelved in 1967. But the outline caught Jonathan Morris's brilliant imagination and we ran with it."

Jonny says: "I've been wanting to do this story ever since the **Lost Stories** range began back in 2009. I would bring it up every couple of years, 'You know, *Operation Werewolf* hasn't

I'VE BEEN WANTING TO DO THIS STORY EVER SINCE THE LOST STORIES RANGE BEGAN BACK IN 2009.

JONATHAN MORRIS

been done yet...'. What interested me about it was that it's such an unusual story. It's set in history – Normandy, a few days before the D-Day landings – with a science-fiction plot, but not one resulting from alien or time-traveller interference. Off the top of my head, I can't think of another **Doctor Who** story that does that.

"So I've been pushing for it for a while. And, of course, I hadn't yet written a full-cast Second Doctor story so there was that completist

urge to fill a gap in the collection!"

How much, in terms of pages, did you have to work with? "I've written a couple of **Lost Story** adaptations before based on outlines – *The Valley of Death* and *The Guardians of Prophecy* – and this was somewhere between the two. Unusually, there were two synopses for this – a 6-page outline of the whole story and an 11-page breakdown of the story into six episodes. This second synopsis also has handwritten annotations by producer Innes Lloyd, I think, and there are three pages of notes on the story. The fact that notes were given on the second synopsis suggests to me that there were plans to take it further, and apparently Camfield and Kitts did deliver a draft of the first episode, but



Above (l-r): Katy Manning and Stephen Noonan

no copies of it are known to still exist."

How difficult was it working from two different outlines to make one cohesive plot? Jonny says: "It was tricky, but rather than combine the two outlines, I approached it on the basis of thinking, 'OK, this is the first version of the story, this is the second version of the story. If they had taken on board of all Lloyd's notes, what would the third version of the story have been?' So my script keeps all of the main elements of the two synopses but treats it as though it had already been through a full script-editing process, with the ideas developed and all the kinks in the plot ironed out.

"For me, the point of the **Lost Stories** is to present the adventures

as authentically as possible but in the best light. To give an example, both synopses begin with the TARDIS landing on the coast before the Doctor and his companions head to a nearby wood. In his notes, Lloyd points out that the coast would have been mined and full of troops on watch. So, in my version, the TARDIS lands in the trees instead. There aren't really any woods in that part of France but I decided to overlook that fact!"

JONNY DID face a number of challenges in his adaptation. He explains: "As well as making the story as clear and logical as possible, the main challenge was to build up the role of the Doctor's female companion. In the synopses, the companion is Victoria, but she doesn't get very much to do. She is barely mentioned and when she is, she is just tagging along with other characters. So I thought, 'If this story had gone ahead, by the time it entered production they would have replaced Victoria with Zoe, so that's what I'll



Above: Michael Troughton

I'M PARTICULARLY LOOKING FORWARD TO THE CLIFFHANGERS...

JONATHAN MORRIS

do.' After all, I think we'd all rather hear Wendy Padbury as Zoe, wouldn't we? And as Zoe is from the future, rather than the past, that raised some interesting dramatic possibilities which meant I could give her some more exciting things to do.

"The other area where I had to be very careful was in terms of tone because this is fairly recent history – I grew up knowing people, family members, teachers, who fought in the war or lived under occupation. But there is a limit to how far **Doctor Who** can go in terms of depicting the harsh realities of war – and you have to be conscious that what might be innocuous to one person might be upsetting to someone else. So, as a guide, I looked at how *The War Games* had treated the First World War, and drama series like *Secret Army*, *Enemy at the Door* and *Wish Me Luck*. I didn't want to write cartoon Nazis, but on the other

hand I wanted to make it very clear that the ones in positions of power were irredeemably evil and deserve everything that's coming to them."

There are a few scenes Jonny's especially looking forward to hearing. He confirms: "There are lots, but I'm particularly looking forward to the cliffhangers, the climax and the scene where the Doctor phones up Winston Churchill: 'Yes, it's me, your old friend! The short one. With the recorder, that's right.'

