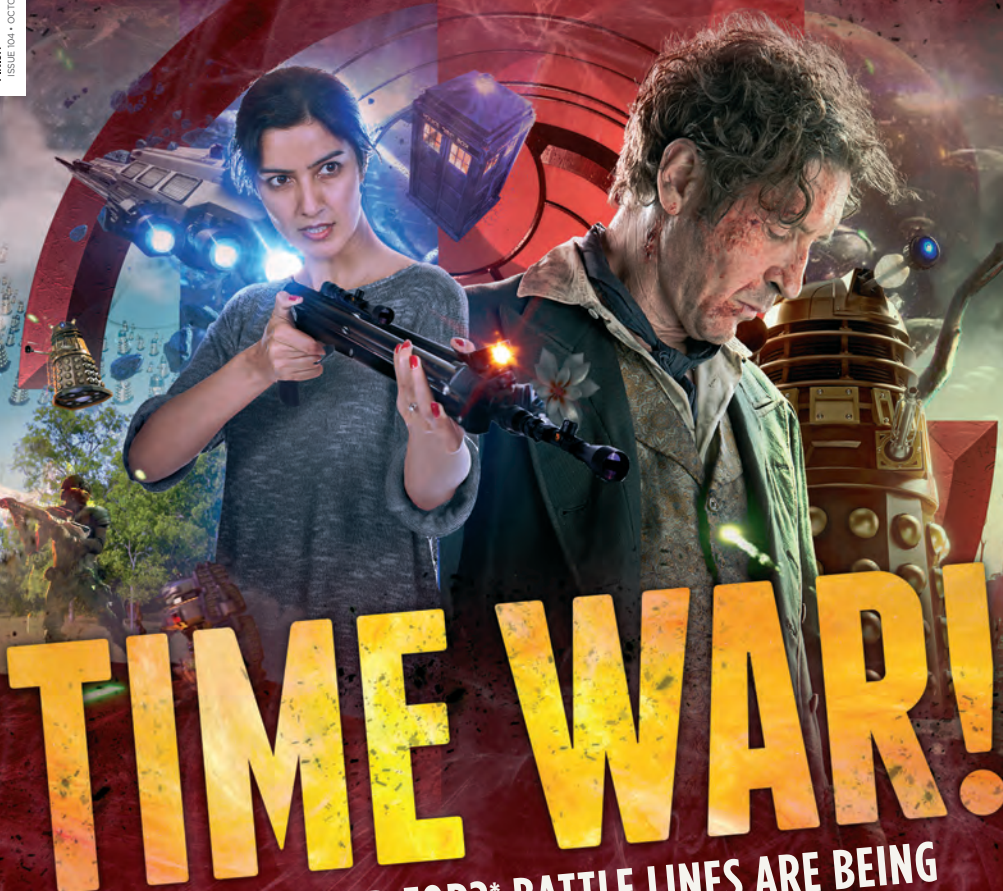


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# VORTEX

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ISSUE 104 • OCTOBER 2017



# TIME WAR!

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**A**FTER MONTHS of planning, we can cry havoc and let slip the dogs of (time) war! For years, as fans of **Doctor Who**, we've wondered how the Eighth Doctor would have managed in the Time War. We've already heard the War Doctor's escapades in his four Big Finish box sets, but now, this month, we get to hear just how his previous incarnation coped with the conflict.

There's always something rather exciting about a new era of **Doctor Who** beginning, as we're about to discover with the Time War sets. **Dark Eyes** and **Doom Coalition** were pretty clean slates for the Eighth Doctor, but the Time War series takes us into uncharted territory, with a universe in the early stages of the devastating temporal battle.

Thanks to *The Night of the Doctor* TV mini-episode, we know how

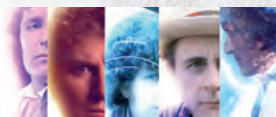
it ends for the Eighth Doctor and that he had avoided becoming involved in the war for a long time. Now, we'll discover just what this joyous, fun-loving Time Lord did.

It's a busy month, though, with lots more going on in the worlds of Big Finish. **Torchwood** continues with **Aliens Among Us 2** as Captain Jack and the team face the on-going conspiracy in Cardiff, **Blake's 7** makes a welcome return with a new box set, **Crossfire Part 1**, we see how the Sixth Doctor copes with two companions for the first time on audio in *The Behemoth*, and then a new **Dark Shadows** spin-off begins with *The Tony & Cassandra Mysteries*.

