

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VOCOTEX

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ADAPTING THE LOST STORY
GENESIS OF THE CYBERMEN...

THE POWER OF THREE

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UNITED WITH PROFESSOR RIVER SONG...





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THE WAR MASTER

FANS OF Sir Derek Jacobi as the War Master are in for a treat, as the Doctor's arch-enemy returns in two new box sets.

The Master stars in an epic adventure across the two releases, *His Greatest Trick*, out in October and *Deeds Without Name* following 12 months later. Get ready for mayhem! The Master has become so dangerous that both sides of the Time War agree on one thing: the Master must be destroyed...

Robert Valentine, new producer of the range, tells *Vortex*: "When the Master returns, we're going to see him facing an existential crisis. The Daleks and the Time Lords both want him dead, and he wants out of the Time War. However, he knows in his hearts of hearts that there is no way out, and a desperate, despairing Master is a very deadly Master indeed.

"There are some deliciously dark and wickedly funny adventures in store, and at the centre of it all is Derek's towering performance. It's been an absolute dream working with Derek, and through these stories we're getting to see many different sides of his Master's character.

"Watching him transform from a charming lady-killer one minute to a rat in a trap the next, or from a kindly grandfather into the very devil has been a thrill. This is very much a Master who sees no hope for the universe or for himself, and is trying to console himself by helping it burn. And he'd very much like you to join him." **VORTEX**

THE WAR MASTER HIS GREATEST TRICK

- RELEASED: OCTOBER 2025
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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EDITORIAL

I'M A SUCKER for the Big Finish range of *Lost Stories*, I can't deny it.


When the range was announced, way back in 2009, I instantly subscribed to listen to some familiar tales such as *The Nightmare Fair* and *Mission to Magnus*, plus a host of other Sixth Doctor and Peri stories I didn't know about.

The range has since gone from strength to strength, taking in the unmade Season 27 overseen by Andrew Cartmel, as well as the other stories that were never broadcast. Tom Baker, Peter Davison and Colin Baker star in these adventures, decades after they were first proposed, as well as lost stories featuring the first three Doctors.

The next release, *Genesis of the Cybermen*, is one I've been intrigued by since 1989 when I got a copy of David Banks's *Cybermen* book which had been published the previous year. It was a gift for my 15th birthday and I have devoured it, time and again.

One of the highlights of the book is the original outline for *Genesis of the Cybermen* pitched by Gerry Davis to the **Doctor Who** production office in the early 1980s, but never made. And now, I can finally hear about Prince Sylvan, his misguided brother Dega and how the Cybermen came to be... But how can this story exist alongside *Spare Parts* you ask? Read on to find out! **VORTEX**

Kenny



The Fifth Doctor and his friends are ready to encounter the Cybermen who are...

TESTING THEIR METAL

SOME OF the *Doctor Who Lost Stories* are better known than others, having been in the fan consciousness for decades, while others were previously unknown.

Genesis of the Cybermen is very much in the former camp, having been conceived by one of the Cybermen's creators, Gerry Davis, who originated them with Kit Pedler.

Gerry's intended origins of the Cybermen never made it to screen. He pitched a story about their creation in the early 1980s, but it was rejected

by producer John Nathan-Turner and script editor Eric Saward.

Fans may remember details of the story being printed in the 1988 book *Cybermen* by David Banks featuring a generic Doctor and his companion Felicity. And the story has now been adapted by David K Barnes into a full-cast audio drama.

The Lost Stories: *Genesis of the Cybermen* stars Peter Davison as the Fifth Doctor alongside Janet Fielding, Sarah Sutton and Matthew Waterhouse as his companions

Tegan, Nyssa and Adric with Nicholas Briggs as the Cybermen.

A King lies dying in his castle. His eldest son Prince Sylvan is an artist with no desire to inherit a kingdom, while Prince Dega toils in his laboratory, dedicated to saving their dying people from extinction. They will all burn unless he succeeds. When the TARDIS arrives, its crew believe they can help. But this planet is Mondas. And this is the Genesis of the Cybermen...

Writer David K Barnes says: "The *Cybermen* book definitely loomed



Above: Peter Davison

large in my early fandom, because when I was 11 my teacher lent me her husband's copy of it. I pored over that book: all those wonderful pictures of Cybermen through the ages! I think that's the reason why I've always had a sneaking preference for the Cybermen over the Daleks.

"The setting that Gerry envisaged is a wonderful fusion of futurism and fairy tale, all kings and castles and rival princes, with the Cybermen representing the perils of science without culture.

"There's also a fascinating structural quirk reminiscent of *The Ark* where the TARDIS hops forward in time part way through the story, and the Doctor discovers the terrible fate that has befallen Mondas in the intervening years. I loved using all of that."

Those who have read the original outline which appeared in *Cybermen* will recall that it featured a very different storyline from the then style of on-screen **Doctor Who**.

David explains his adaptation: "This adventure has been tooled for the Season 19 crew, as that's

partially-converted cybernetic Queen! "I've tried to develop them all further, giving the story's villain a stronger motivation, while digging into themes that seemed especially resonant today like climate change, mental burnout and the tension between art and AI."

One of the other things David had to battle with was the actual use of the Cybermen, which involved the writer getting some outside help.

David continues: "Gerry's use of the Cybermen in his outline is perplexing: he gives barely any reason for their creation! Mondasian society goes from 'a few spare parts' to 'armies of Cybermen with schemes of conquest'

I'VE ALWAYS HAD A SNEAKING PREFERENCE FOR THE CYBERMEN OVER THE DALEKS.

DAVID K BARNES

in the blink of an eye (thanks to that short hop in the TARDIS).

"So, with the help of my own scientific advisor, Jamie Laird, I tried to delve into why Mondasian science might evolve in this way, and why they might have dispensed with emotions so willingly. Mind you, if I'd changed every example of bonkers science in the outline then there wouldn't have been very much story left! How did Mondas begin its journey to the edge of space? The answer may surprise you..."

Producer and director David O'Mahony was delighted to work on this adventure.