"Oh, and back then, they sometimes gave stories their own bespoke title sequence, so we've done something similar with Morse code bleeps and teleprinter sounds to go under the individual episode titles, to give it added authenticity."

David concludes: "As with all our **Lost Story** productions, I hope the original teams would be proud of what we have created." **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO: THE LOST STORIES DEATHWORLD

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OPERATION WEREWOLF

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TORCHWOOD ARE SET TO TAKE ON AN
OLD ENEMY OF THE DOCTOR IN THE 1920s...

UNION OF THE SNAKE



Above: Simon Kane



Above: Wilf Scolding

PREVIOUSLY IN Torchwood, the teams throughout the decades have faced a number of the Doctor's old foes including the Fendahl, the Autons, the giant maggots, a Sontaran and Margaret Slitheen. And now, they're getting ready to take on a more slippery foe in the form of the Mara, in July's release, *Art Decadence*.

The **Torchwood** series has explored various points in the history of the eponymous institute, from its origins in the Victorian era to its legacy in the far future via the 1950s, the modern day and more. Now, a new period in Torchwood history will get its time in the spotlight as *Art Decadence* takes us to London, almost 100 years ago.

One of **Torchwood's** top agents at this time is Sir Reginald Dellafield (voiced by Wilf Scolding). But Dellafield is a blundering buffoon and the real talent doing most of the alien-hunting work is his loyal butler, A.C. Forster. They've got

**I'M ENOUGH OF A
DOCTOR WHO FAN
TO KNOW ABOUT
SNAKEDANCE —
AND TATTOOS AND
SNAKES APPEARING
IN MIRRORS.**

SIMON KANE

outsiders to deal with — not only the wannabe footman Peter Janks (Timothy Blore), but also the Mara.

London in the 1920s and Sir Reggie works for Torchwood, saving the world from alien invasions. Really, he relies on the services of his loyal butler while he paints the town red.

But there's a new sensation in high society — what is the secret of The Serpentine Club and can Forster save his master from it?

First seen in the 1980s **Doctor Who** television stories *Kinda* and *Snakedance*, the Mara is a mysterious entity that takes over human hosts via their dreams and inhabits the form of a snake. *Art Decadence* marks its first Big Finish appearance since 2010's *The Cradle of the Snake*.

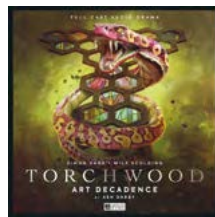
Simon Kane, playing Forster, was particularly delighted to be involved in this story. Simon says: "I'm enough of a **Doctor Who** fan to know about *Snakedance* — and tattoos and snakes appearing in mirrors.

Art Decadence actually does a really nice explanation of the Mara, which I don't really remember from seeing that initial story. There's so much sort of serpent and original sin in it.

"But then when we actually hear what the Mara wants and how the Mara operates on a day-to-day basis in terms of why it's starting to project onto the Earth, that's really nice!" **VORTEX**

Art Decadence is written by Ash Darby and directed by Scott Handcock, who is also the script editor of the current **Doctor Who** TV series.

TORCHWOOD
ART DECADENCE



■ RELEASED: JULY 2024
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TORCHWOOD'S 1950s TEAM FACES THEIR MOST DIFFICULT ASSIGNMENT YET...

SOME ASCENDING

NO MATTER the era, all of the Torchwood teams have faced peril, danger, death, love, hate, violence and aliens – and often all of those elements combined in the space of one episode! We're heading back to the 1950s this July in **Torchwood Soho: Ascension** as the team of Norton Folgate (Samuel Barnett), Sergeant Andy Davidson (Tom Price), Gideon Lymchee (Joe Shire) and Lizbeth Hayhoe (Dervla Kirwan) encounter an apparent gateway to the

afterlife.

Is the end of the world really nigh? A number of groups believe so – and what's odder, they're all vanishing. Have they really gone to heaven or is something far worse happening? It's Torchwood. Obviously something far worse is happening.