That's an awful lot of time I need to find to listen to it all – oh, what a first world problem to have!  
**KENNY**

## SNEAKPREVIEW

### Short Trips Rarities



**I**T'S TIME for another raid on the 'lost' archives of Big Finish, with the release of some more **Short Trips Rarities**.

This October sees five stories, previously only available to subscribers, being released to all.

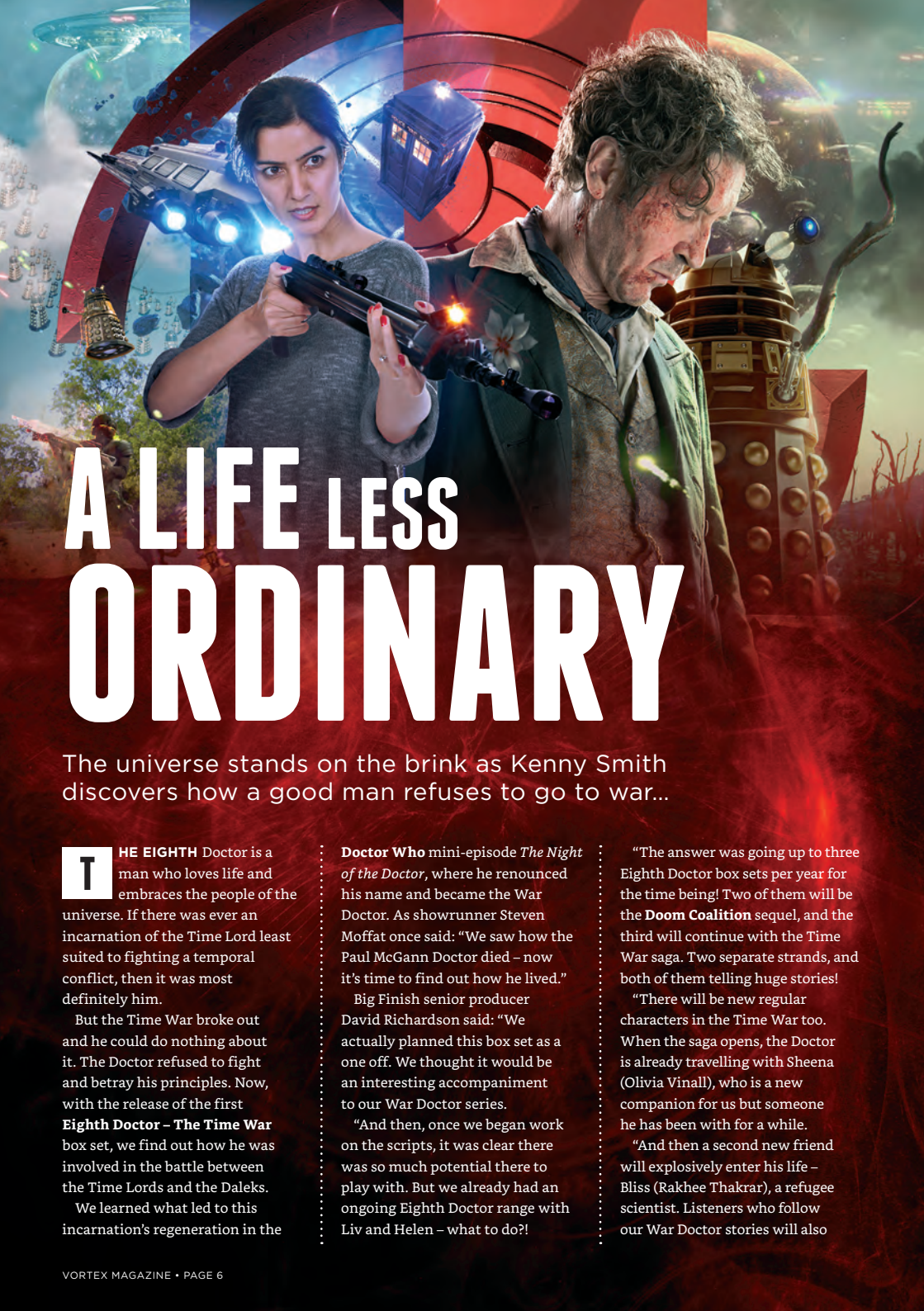
They are *The Switching* by Simon Guerrier, *Twilight's End* by Mark Wright and Cavan Scott, *Waiting for Gadot* by John Dorney, *Intuition* by Rob Nisbet and *The Young Lions* by Alice Cavender.

Making the stories available again has been a joy for **Short Trips** producer Ian Atkins. He says: "The subscriber **Short Trips** have a big place in my affections. They were my first gig at Big Finish, and were a great chance to work with newer writers in areas of **Doctor Who** history we can't easily access elsewhere in Big Finish.