He says: "I love a proposed origin story. As with all our **Lost Stories** it's a case of 'what if...?' and this is our offering of a really brilliant, fun and pretty dark origin story that I think/hope will allow the audience to reflect on the great story but also the wider questions of anti-heroes like the first Cybermen.

"Humanity has always struggled with its humanity. I'm sure we've all had moments in our lives when we thought, 'Life would be so much easier if I didn't feel emotions; or have to sleep; or have aches and pains...'. Characters like the Cybermen show the beauty and worth our fragile minds and bodies have. They are



Above (l-r): Michael Abubakar and Evie Ward-Drummond

roughly when Gerry submitted the outline – it was relatively easy to find storylines for Tegan, Nyssa and Adric.

"Notably absent, however, is Felicity, the somewhat bland companion Gerry created in his outline – but I doubt John and Eric would have used her, so I didn't either! We've kept the majority of the original characters, though, including a

also a character that represents 'progress at all costs', something that our species in some ways is already paying the price for."

DAVID WAS very pleased with the cast with Nuhazet Diaz Cano, Kelly Price, Colin Tierney, Michael Abubakar and Evvie Ward-Drummond plus Nick as the Cybermen. He says: "The cast for *Genesis of the Cybermen* were just brilliant to work with. From a personal point of view I have to extend my gratitude to them all, but especially our leads Peter, Janet, Sarah and Matthew.

"I love being in the studio with everyone. But the week of the recording my wife was diagnosed with breast cancer so I had to stay home and direct remotely. The whole team, Rohan – our sound engineer – and all the staff at The Soundhouse were so supportive.

"When you work with such an established, well-oiled machine like the Fifth Doctor team it is so easy to bring in other actors to play leads and supporting roles. I'm really excited about people meeting Colin as sinister and tortured Dega; Nuhazet as wide-eyed, idealistic Sylvan; Kelly as unhinged Meta; and Michael and Evvie who play young Dega and Raith, and young Meta and Shan respectively.

"The cast all worked brilliantly together but they also shine individually. And it goes without saying (but I'll say it anyway) that Nicholas Briggs as the voices of the Cybermen was sublime. There's a particularly poignant moment in episode two when Nick really brought his A game – it's the first time a Cyberman has made me well up!"

SOME BIG Finish fans have made comments that Marc Platt's *Spare Parts*, an adventure based on the genesis of the Cybermen featuring the Fifth Doctor and Nyssa, already exists.

Writer David K Barnes explains: "*Spare Parts* is not only one of Big Finish's most successful early releases, but is a really good story in its own right. To reassure fans, not only is *Genesis of the Cybermen* a totally different story in almost every way – despite its subject matter – but I approached this very much as a lost story. For me, at least, it exists



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

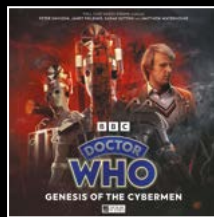
NICK REALLY BROUGHT HIS A GAME – IT'S THE FIRST TIME A CYBERMAN HAS MADE ME WELL UP!

DAVID O'MAHONY

outside continuity. So there are no mind-wipes and it has no bearing either on TV episode *Earthshock*." David O'Mahony adds: "When we first discussed adapting Gerry Davis's original idea there was a temptation to tie ourselves in knots with complicated ways of making the story fit with the canon timeline. **Lost Stories** are supposed to be offshoots of the main timeline thread and that is where the fun and freedom comes from. Rather than focussing on anything canon we focussed on honouring Gerry's original intention. "Obviously, with any origin story or any story that is shoehorned into

a timeline there will be discrepancies or just outright falsehoods that don't quite fit with what people already know. From the story *Spare Parts* and even the TV episode *The Tenth Planet* and other source material, we have to respectfully take some artistic licence. "*Genesis of the Cybermen* is not only a great story in the context of **Doctor Who** but it's also an interesting view into what could have been..." **VORTEX**

THE FIFTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES GENESIS OF THE CYBERMEN



■ RELEASED: MARCH 2025
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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PAUL DARROW YOU'RE HIM, AREN'T YOU?



TO CALL Paul Darrow an icon of British television is doing him a massive disservice. His four years as Kerr Avon in *Blake's 7* were just the tip of the iceberg in a career that encompassed theatre, television and film.

As well as playing the ruthless and calculating computer expert, Paul also appeared in *Coronation Street*, *Emergency Ward 10* and many other productions – including two guest appearances in *Doctor Who*.

Big Finish published Paul's autobiography, *You're Him, Aren't You?* in 2006, with an audiobook version following a decade later read by Paul himself.

Populated by familiar names and productions, Paul's story tells of his association with *Blake's 7* – how he was cast, his experiences of making the show, what has happened since and his memories

of Terry Nation, the cast and the crew. It also tells of his childhood, his time playing Elvis Presley and his near miss with James Bond.

Looking after the initial project was Sue Cowley, who went on to become a behind the scenes stalwart at Big Finish.

Sue says: "This all began with an apparently innocuous question from executive producer Jason Haigh-Ellery towards the end of 2004, 'Do you fancy reading the first draft of Paul's autobiography?' I was working for BBC Worldwide at the time, and amongst other things editing fiction zines for *Horizon*, the *Blake's 7* fan club. Since Jason and I had first met at a *Blake's 7* convention, he knew the series was close to my heart. 'Perhaps you could also do some fact checking and let me know what you think...?'

"So over the Christmas 2004 holidays I read Paul's manuscript and attempted to pass my extensive feedback to Jason. 'Ah,' he said. 'Do you think you could talk to Paul directly about this...?'

"And just like that, my role morphed into something far greater than anticipated. Several phone calls with Paul followed, initially awkward, and then a working lunch with Paul at The Criterion on Valentine's Day 2005, which remains one of my most cherished memories.

"It became obvious very quickly that when it came to writing, Paul was a one-and-done guy. He listened to my suggestions with good grace, agreeing with most if not all, but he wasn't keen on doing any rewrites. So we came to a compromise: he

would write an extra chapter about his time on *Doctor Who* and I'd shift things around to add structure to the overall narrative.

"As part of that process, I came up with the idea of using Avon quotes as the chapter names. In the end, there were only a couple which felt a bit bodged, and it was extremely gratifying to be able to find so many phrases that were the perfect fit.