Scripted by writer and producer James Goss, the six episodes in this box set are:

Burning Bright: When carol singers on the runway bring down a plane,

Torchwood investigate. *Chariot of Fire:* The race is on to stop the world ending at midnight. Norton has it all under control. *The Invisible Worm:* In Moscow, the true power of Ascension is revealed. *We Have Built Jerusalem:* It's up to Lizbeth, Andy and Gideon to save the world now. *Dark Satanic Mills:* Come on holiday, all ye faithful! What is going on on Salisbury Plain? *Fearful Symmetry:* As the net tightens, does the human race have one last use for Torchwood?



Above (l-r): Samuel Barnett and Joe Shire

For those who haven't listened to any of the series yet, James explains: "**Torchwood Soho** is about a group of misfits from the 1950s who are protecting humankind from themselves and from alien threats. "It's based primarily around the character of Norton Folgate who is mercurial. He's duplicitous. He's a nasty piece of work, but also he's a wonderful person who wants to save the world so long as he is in charge of it. He is the ultimate demon twink. He is dangerous. He is unpredictable. He has complicated plans that always go horribly wrong and yet he always manages to save the day. "And it's about the group of people who are around him. They're Sergeant Andy who is on loan from the 21st century and is sort of like Norton's conscience. There's Gideon Lyme, who might be Norton's better half. Gideon

is Norton's boyfriend, sort of, but is also the person who stands there and says, 'Could you stop doing that?' "And then there's Elizabeth Heyhoe who used to be Norton's boss, until Norton murdered her via a killer Nazi mushroom, and now she sort of hangs around to basically upbraid him because of his sheer awfulness."

THE WHOLE series has been inspired by a British science fiction classic which has helped to shape each of the box sets so far. James says: "All of the **Torchwood Soho** stories take their inspiration from Nigel Kneale's Quatermass stories. The first one was basically *The Quatermass Experiment* and we've gone all the way through to *Quatermass and the Pit* being echoed in the last box set. "*Ascension* is inspired by the fourth

story by Nigel Kneale which is about a mysterious alien entity that people begin to worship. It transports people away and we've used that as the starting point, 'What if 1950s England suddenly discovers that heaven is real?' We've been trying to find a way that's even more cynical, which is very, very difficult because Nigel Kneale was one of the most cynical writers ever to exist! "We came up with the notion, 'How would a government behave if it discovered that people went away to heaven? How would governments use this piece of information?'

HE IS DANGEROUS. HE IS UNPREDICTABLE. HE HAS COMPLICATED PLANS THAT ALWAYS GO HORRIBLY WRONG...

JAMES GOSS

"And that's what we're doing in *Ascension*. If heaven is real, how does this change the world? And how can Norton Folgate use it to his own advantage? The answer is... messily!"

SAM REPRISES his role as Norton and says of the character: "Norton Folgate is a difficult man to pin down. He is gay, which obviously in the 1950s means he has to be very much undercover, but because he works undercover anyway and he kind of works behind the scenes in quite a murky way, I think he gets to hide behind that. "He's a slippery character, very morally dubious – you never quite know if he's good or bad, and that's what I quite enjoy about playing him. He's a sort of heroic anti-hero. He's not always likeable and he will throw even his nearest and dearest under the bus. But then he always manages to save them just before they get crushed. His methods are really dubious but I think, ultimately, he's a good person even though he wouldn't necessarily admit to it.

"I adore **Doctor Who** but I have a very special place in my heart for **Torchwood**. Watching it on TV, I thought, 'Oh, wow, they're pushing the boundaries in a different way to **Doctor Who** and they are also making it really, really inclusive.' **Doctor Who** does that a lot too, more so these days, obviously, but I think **Torchwood** did it first."

Sam has particularly enjoyed working on this adventure, explaining: "Ascension is a big mystery. We're led to believe that people are being kind of beamed up to heaven and it's the perfect thing for **Torchwood** to investigate because Norton suspects that it's not what it seems. I don't think he believes in heaven – he suspects that it's some sort of alien interference.