"But the older **Trips** tend to be forgotten as people don't often buy a subscription say, three years back, and I feel bad for a writer whose work then sits there not being experienced and enjoyed – that's exactly what shouldn't happen.

"So we came up with the **Short Trips Rarities** range, which enables us to respect the window for subscribers plus eventually rolling out these little gems to the wider world.

"As with last year, we're now releasing another five titles, this time combining established Big Finish writers such as John Dorney, Simon Guerrier, Mark Wright and Cavan Scott with (at the time) newbies who've gone onto other things such as Rob Nisbet and Alice Cavender – and they are delighted they can at last get family and friends to buy their work and share the love!" **VORTEX**



# A LIFE LESS ORDINARY

The universe stands on the brink as Kenny Smith discovers how a good man refuses to go to war...

**T**HE EIGHTH Doctor is a man who loves life and embraces the people of the universe. If there was ever an incarnation of the Time Lord least suited to fighting a temporal conflict, then it was most definitely him.

But the Time War broke out and he could do nothing about it. The Doctor refused to fight and betray his principles. Now, with the release of the first **Eighth Doctor - The Time War** box set, we find out how he was involved in the battle between the Time Lords and the Daleks.

We learned what led to this incarnation's regeneration in the

**Doctor Who** mini-episode *The Night of the Doctor*, where he renounced his name and became the War Doctor. As showrunner Steven Moffat once said: "We saw how the Paul McGann Doctor died – now it's time to find out how he lived."

Big Finish senior producer David Richardson said: "We actually planned this box set as a one off. We thought it would be an interesting accompaniment to our War Doctor series.

"And then, once we began work on the scripts, it was clear there was so much potential there to play with. But we already had an ongoing Eighth Doctor range with Liv and Helen – what to do?!

"The answer was going up to three Eighth Doctor box sets per year for the time being! Two of them will be the **Doom Coalition** sequel, and the third will continue with the Time War saga. Two separate strands, and both of them telling huge stories!

"There will be new regular characters in the Time War too. When the saga opens, the Doctor is already travelling with Sheena (Olivia Vinall), who is a new companion for us but someone he has been with for a while.

"And then a second new friend will explosively enter his life – Bliss (Rakhee Thakrar), a refugee scientist. Listeners who follow our War Doctor stories will also

need no introduction to Ollistra (Jacqueline Pearce), here proving she has been a thorn in the Doctor's side for far more years than we might have imagined..."

Casting Olivia – who appeared in the TV episode *The Crimson*

Ken adds: "Rakhee was suggested by Matt. He'd actually come up with the idea for Bliss with Rakhee in mind.

"Unfortunately our recording dates are pretty inflexible so we can have people we know we'd

hit the ground running and we all had a brilliant time recording with her. She's a lot of fun."

**T**HE FIRST *Time War* set features four adventures, *The Starship of Theseus* by John Dorney, *Echoes of War* by Matt Fitton, *The Conscript* also by John, and *One Life* also by Matt.

Although *The Night of the Doctor* ran for under seven minutes, there was more than enough information in it for the writers to extrapolate the state of the universe and the attitudes of the 'little people' towards the combatants.

Matt says: "From the attitude Cass had towards the Doctor in *The Night of the Doctor*, we get an idea of the general view of the Time Lords, and that the Eighth Doctor has set himself apart from them – he doesn't want anything to do with them.

"This conflict is so huge, he feels it's beyond his capabilities to deal with, so he does what he usually does – he tries to help out and save as many people as he can, which is where we find him at the start of this box set. We touched on it in **Classic Doctors**, **New Monsters** and Volume One of **The Diary of River Song**.

"John and I discussed whether this is the Doctor's very first involvement in the Time War or whether he's been skirting round it for a while, but John has been very clever – you could read his script and it works either way – but this is the point where events catch up with him and he has to take action.

"He still has that spark and still wants to help, he wants to take Sheena around the universe as his companion, but at the same time, he doesn't realise that the universe isn't like that any more.

"We start to build up to that, that collision of the Doctor's values with where the universe is now. He hasn't got that freedom any more."

John adds: "I don't know if I changed the way I wrote the Doctor. He reacts to circumstance, and



Above (left to right): David Richardson, Sean Murray, John Dorney, David Ganly, Nicholas Briggs, Rakhee Thakrar, Hywel Morgan, Laurence Kennedy, Nimmy March and Matt Fitton

## “ WE ACTUALLY PLANNED THIS BOX SET AS A ONE OFF. ”

David Richardson

*Horror* – was a delight for director Ken Bentley.