"Paul signed off on the final edit and it was delivered to producer's assistant Ian Farrington in June 2005 – although it was another 12 months before the book was published.

"I had just experienced my first official work for Big Finish... little did I realise what the future would hold!"

The book was released to critical acclaim. In their review, *Sci-Fi Bulletin* said: "For a man best known for a character whose every line was a snarl, it turns out Darrow is a true gentleman. Or to put it another way, Avon may be Paul Darrow, but Paul Darrow is so much more than Avon."

And from *MassMovement*: "Even if you've never seen him, you've probably heard his voice. And what a voice it is. Sinister, sibilant and silky, like a cross between Shere Khan and a bar of Green and Black's." **VORTEX**

PAUL DARROW YOU'RE HIM, AREN'T YOU?



■ RELEASED: AUGUST 2016
■ FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/darrow 

Two of the Doctor's old friends are united with Professor River Song...



THE POWER OF THREE

WE KNOW that in the 21st century the Doctor's former companions Ace and Tegan are working with Kate Stewart at UNIT, as seen in the television special *The Power of the Doctor*.

But how did they come to be there? We're about to find out in the second volume of **The Death and Life of River Song: Ace and Tegan**.

Ace and Tegan have been plucked from their twenty-first century lives and stranded in 1860. But who is responsible,

and why is River Song mixing in nineteenth century society too?

Somebody is out to eliminate the three of them, as Ace and Tegan realise that this may not be their first meeting with River. Their lives are entangled, and to escape, somebody must pay the ultimate price...

There are four fantastic adventures in this set: *Castaways* by James Moran, *Driftwood* and *Dead Rising* both by Roland Moore and *The End* is the *Beginning* is

the End, also written by James.

Producer David Richardson explains: "This set is about worlds colliding. River and Ace. River and Tegan. Ace and Tegan. And then all of them together! Three characters caught up in events – created by one man – that may prove to be inescapable... yet with these three in his sights one might suspect that he hasn't got a chance! How lovely to get to lay a path that leads to *The Power of the Doctor* while playing



Above (l-r): Janet Fielding and Sophie Aldred

with the brilliant and lively character dynamics of this much-loved cast.”

Script editor Matt Fitton adds: “It was in mid-2023 that David Richardson came to me with the idea of River meeting Ace and Tegan – and particularly the post-Doctor versions. From what we saw on screen in *The Power of the Doctor*, it looked like the two of them had known each other for a while, so we thought it would be fun to explore how that relationship might have come about.

“We decided to pair Roland and James to write a couple of interlinked two-parters, which comprise an overall arc for the box set. We get to dip into the younger Ace and Tegan’s TARDIS travels, as well as seeing how those events have brought the older, wiser, present-day versions of the characters together. And their first meeting is in the most unlikely time and place! Bringing together Roland’s emotional storytelling and James’s

River and Ace. River and Tegan. Ace and Tegan. And then all of them together!

DAVID RICHARDSON

freewheeling madness makes for an especially timey-wimey series of events, which fit River like a glove.

“The 1980s companions work well with River. All three of them share a lot of character traits, being willing and able to stand up for themselves, not take any nonsense and stubbornly keen to do the right thing. But it was interesting to look at their differences too – in particular River’s moral ambiguity – so they are not always in agreement. And when they do clash, sparks most definitely fly!”

VORTEX ASKS the writers how exciting it was to be asked to write for River plus Ace and Tegan? James says: “Every time I create a story for Big Finish I feel like a competition winner, honestly, but this one achieved new, ludicrous levels of excitement! And because it was kicking off a new team-up range, that added another layer. If you had a wish list for who you’d want to cram into the same story, you probably wouldn’t even list these three characters because you’d assume it wouldn’t be possible. I’m so lucky that Big Finish keep trusting me to play in their section of the Whoniverse. My only worry, as ever, is that I’ll mess it up and never get asked back...”

“When Matt told me the hook for this box set, after I’d already had an excited freakout about River



Above (l-r): Zina Badran and Dempsey Bovell

Song, this was genuinely my email reply, copied and pasted below:

OH MY GOD

OH MY GOD MATT

ACE AND TEGAN OH MY GOD

“As you can see I was quite pleased!”

And Roland agrees: “Well, this box set was a lot of fun to write. To fill in the backstory of how River met Ace and Tegan, and also to show what happened after they were reunited on screen – that was really exciting.”

James continues: “Initially, Matt asked me if I’d be interested in



Above (l-r): Beth Chalmers, Kerrie Taylor, Janet Fielding and Alan Cox

writing two episodes of a new four-part **River** set, with a 'juicy hook'. I immediately said yes because at, 'Hello, River...' I was already sold! Then he hit me with the hook, which was having all three of these characters together, set sometime before *The Power of the Doctor* so we don't step on the toes of the TV show.

"After that, Roland, Matt and I had a Zoom call where we brainstormed possible ideas. I think Roland came up with the villain character and how to work him into all four episodes, then it turned to us having to figure out what all the pieces were and where they would go. The brief was fairly open, really. One of the trickiest things for me was making sure I didn't mess up River's continuity because her timeline is so complicated. I found a website listing her entire timeline in chronological order and read the whole thing, thinking it would help. And wow it really did *not* help, I still haven't quite recovered!"

Roland says: "I'd written for Ace before (in the *Short Trip Dead Woman Walking*) and it was a joy to write for her again. Tegan is one of my favourite companions and I was keen to let her loose in the story. And River is great

They all steal every single scene they're in, wrestling it back and forth from each other, over and over.

JAMES MORAN

fun. Their voices and characters are so distinct that it's tempting to just let them talk and spar for a couple of hours, but I knew I had to fit in two big race-against-time stories too!"

And James agrees: "This set is a genuine dream come true with three total legends and heroes of mine. They're SO much fun to write dialogue for, they *all* steal every single scene they're in, wrestling it back and forth from each other, over and over.

"On a personal note, I grew up watching Tegan and then Ace, they set the template for the modern companions – you can draw a direct line from them to River to Donna and so on. Tegan and Ace, and Janet

and Sophie's portrayals of them, had such a massive impact on me, and I'm so glad I got to write for them.