"And, as ever, it's very murky, particularly with this one, as to who's on the right and the wrong side of this. What I quite like about this particular script is you never quite know. And the people who try to harness it are not necessarily doing good things with it.

"It's really asking, what would it be like if heaven was proved to be real? What would that do to people? And it sort of shows what it does to people in the script. What's lovely and clever about this script is it's really relevant to today in terms of our social media and thinking, 'This thing isn't good. But it feels good and I want to engage with it.'

"There's a sense in this script about human nature which feels very real for today, about people sort of self-sabotaging themselves even if they know something is ultimately really not good for them, they still end up wanting to do it. This is set in the 1950s, but it's very much about right now."

JAMES IS particularly pleased to be bringing Sergeant Andy back, given his recent adventures with the Eighth Doctor in *Stranded*. The producer explains: "Andy is the character from **Torchwood** who's had the biggest adventures since the TV series ended.

"He's gone on to have a life as a companion of the Eighth Doctor. He's been inside a TARDIS. And he's also somebody who is quite capable of going back and making



Above (l-r): Samuel Barnett, Joe Shire and Tom Price

IF HEAVEN IS REAL, HOW DOES THIS CHANGE THE WORLD? AND HOW CAN NORTON FOLGATE USE IT TO HIS OWN ADVANTAGE?

SAMUEL BARNETT

himself at home in 1950s London.

"I dread to think of all the post that's gathering on Andy's door mat when he's away. Just imagine the number of Netflix offers and double glazing leaflets that he comes home to every

time he gets back from another trip!

"He has this wonderful, exciting life but he's a genuine everyman character. He's very, very bright. He's very, very personable but he also feels like he's normal. And in a world of extraordinary people, which is often what happens in **Big Finish**, it's nice to have somebody who's just normal."

Tom Price adds: "I really love doing all the different guises of **Torchwood**. It's brilliant being in **Torchwood Soho** as I love working with Joe and Sam. They're great, brilliant actors, a lot of fun to bounce off. You can really trust them.

"Andy is up for anything whether it's going to the cinema or going to a different planet – or in this case, going back in time. He's up for that until the reality dawns and he realises that Norton Folgate has once more landed him in mortal danger.

“Andy just wants to go back to his own time and Norton doesn’t necessarily want that to happen. Once again, Andy is stuck, which is, you know, I guess how we all feel on occasion, stuck in our own time. But poor Andy is stuck in a

different time. Imagine *Back to the Future* but he’s not got his mum trying to kiss him! It’s basically that.

“Andy’s definitely changed since we first saw him in the TV show, and it’s not just his hairline that’s changed! I think that he has become a bit more

for the character of Gideon because I think he grew up as a man of faith but now he believes in something else. Maybe not faith as in a god but he does believe in something higher working within this world.

“He believes the soul does



Above (l-r): Tom Price, Jamie Baughan, Adam Howden, Ali Bastian and Joe Shire

IT'S REALLY RELEVANT TO TODAY IN TERMS OF OUR SOCIAL MEDIA AND THINKING, 'THIS THING ISN'T GOOD. BUT IT FEELS GOOD AND I WANT TO ENGAGE WITH IT.'

SAMUEL BARNETT

something after life, but he’s not quite as much as a believer as some of the other characters.”

The guest cast for **Torchwood Soho: Ascension** includes Greg Austin (*Charlie from Doctor Who* spin-off *Class*), Ali Bastian (*Hollyoaks*, *The Bill*), Naana Agyei-Ampadu (*The Wheel of Time*), Michael Higgs (*Wizards vs Aliens*, *Eastenders*) and David Sterne (*Detectorists*). **VORTEX**



Above: Tom Price

astute. He thinks about things a bit more and he even tries to do some detecting. He’s got an inner Sherlock who comes out every now and then.

“I would say that the first iteration of Andy was more interested in sausage rolls – and now he’s more interested in the roles of the people around him. Fundamentally he’s still a man who wants his lunch, but there are other things going on as well.

“When we saw Andy on the TV show he was a bit more blasé and more of a shrugger, but now he is a bit more proactive and wants to see the right thing happen.”