He explains: "Olivia has been on my radar for some time. She's been enjoying a fantastic career on stage which unfortunately means she's rarely been available to record for us. This role was perfect for her so I decided to give it a try again this time. Luckily she managed to squeeze us in between filming dates."

Bliss is played by Rakhee Thakrar, better known as Shabnam Masood in **EastEnders**.

Writer Matt Fitton says: "Of the companions we meet in this set, Bliss is the more traditional kind. She joins him during the adventure, recognising that the Doctor is trying to do the right thing."



David Ganly and Nimmy March

ideally like for roles, but that doesn't always mean they'll be available on the scheduled studio days. Thankfully Rakhee was able to join us, and we couldn't be happier. She

his style and attitude are still the same, but there will be a degree to which different places, times and contexts will change him.

“That’s what the difference was – write the character and the situations, and you find he will automatically change.

“It’s a different approach to the same conflict. It’s definitely written differently to the War Doctor, and there’s other resonances. Hopefully, that will come across.”

**W**ORKING OUT the story content was something the writing pair enjoyed. John recalls: “I seem to remember that Matt and I had a meeting in Louise Jameson’s living room during the recording of Series Two of **The Omega Factor**. I think Louise was rehearsing a musical at the time, so we just sat down in the front room, bashing suggestions back and forward.

“We had ideas about what we could and couldn’t do, what the BBC wanted, and other things we could develop.

“The idea of what kind of story you can tell with a Doctor who’s only notionally involved in the Time War gives you an interesting starting point, and we settled on the idea of him helping refugees.

“There were actually a few ideas which we came up with which didn’t actually make it in there this time around.

“For *One Life*, I had an idea a few years ago and had kept a note of it, and it felt right to be part of this set. I’ve got a file on my computer called ‘**Doctor Who** Ideas’!

“I had a vague notion that started off with everything being very normal and then the Time War crashes into that. It was a one sentence line of a story, which might sustain an hour, but definitely not two, and I thought, OK, take it, and it will be a relatively traditional **Doctor Who** story until the Time War comes along.”



Directed By: Ken Bentley

Starring:

Paul McGann,  
Rakhee Thakrar,  
Jacqueline Pearce,  
Nicholas Briggs

Running time:  
300’ approx

## THE EIGHTH DOCTOR THE TIME WAR 1

OUT THIS MONTH

CD: £23.00, Download: £20.00

EXTRAS Bonus disc

**The Starship of Theseus**

by John Dorney

**Echoes of War**

by Matt Fitton

**The Conscript**

by Matt Fitton

**One Life**

by John Dorney



With the **Time War** series following on many years after the events of **Doom Coalition** and its imminent sequel, Matt confirms there is a connection to it, as well as Big Finish’s **The War Doctor** series.

He explains: “There’s a link in the form of Cardinal Ollistra, who takes it upon herself to make one last attempt to convince the Doctor to join up. She has a gut feeling that the Doctor is the man who can stop the Time War. We do see that in the relationship she has with the War Doctor, and eventually we learn she was proved right in the end!”



“There will be characters throughout these box sets that pop up again, and work on the second set is underway now.”

**J**OINING THE Doctor on his travels is Rakhee Thakrar as Bliss, a refugee scientist.

She reveals: “Getting to voice the role of Bliss alongside the Doctor is an absolute dream. She’s a character who I’d like to be more like; someone who puts aside her own fear to help others. I think Big Finish have created a great companion with Bliss, she’s incredibly bright but is not excluded from making mistakes





Above: Rakhee Thakrar • Below: Olivia Vinnal



“IT WAS GREAT TO WRITE UP A FAIRLY STANDARD, TRADITIONAL COMPANION AND THEN PUSH IT AND SEE WHERE IT WENT.”

John Dorney



and having a sense of humour. I find her very real, and she's a joy to play. I'm thoroughly excited to join the Big Finish *Doctor Who* team.”

Talking of Bliss and Sheena, John said: “They were good fun to write. I nominally created one, and Matt created another.

“It was great to write up a fairly standard, traditional companion and then push it and see where it went. I didn't have as much to do with Bliss, but she's an energetic, sparky character and you can get a lot of interesting material out of her.

“Rakhee is great fun, she came to the pub with us afterwards and we had a good time! She's become a part of the team.”