"I was at the recording and was able to tell them what it meant to me – actually I think I might have gone on a bit too long about it and scared them. They are so lovely and funny and kind. I didn't get to meet Alex, sadly, but River is one of the all-time best characters in **Doctor Who**. All three of them share similar DNA, and I'm genuinely giddy that I somehow got to write for them all."

WITH TWO writers working on a four-part tale, *Vortex* asks them how much they communicated during the creative process? Roland explains: "Being a **River Song** adventure, it's a time-bending story so James and I had a lot of conversations to ensure it all made sense. The discussions were a lot of fun – they meant we could find little details to plant in a particular episode – things that would seem inconsequential, but things that would pay off in a big way. It was great to bury all of that 'in plain sight'. The best creative



Above: Alex Kingston

conversations are the ones that start with, 'What about if this happens...?'

James adds: "Yes, we had to chat a lot! Writing the characters was infinitely fun but wrestling with the plot was much harder. As the plot developed, we swiftly realised it was extremely complicated to piece together, given that, when you take on anything involving River, linear time is merely a mild suggestion... We kept sending emails that sounded like, 'I've had to add a bit where this happens, does it contradict anything in your ep?' or 'Has your ep got a bit where this happens? If not, could you put one in, so I can refer back to it?' or 'Have you gone mad as well? It's too complex, shall we just run away?!'"

Turning to the storyline, James sums it up as: "Lots of twisty-turny-timey shenanigans, explosions, ghosts, explosions, floofy Victorian dresses, daring thefts, explosions, some very, very bad manners, arguments and maybe some explosions. I could tell you more but then I'd have to send River to kill you..."



Above (l-r): Simon Kane and Anna Grichlow

Roland points out: "We decided that James would write the 'present day' episodes and I'd write episodes featuring the younger versions of Tegan and Ace. This allowed us to keep track of the timelines in a way that meant it was easier to get our heads around. Not that we didn't have a lot of email correspondence along the lines of, 'If this has happened, would it be before this or after it?' The

four stories are intrinsically linked, despite being in different times.

"My episodes feature the first meetings of River with Ace (in *Driftwood*) and Tegan (in *Dead Rising*). They're self-contained adventures in a way – although they are also integral to what happens in the future for the three characters. Past and present are linked.

The stories also gave me a chance to introduce a couple of new monsters. The antagonist in *Driftwood* is particularly strange and odd, but in both stories it is up to Ace and Tegan to save the day, with help from River. As for the Doctor, well, you'll find out..."

When asked for their highlights of working on this series, James mentions one character in particular.

He tells *Vortex*: "Xonathan. Always, always Xonathan. I'll definitely be bringing back Xonathan one day. Apart from that, I really enjoyed writing the opening scene with River and the spaceship tour guide, and the first scene where all three of the leads are together and arguing. I could just write that and listen to them all day long. And getting to watch Sophie and Janet in the recording booth, tearing the roof off the studio with how brilliant and funny they are. And, and, and, everything else, all of it, it's all my favourite bit. What an absolute joy."


Roland concludes: "I enjoyed the first meeting moments for both Ace and River, and then Tegan and River. My other favourite moment is that both Ace and Tegan have their own unique responses to when River says, 'Spoilers'. That was fun. And being there for the Tegan recording and meeting Janet was just wonderful." **VORTEX**

THE DEATH AND LIFE OF RIVER SONG
AGE AND TEGAN



- RELEASED: MARCH 2025
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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THE FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES
RETURN WITH TOM BAKER
AT THE CONTROLS OF THE
TARDIS ONCE MORE...

GHOST SAFARI

THE FOURTH Doctor and Leela return for more adventures in time and space in their latest box set *The Hellwood Inheritance*. The pair find the ghosts of the pasts can linger everywhere – from a stately home in modern day England to a colony planet in the far distant future. Uncovering the truth is the only way of keeping everyone alive. And there's some real time travel involved as these adventures were recorded during the COVID-19 pandemic!

Producer David Richardson recalls: "It feels like *The Hellwood Inheritance* was recorded in another world, back in 2020, when everything was in lockdown but Big Finish kept on going, the urge

to tell stories too strong to resist!

"It's been a strange experience listening to the edits which betray nothing of that. Here are two polished and exciting stories that fit somewhere between the eras of Hinchcliffe and Williams, with Tom Baker and Louise Jameson timelessly recapturing the roles of the Fourth Doctor and Leela. It always feels special to have them back – two magnificent performers playing their hugely iconic **Doctor Who** roles. And this time they're facing killer ghosts and outer space sci-fi shenanigans in two highly contrasting tales."

The set's opener is the four-part *The Hellwood Inheritance* by Alan Barnes.

When the Doctor and Leela are chased through the countryside by

a headless knight it's only the start of their problems. Because they are in the grounds of Hellwood Manor – the first safari park for ghosts!

Mistaken for parapsychical investigators, the TARDIS team are shown the mysterious 'ghost catcher' device that's made the whole scheme possible. But it can't really be catching ghosts, can it? What's really happening in Hellwood?

Alan says: "I hate elevator pitches – the very idea of them is awful beyond belief. So it was to my horror that one day I found that one had popped into my head! It's *Jurassic Park*... but instead of dinosaurs, it's got ghosts! Actual, live, dead ghosts!

"I mean, how ridiculous is that? *Jurassic Park*, with ghosts? How



Above (l-r), Tom Baker and Louise Jameson

would that work? How do you catch ghosts and put them in a Longleat-style safari park? Seriously, how would that actually work? How would you prove it wasn't faked? And even if you could... would you have the ghosts behind electric fences? Would they be dangerous? Would you get tourists going round in cars on all-night day trips? Would they stop off at the gift shop afterwards to collect bumper stickers: I've seen the ghosts at Hellwood!

"So I started answering all those questions... and to my amazement it started to look like an outline."

The second story in the set is *The Memory Thieves* by Phil Mulryne.

The colony world of New Pasithea was peaceful for many years. But strange electric pulses started to be detected in its forests... and then they started to get stronger... and then people lost their memories...