Joe Shire, who plays Gideon, was intrigued by this story.

He says: “It’s about faith and the possibility of what might come afterwards, which is quite interesting

TORCHWOOD: SOHO
ASCENSION



■ RELEASED: JULY 2024
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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THE SECOND OF THE DARK GALLIFREY ADVENTURES IS ABOUT TO BEGIN...

DARK MASTER

DARK GALLIFREY continues with the release of the second adventure in the range and, of course, with this being set in the **Doctor Who** universe, things aren't always straightforward.

Dark Gallifrey: The War Master – a three-part story – features Derek Jacobi as the War Master, the late, great David Warner in his final performance as the Unbound Doctor, Lisa Bowerman as Professor Bernice Summerfield and James Marsters as Captain John Hart plus Jonathon Carley as the War Doctor.

Producer Scott Handcock says: "I was presented with the idea, either during or before lockdown, when senior producer David Richardson said Big Finish was planning on making a

series called **Dark Gallifrey** and asked me to look after the War Master trilogy because I know Derek so well. He said they wanted it to feature a character from **Torchwood** and Bernice Summerfield. It basically serves as a coda to the series, even though it is the second adventure in the range.

"The good thing about having being asked to do the War Master with Benny and **Torchwood** was that I know these worlds very well. It also meant, as we're doing Bernice Summerfield, that we'd be able to do something with David Warner. It was irresistible, linking the Unbound Doctor to the wider Whoniverse at a point when the Whoniverse wasn't so widely exploited."

Writer James Goss continues:

"*The War Master* is an experimental adventure. The first episode is all about the disruption to time caused by the third episode, and the second episode is about the unlikely wooing of Bernice Summerfield by Captain John. It was great to visit Benny later on in life as a semi-retired cat lady who has put all her travelling behind her. Or has she?"

"I decided to make it a quest by Benny and the Doctor to find the location of the mythical 'Dark Gallifrey' and about the consequences of that visit. The visit does not go well. Many years later, Benny finds other people are interested in the location of Dark Gallifrey and are using her to get to it, so she sets a trap for them."



Above (l-r): David Warner and Lisa Bowerman

Recording sessions took place when COVID was still prevalent, resulting in at-home and in-studio recordings on several days.

Scott says: "I remember we had two days with Derek remotely, two days with Lisa, and one in a studio with David and a couple of the other cast members. It was business as usual, really. There was a lot of laughter, it was lots of fun.

"I felt really sorry, actually, for James and Jonathon who did all their stuff basically on their own in isolation. For James it was because of the time difference with America, which is always difficult because no one wants to start at UK night so it was just me reading in.

"And then with Jonathon, rather than keeping him hanging around off and on for multiple days, we thought it would make more sense to record with him in a nice morning block.

"It's a great script from James [Goss]. The characters leap off the page and the dialogue works beautifully for all the actors.

When I listened to the edits, three years after we recorded it, I'd completely forgotten who was and wasn't with each other.

EVEN THOUGH THEY DON'T INTERACT, HAVING A STORY STARRING BOTH DAVID AND DEREK WAS JUST REALLY DELIGHTFUL.

SCOTT HANDCOCK

TEASING WHAT lies ahead, Scott says: "There's a lot to love in these *Dark Gallifrey* releases. The first adventure is rather bittersweet because it was the final time spent in the company of Lisa and David. I will never not love that combination of characters, those people, friends. That's a highlight for me.

"With the second adventure, I think we'll throw people because everyone's expecting a series called *Dark Gallifrey* to be brutal and unpleasant, particularly with a

character like the War Master, and actually the second story is bafflingly ridiculous, silly and funny. It's the combination of characters like the War Master, Bernice and Captain John together which is just joyfully bizarre. Their comic timing is incredible, actually, considering they didn't get to record together.

"This trilogy is another testament to James's writing. It just sings and everyone knows what they need to deliver. I'm really excited about it."

While the story features the Unbound Doctor and War Master, portrayed by two of Britain's finest-ever acting talents, the pair don't get to meet.