Phil wrote this script around the time of the 2020 lockdown – did that come into the story at all? He tells *Vortex*: "Yes... maybe subconsciously! If memory serves (if it hasn't been thieved!) the brief was pretty open and we cycled through quite a few ideas before this one was chosen. We'd decided it would have to be something off-world, and I'm often

HOW DO YOU CATCH GHOSTS AND PUT THEM IN A LONGLEAT-STYLE SAFARI PARK? SERIOUSLY, HOW WOULD THAT ACTUALLY WORK?

ALAN BARNES

drawn to the atmospheric and mysterious first – that feeling even before any real plot or character. And so in this story we have a mysterious place with a mysterious threat no one really understands as yet.

"I find that memory is especially fascinating to explore. It's so integral to our sense of who we are and what we're about. So if bits of it go missing through an accident or illness then... are we still us? Or have we become someone else? Has our identity changed? Maybe that is a subconscious result of 2020, when so many people were trapped with only themselves, and their thoughts and memories..."

Phil enjoyed writing for the Doctor and Leela, saying: "The characters spark off each other so well with such lovely, in-built contrasts. There's the Doctor who's tremendous fun but ultimately rational and curious and peace-seeking. And Leela who's brave but impetuous, liable to strike first and ask questions later, and who's potentially superstitious. It was also fun to split them up and play with those different approaches. So for example in this story, the Doctor is carted off back to the main base but that leaves Leela stranded with a despairing scientist..."

By having colonial characters in a sci-fi setting, is that a good way to touch on the past whilst looking to the future? Phil says: "The idea definitely does rely on people landing somewhere new, wild and untamed, going into uncertainty and danger, and starting a new life. Which has been one of the mainstays of the human experience whatever people group we're talking about. I wish there'd been more room in the story to really delve into the world of the colony. I did consider who might go off to found a colony – in the past or the future. Who'd be essential for establishing it. Scientists? Medics? Farmers? What about soldiers, engineers, architects? Any artists?"

"A colony in danger is such a good platform to explore characters, because the life they've embarked on is so precarious. And there are certainly historical examples of colonies collapsing or imploding or turning on one another." **VORTEX**

THE FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES THE HELLWOOD INHERITANCE



■ RELEASED: MARCH 2025
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THE PATERNOSTER GANG
ARE SET TO TAKE THEIR
LAST STAND AGAINST
THE TRESPASSERS...



Stand and Deliver

THE PATERNOSTER Gang have had a hectic time over the course of *Trespassers*. Jenny's been kidnapped and replaced by a Zygon, with Madame Vastra and Strax slowly but surely discovering something was amiss. They've also had the Doctor popping by in different incarnations, which has only added to their confusion.

The fourth and concluding box set in the series, *Last Stand*, features three new adventures – *I Married a Zygon* by Alan Ronald, *A Passion*

for Fashion by Helen Goldwyn and *The Final Poblom* by Lauren Mooney and Stewart Pringle.

Producer David Richardson says: "It's the finale! We're about to reach the end of this 12-episode 'season' of **The Paternoster Gang** and we're going to end with a bang as Madame Vastra confronts her shapeshifting nemesis. Some familiar faces return. Miss Faversham, the jilted admirer of Dr John Smith, has a new man in her life, while the Eighth Doctor is back on Earth to

attend a momentous event. Yet, as everyone is about to discover, they all have a huge Poblom..."

Script editor Matt continues: "We are into the final of this arc and the trespassers of Paternoster Row have been revealed – and it's the Gang themselves!

"We have discovered that Vastra, Jenny and Strax are living in a house once occupied by a certain Zygon – and he is keen to get back what was taken from him. Brottag has set himself up as Madame



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

Vastra's nemesis, organising the criminal underworld against her and becoming a Moriarty figure to her Holmesian detective."

Dan Starkey, playing Strax says of the set: "Yes, the Paternosters meet their arch enemy! Again! An operatic end to our face-swapping series of misadventures! Watch the feathers fly and reckonings get reckoned!"

I Married a Zygon by Alan Ronald opens the set. Matt reveals: "In *I Married a Zygon*, Vastra is keen to track down their elusive foe and sees shapeshifters in every corner. I brought in Al to write this one as he had just completed a first script for me which had a lovely sense of humour and cracking dialogue, so I thought he'd be a perfect fit for this series. I asked him to bring back Miss Faversham

I COULDN'T HAVE BEEN HAPPIER BY HOW SILLY IT SOUNDED!

AL RONALD

from the first box set and put her through the wringer once again."

Al tells *Vortex*: "It was a joyous day when Matt asked me to work on a **Paternoster** adventure. Matt seemed to enjoy the comedic style of my other script, plus my comedy partner Cy Henty and I – collectively known as The Electric Head – recently won the Big Finish Comedy Playhouse competition/

Galton & Simpson Godfathers of Comedy award. So I think, given the amount of comedy required in **The Paternoster Gang**, that all contributed to the commission.

"I loved the Paternoster Gang on TV and had listened to some of the earlier Big Finish adventures, but relished catching up with the more recent ones in preparation. The dynamic and the setting are always brilliant fun, and I love how Big Finish really expands on all of that, using the period setting so evocatively on audio."

Recalling his brief, Al says:

"Matt was very amused at the idea for the title – *I Married a Zygon* – and I couldn't have been happier by how silly it sounded!

"He also wanted me to bring back the Miss Faversham character who had been a hit in Lisa McMullin's story: *Till Death Us Do Part*. Lisa has done an amazing job creating that character and Beth Chalmers performs it so utterly brilliantly, that I was initially quite nervous (but thrilled) to have a go at writing for her myself. I think it was mainly those two elements that were in the brief, and I had a blank page from there.

"*I Married a Zygon* is a whodunnit in a haunted house with a shapeshifter. Jenny teams up with Harriet Cross, a ghost hunter who doesn't believe in ghosts; Strax develops a violent relationship with another butler named Randolph; and Madame Vastra has *Zygons* on the brain. Hopefully it is funny, exciting and just a little bit scary! It really has been a joy to work on and I hope it is not the last! Sontar-Ha!"