James says: "It's gorgeous and sad that we get to give David's Doctor a rich send off and hopefully we end things with him on a note of grace. He's such a hero, both as an actor and as a Doctor, and much of this story is about preserving his legacy."

Scott adds: "Even though they don't interact, having a story starring both David and Derek was just really delightful. I know David also did *Once and Future: Time Lord Immemorial* with Christopher Eccleston, which I think was conceived after this even though it was recorded around the same time.

"It's perfect that David's final outing as the Doctor is with Lisa because the characters mean so much to each other, and in real life they obviously meant so much to each other. And it just feels right. They get one last hurrah as the best of friends." **VORTEX**

DARK GALLIFREY THE WAR MASTER: PART ONE



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FINAL SCORES

I've spent countless hours collecting the soundtracks and listening to the music of the TV series. I don't suppose you'd ever consider reviving the audio soundtracks, releasing 'best of' albums? It seems you used to some years ago, but they're all out of print now and there's been so much new great music in the audio series since then. Personal favourites: the themes for the Fourth, Eighth and War Doctors ('Begin the Big Adventure', 'There's a Man I Know' and 'I am Not the Doctor'); the music suite for *The Legacy of Time: Collision Course* in all its nostalgic Siren-y goodness; and the Masterful theme tune (which, since its re-use in *The Last Day*, I've christened 'Living in the Worst Possible Timeline')! I'm sure there are many other tracks I've overlooked. We love stories – but I love music, too!

RICH SLADE

Nick: It's a great idea, Rich. And we really must do something about it.

BOX SET THOUGHTS

Firstly, I was wondering, now that you've mostly gone from four- to three-hour releases, is it still economically beneficial to issue box sets rather than two-CD single sets? This obviously leaves a couple of the CD spaces in the box sets empty, though I imagine that there are probably other release-related factors to consider, such as two box sets costing less to release than three singles? I do miss the old days of the main range though.

DAVID CANFIELD

*Nick: I know what you mean, David. The whole business of what makes the best sense economically, and what people are most likely to buy is a very imprecise science. We're constantly monitoring purchasing patterns and sales, and that's why things change from time to time. Added to that, it's often difficult to know the exact reason why something is popular. For example, it was **Dark Eyes** that*

prompted our CEO to ask for more box sets, since it was very successful. But perhaps there were other factors...? Paul McGann? Daleks? Or maybe it was the heady combination of the box set and those story factors. We'll keep trying as best we can.

TERRIFIC TORCHWOOD

I'm a huge fan of everything that Big Finish puts out under the **Torchwood** banner, with most everything being a hit in my eyes. I've especially loved the **Story Continues** box sets in recent years, as well as the monthly range releases with Mr Colchester. Are there plans for more of St John, Orr, Ng, Tyler, etc. in the near future? Also, it's been 10+ years since BBC Books last published a **Torchwood** novel. Has Big Finish ever considered a publishing licence for **Torchwood**? I'd love to read TV novelisations in the same vein as your **Blake's 7 Origins** box set, or original stories from BF's frankly amazing stable of **Torchwood** writers?

JAMES HAWKINS

Nick: There are currently no plans for novels, James. And as for what's coming up, I leave that in the more than capable hands of that genius James Goss!

CLONE WARS

I've really enjoyed the **Sontarans vs Rutans** stories this year – every single one of them was brilliant, and it was just amazing to hear Conrad Westmaas back as C'rizz. I hope that there could be more releases like this in future, with mini-series which could run alongside the regular box sets but with different Doctors, making up a bigger story?

SCOTT

*Nick: So glad you enjoyed it, Scott. Yes, it's gone down very well and we're certainly planning other ventures like this. **VORTEX***



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Operation Werewolf

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The War Master: Part 1

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Ascension (BOX SET)

TORCHWOOD *Art Decadence* (85)

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The Great Beyond (BOX SET)

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THE 1950s TEAM FACES THEIR MOST DIFFICULT ASSIGNMENT YET...

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