THE SECOND adventure, *A Passion for Fashion*, takes a look into a trend that other Big Finish adventures set in this era haven't previously explored.

Matt reveals: "In *A Passion for Fashion*, Helen was keen to tell a story of exploitation and one-upmanship in the burgeoning world of Victorian fashion, where not everyone is as they appear. This is a lovely story with some poignant moments as well as some menacing ones for Jenny and Vastra, in particular."

Helen tells *Vortex*: "It's always fun to enter into a new **Doctor Who** world as you learn so much in the research at the start. I've worked

with Madame Vastra, Jenny and Strax before as a director in a number of other episodes, but to come into **The Paternoster Gang** setting as a writer is quite a different thing.

“For starters, I needed to know more about their history. How did this trio come to be working together? How did Madame Vastra and Jenny meet and marry? How do they refer to each other? What have they all

bans on the plumage trade.

“Having said that, despite being inspired by a woman who fought against societal norms, the character in my script who is doing the same thing in her own way actually turns out to be the villain. Ethel is talented and ambitious, with very few opportunities available to her, so she contrives to create some using deception and threat.

Naturally, ‘that way danger lies’ and I’m afraid she meets a sticky end. I rather wish I could have given her a more positive outcome but she’d crossed the line from self-interest into megalomania, so she had to go!

“The most enjoyable part of writing the script was finding ways to bring the era to life and a lot of that came from my research into Victorian society and terminology. I also did lots of research into how hats were made and what was fashionable at the time.”



Above (l-r): Shogo Miyakita, Lara Leman, Beth Chalmers and Nicholas Briggs

been through to arrive at this point?

“Thankfully, as always with these various series, Matt was able to give me a brilliant ‘series bible’ which gave me answers to a lot of questions and brought me up to speed with the episodes that had gone before.”

Helen was delighted to look at the issue of fashion in her script. She explains: “I had an idea years ago about doing a story about hat-making in Victorian times as I’d read an article about the activist/society lady Emily Williamson who fought to change the plumage industry when she realised how many birds were being killed for the sake of their feathers. She became a co-founder of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, which eventually (after many struggles) managed to implement



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

THE FINAL *Poblom* by Stewart Pringle and Lauren Mooney brings this current series to an end. Matt says: “I asked Lauren and Stewart to return as they did such a great job with their previous **Paternoster** story, getting the humour and the Gang spot on. As befits a final confrontation between a great detective and their nemesis, there is a standoff beside a swirling maelstrom – huge stakes for everyone, and a certain Doctor is involved. It’s an epic finale to this set, playing to the strengths of each member of the gang while testing them to the limit. Will **Paternoster Row** ever be the same again?”

Vortex asks the husband and wife writing team how exciting it was to write a box set and series conclusion in **Paternoster** world.

Stewart says: “We were really delighted to be asked to wrap up this set. We had a great time writing *Gentlemen Thieves* and really love the **Paternosters** – they’re the closest thing to pure comedy that we get to write, in any part of our careers really, and that’s so liberating. It was a great honour.”

Lauren agrees: “We love to make really staggeringly stupid jokes and they seem to have a place in **The Paternoster Gang**. Writing for these actors is such a joy. They really know the rhythms, not only of comedy, but of these characters and of each other as performers. It’s a total gift. Fingers crossed we get to do more some time, if only so we can keep our very *stupidest* jokes out of our other scripts...”

Stewart sums up their writing brief: “Wrap up the whole 12-hour **Trespassers** arc in 60 exciting minutes, more or less! It’s the final battle for the **Paternoster Gang**, for



Above (l-r): Kammy Darweish, Dan Starkey, Susan Harrison, Catrin Stewart, Neve McIntosh and John Ramm

their homes and for their lives so we had to make it a good one. We wanted to take these characters to their lowest ebb, their darkest hour. You want to do justice to these characters but you also want to tell a funny, thrilling adventure in its own right.”

Lauren adds: “There’s a touch of the Holmes and Moriarty in Vastra’s relationship with Brottac, so we wanted to pay that off with an homage to Holmes’s final battle with Moriarty in *The Final Problem*. You see where this is going!

“Stew was on a train, rereading the story for inspiration, and then texted to say he thought we should call the story *The Final Poblom*, about the last surviving member of an intergalactic race of Pobloms, and the whole thing spiralled very, very stupidly from there. I initially replied to say, ‘No’ and, ‘We will be arrested’, but seemingly came round to the idea quite fast! There’s some fun surprises in there so I don’t want to say much more except that

THEY’RE THE CLOSEST THING TO PURE COMEDY THAT WE GET TO WRITE...

STEWART PRINGLE

if you like that rubbish joke, you will probably like the script. And if you didn’t, hopefully you’ll get something out of the other elements (the acting, the sound design, etc).

Stewart says: “This is maybe the only story we’ve ever written where we came up with the title first and wrote the story to fit – so I guess my highlight is that we somehow got away with it!”

And Lauren concludes: “My best joke was about an alcoholic chimney sweep, and it was very reasonably

cut, but I’m looking forward to using it when we drop *Paternoster After Dark*, I guess?! My highlight is probably Stew coming up with the concept, which I found so funny that I had to sit down on a bench in Kings Cross to recover!” **VORTEX**

THE PATERNOSTER GANG LAST STAND



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NEW CHALLENGES AND OLD FOES
AWAIT SUSAN AND THE WAR DOCTOR...

A FAMILY AT WAR

THE WAR Doctor has been pulled out of his era and brought back to Gallifrey at an earlier point in the Time War. And, it's fair to say, his granddaughter Susan isn't particularly impressed with this new incarnation of her grandfather after their adventures in *Susan's War Family Ties*.

Susan's War now reaches its third box set with two more adventures in *Grandfather Time*.

Gallifrey is using the skills of every *Time Lord* at their disposal – and

Cardinal Rasmus is not above bending the rules to gain an agent from the future. Susan is assigned alongside the War Doctor to keep him in line. But if he is no longer the Doctor – is he still her grandfather?

Producer Heather Challands says: “The relationship between Susan and the War Doctor is key and it is really interesting for me that there is conflict. These are not the same people that they were, and there is a question on whether their goals and values even align anymore.

“They've both become people that the other wasn't expecting! It is so rewarding to be able to explore this new dynamic and yet also see glimpses of everything being as it's always been. He's her Grandfather! He loves her, and vice versa.”

The Last of the Kaleds by David Llewellyn is the first story in this set. *Using his deniable asset, Cardinal Rasmus takes Susan along with the War Doctor to a mysterious enclave to seek an alliance. As Susan comes to terms with her grandfather's future*

persona, they uncover plots and counter-plots. *Kaledon* is a splinter of *Skaro's* own distant timeline – but some histories are inevitable.

Heather explains: “*The Last of the Kaleds* is a great story. Rasmus is looking for something to use against the Daleks and thinks he’s found just the ticket.

“It is really fun because it gives a bit of a different perspective on the Dalek threat. It’s got politics, robot nuns and monsters hidden in plain sight! I’ve yet to hear the

where he was script editor, and says: “*The Voord Alliance* reunited me with Andrew which is always a pleasure. Andrew is great at creating these very action-packed, bombastic stories but with a personal stake and he’s done just that here. And it’s great to bring back the Voord. You wouldn’t think the Voord would be natural allies for Susan and the War Doctor, but in war, the enemy of my enemy...”

Andrew says: “In my brief, I was given the Daleks, Voord and Cardinal

“It was a very tantalising prospect, having both the Voord and Daleks. I’ve written for the Voord before, back in 2012 for *Domain of the Voord*, and they’re an interesting species to play around with. This became one of those timey-wimey stories which can be just so tricky to do. There’s foreshadowing of future events; we’ve got a planet that’s been invaded by the Voord; the Daleks turn up; and then Susan and the Doctor arrive.

“It’s tricky but when you’re writing, you have to remember this is a series where Susan is our lead character – this is Carole Ann’s series. We really want her to be driving things, but you’ve still got the Doctor there, so you have to manage that balance.

“Susan is a really strong character who knows her own mind, and now she won’t take any nonsense from the Doctor – she’ll happily put him in his place. That was made very clear in the first box set where Susan’s attitude is, ‘I’m very much doing what I want.’”

Heather concludes: “The studio sessions are a blur of fun. We recorded these episodes alongside the second box set *Family Ties*. Having Jonathon and Carole Ann recording their episodes in chronological order, hearing that journey for those characters from start to finish, as well as working with other lovely people was a real joy.

“You don’t often get to feel like you add something substantial to ‘canon’ or break new ground, but this did for me. It’s Susan, it’s the War Doctor, it’s Daleks! What’s not to love?” **VORTEX**



Above (l-r): Nicholas Briggs, Carole Ann Ford, Jonathon Carley, Charlotte Strevens, Damian Lynch and Steven Elder

edits but I’m very much looking forward, particularly, to hearing Steven Elder’s finished performance. He was wonderful in studio.”

THE SECOND adventure is *The Voord Alliance* by Andrew Smith which takes Susan and her grandfather to an encounter with not one but two familiar races from their travels together.

When a *Time Lord* operation goes wrong, Cardinal Rasmus sends in Susan and the War Doctor. The mission’s leader was his daughter, and he needs to know if she survived. On the ocean moon of Sarros Minor, they find unlikely allies against the Daleks. But how far can Susan really trust the Voord?

Heather previously worked with Andrew on **UNIT: Nemesis**,

IT’S GOT POLITICS, ROBOT NUNS AND MONSTERS HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT!

HEATHER CHALLANDS

Rasmus. So, here we have Susan and the Doctor being sent on a mission by Cardinal Rasmus. It’s not official *Time Lord* business as his daughter was part of a Gallifreyan commando unit that was sent there but disappeared. So, Rasmus has sent them to try and get his daughter back. There’s a personal angle to it, family is always such a good thing to write about.

SUSAN'S WAR
GRANDFATHER TIME



■ RELEASED: MARCH 2025
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Trouble and Strife

THERE'S TROUBLE FOR YVONNE HARTMAN AS SHE GOES ON AN UNDERCOVER MISSION THIS VALENTINE'S DAY...

WHEN YOU think about Torchwood as an organisation, or indeed as a series, it isn't the sort of place where there's much romance. After all, when you're saving the world from creatures emerging through the rift in Cardiff, battling invading hoards in London or encountering strange intelligences in the 1950s, there's not much time for sitting around and getting to know your co-workers (we'll make an exception for Ianto and Lisa).

New release **Torchwood: Inseparable** has been written by acclaimed horror authors Helen Marshall and Malcolm Devlín, writers of **Torchwood: The Hollow Choir**

which was released late last year.

Yvonne Hartman and Tommy have gone undercover at a couples' retreat. Will anyone buy their May–December romance?

Torchwood came looking for a mysterious energy signal and instead found themselves caught in a web of troubled lovers becoming ever closer. Perhaps what Yvonne and Tommy really need is time apart from each other?

Its guest cast includes Jaye Griffiths – better known to Big Finish fans as the Eighth Doctor's companion Audacity – who plays love guru Gloria. Producer James Goss says: "It's been a while since

we did a romance, and this is our maddest one yet! What are the ice cool leader of Torchwood, Yvonne Hartman and her septuagenarian handyman Tommy doing at a couple's retreat? What's really going on? And what is the couples' counsellor Gloria's terrible secret?

"*Inseparable* is another lovely script from Helen and Malcolm that starts off as a comedy and becomes an increasingly sticky bit of body horror."

Asked to describe the plot of *Inseparable*, Malcolm explains: "*Inseparable* is about two people who don't really like each other, who end up undercover at a bed and breakfast couples retreat which turns out to



Above (l-r): Tracy-Ann Oberman and Timothy Bentinck

be run by a crazed alien with plans of her own for all the couples.

“Originally the idea was that it was going to be about two people who actually liked each other, but then we changed it midway. The nice thing about romantic comedies is they mostly start off being about people who don’t like each other anyway, so our version is still a romantic comedy. We just cut out the third act where they get back together and like each other!”

Helen adds: “It’s a romantic comedy with very little romance in it. What I really like about writing for Tommy and Yvonne is they have a strange sort of work marriage, but they are completely different people. And when I say that they have a work marriage it’s not particularly equal, Yvonne is definitely in charge.

“Yvonne is ambitious. She’s willing to sacrifice those around her. She really doesn’t care who gets hurt by what she has planned. And Tommy, in my mind, is like the ‘on the brink of retirement cop’ you get in all the buddy police movies. You know he’s seen things. He is ready to get out, but he’s maybe

IT’S A ROMANTIC COMEDY WITH VERY LITTLE ROMANCE IN IT.

HELEN MARSHALL

also a little bit warmer and gentler than he lets on in the beginning.”

Helen enjoyed writing for Tommy, explaining: “I think he can find the humanity in Yvonne, and I think he’s also somebody who has seen her come up through the ranks. That gives him a different vantage point.

“When I was thinking about how these characters interact, what she brings out in him is a kind of protectiveness, because he can see through some of the facade of who she is presenting as. He can actually see the fragility that she might be hiding from other people.”

Malcom says: “I think Tommy has probably the more obvious tragic backstory. He has a wife that he’s

not allowed to see and so on. But Yvonne has a strange sort of fragile nature to her and she’s papering over things. She’s using her work to cover over the cracks, I suppose.”

Despite the story having some darkness, Helen says: “I’ve always really liked the advice from Jonathan Safran Foer, the literary writer, that if you have a sad story you have to tell it in a funny way. I think that really works in this case. *Inseparable* is about a sort of mad couples retreat, which allows you to work your way through things. It’s not normal at all. But we had so much fun writing it.

“I would like to say that that because we are a husband and wife writing team ourselves we imagined this is basically the worst place in the world to be trapped for a long weekend. Then we just took the horror stories building in our minds and put them together.

Malcolm points out: “We got married in 2019 and wrote the first draft of this the following year pretty much, right at the start of the pandemic. But it isn’t based on that!”

Helen says: “I was really interested in Jon Ronson’s books at the time, and he talks about primal scream workshops [where people just scream]. That really stuck in my mind and I thought it would work well on audio. Deep in my heart there’s a part of me that thinks that maybe it would work in the real world – I can imagine some of my colleagues and coworkers just screaming into the void!” **VORTEX**

TORCHWOOD
INSEPARABLE



■ RELEASED: FEBRUARY 2025
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TOP TORCHWOOD

At the end of 2024 I scrolled back through all my favourite stories from this year and I noticed a pattern. Most of them were **Torchwood** – the box sets and all the monthlies were truly excellent and showcased the best storytelling you guys offer. I know there is a massive fan demand for series eight, after the incredible *Among Us* series, and so is there hope we'll be seeing it sooner rather than later?

JACK RICHARDSON

Nick: Who knows the secret plans of Torchwood producer James Goss? Not me... but I suspect many delights will be on their way.

FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

I just wanted to drop you a line to say thanks to all at Big Finish for the recent Bernice Summerfield series, *The Eternity Club*. I've been a fan of Benny at Big Finish since the start. *The Eternity Club* backdrop, with its recurring cast, reminded me of those first days at the Braxiatel Collection. And what a cliffhanger –

huge congratulations to James Goss and Tim Foley for a brilliant series.

ALAN

Nick: I happen to know that there's some really exciting stuff on the way in the Eternity Club, Alan.

PIECES OF GR-EIGHT

It's very difficult to pick a favourite from the recent Eighth Doctor set *Deadly Strangers*, so instead I'll just say that I enjoyed them all hugely. It was great to hear more from Jaye Griffiths as Audacity and I hope there



are many more adventures for her to come. A real treat was *Puccini and the Doctor*. How wonderful after all this time that Matthew Jacobs got to write another story for the Eighth Doctor. I hope Matthew will write more for Big Finish in the future!

DAVID STEEL, LIBERAL PARTY HQ

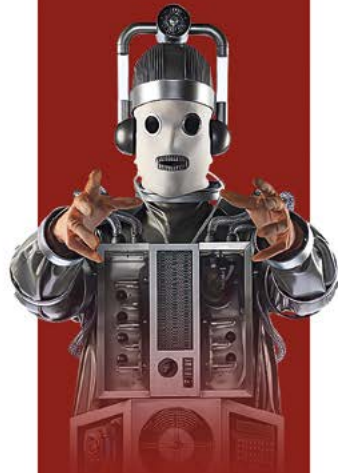
Nick: Liberal Party HQ indeed! That's a little David Steel joke that David and I share, folks. Always makes me chortle. Yes, I could hardly believe it when I saw Matthew's name on a story synopsis sent to me for approval. A lovely bit of TV history to have him write Doctor Who again.

TRIPOD TIME?

I came to Big Finish quite late. I confess I was one of those who cried, "But it's not canon." It took me several years to decide that (a) canon is flexible in the world of **Doctor Who**, and (b) canon isn't exclusive to the TV show. Now I'm catching up like mad. Also, there's a BBC show that I'd love Big Finish to adapt, but I've never suggested it as I thought it might be tricky for audio. But now that you're taking on **V** (yay by the way – one of my favourite 1980s shows that I'm currently rewatching), perhaps the time has come. The BBC only adapted the first two of John Christopher's *Tripods* novels, and on a budget lower than necessary, although as with **Doctor Who** that's half the fun of it. Would you be willing, or contractually able for that matter, to reboot the series for audio and complete the trilogy? *The Tripods* would fit in nicely with your other properties.

DAVID CANFIELD

Nick: Glad you absorbed us into your canon, David. As for The Tripods, people have been suggesting this ever since Big Finish began, but my understanding is that the rights are tied up elsewhere. From what I know, though, those books would adapt brilliantly for audio, especially since I'm a firm believer that, artistically speaking, anything can be achieved on audio! **VORTEX**



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VORTEX



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FINISH OF STORIES

THE POWER OF THREE

**TWO OF THE DOCTOR'S OLD
FRIENDS ARE UNITED WITH
PROFESSOR RIVER SONG...**

CYBER START

**ADAPTING THE LOST STORY
GENESIS OF THE CYBERMEN...**