Ken adds: “I really enjoyed working with the cast. This was much more like casting a box set of *Survivors*, since the characters

pretty much appear across all four episodes. That made for a great week in studio with everybody really getting to spend time with each other. We had a lot of laughs and it reminded me much more of working in theatre, where you have time to enjoy the company of the people you're working with.”

He concludes: “This *Time War* series will have a very different feel to our previous outing with the Eighth Doctor. With *Doom Coalition* it was our intention to tell an epic story on a grand scale. But the *Time War* is a darker subject.

“We live in increasingly troubled times now. The horror of war we've known about for centuries, but the fallout from war – and how we respond – feels increasingly current. This is science fiction, but these stories won't just wallow in the spectacle of a war the like of which we've never seen, they'll explore the effect of war on the lives of the innocent.” **VORTEX**

Kenny Smith talks to the writers of the new Sixth Doctor trilogy, in which the Doctor is joined by Constance Clark and Flip Jackson.

# IT TAKES TWO

**T**HE SIXTH Doctor has been used to travelling on his own – or with just one companion – throughout his audio exploits. But this month kicks off a trilogy with a difference for him.

Following on from the events of *Quicksilver* – voted best 2016 monthly range release by readers of *Doctor Who Magazine* – the Doctor, Flip and Constance departed together giving the Sixth Doctor two companions for the first time on audio.

The first adventure in this new trilogy is *The Behemoth*, written by

Marc Platt. He reveals: “Colin Baker had asked to do a purely historical story – no aliens allowed – and that fitted neatly with a story I’d wanted to write about the slave trade triangle of the 18th century. It’s set in 1756, in the fashionable spa town of Bath, the playground of the upper classes, merchants and nobility; a place of gossip and intrigue that the Sixth Doctor makes himself entirely at home in. Meanwhile, along the road is the port of Bristol, one of the centres of the slave trade.

“The two different worlds are in easy collusion. The frivolous

whirl of high society, peopled by flamboyant characters out of some Sheridan-esque comedy, hides society’s dark underbelly as the first wheels of the industrial revolution start to turn. Everything is for sale, including human beings.

“Only two of the characters we meet are historically real: the mysterious Lady Clara and her Dutch Captain escort. They are bizarrely perfect **Doctor Who** characters, whose touring round 18th century Europe is well-documented. I’ve wanted to use them for years.”

The next trip through time and space is *The Middle*, written by Chris Chapman. He reveals: "In *The Middle*, the Doctor, Flip and Constance arrive in a place called Formicia. It's Constance's birthday and she'd rather not make a fuss – but Flip has

... was an indomitable 94 year old, still driving, still enjoying a massive social life and all of his faculties, and I guess I was thinking a lot about what different generations are capable of, and how we might underestimate them."



Above (left to right): Miranda Raison, Colin Baker and Lisa Greenwood

## “COLIN BAKER HAD ASKED TO DO A PURELY HISTORICAL STORY – NO ALIENS ALLOWED.”

Marc Platt

other ideas. They find themselves in a supremely pampered city with some very strange attitudes towards ageing. The trio are scanned and Flip is deemed to be part of 'The Beginning', Constance 'The Middle' and the Doctor sends the readings crazy and is told he is 'The End'. This is not good news!

"This is my second script for Big Finish after *The Memory Bank* and it was a chance to really cut loose with a four-part adventure – far more time to flesh out the characters and location, which was a real thrill. I love cliffhangers in *Doctor Who*, so it was great to be able to play with three of them!

"It was also a chance to sort-of write about my grandfather, who I was spending a lot of time with during the writing of the story. He

The trilogy concludes with *Static*, by Jonathan Morris. Jonny tells Vortex: "It's set in a bleak and miserable caravan park in the middle of nowhere, around the end of the 1970s. The site is managed by a standoffish old man called Percy Till and the only guests are a young couple, Andy and Joanna, who are haunted by a traumatic accident.

"The Doctor, Constance and Flip arrive, the TARDIS having detected some temporal interference, and they learn that the site holds a dark secret, a secret stretching back to the Second World War... It's (hopefully) very spooky and very scary; all about atmosphere and suspense!"

**T** HE WRITERS all enjoyed the chance to write around the contrast between 1940s

Constance and 20-something Flip.

Marc explains: "I love this pairing. Their characters are very chalk and cheese, which is great to write. They were born about 65 years apart from totally different backgrounds, and in theory shouldn't get on; Constance with her meticulous cut-glass accent and considered ways, against Flip's impulsive tell it like it is street style.

"But of course they do bond, united in looking after and putting up with the Doctor in all his infinite variety. And since neither of them are TV companions, it allows the writing to be much freer, without having to worry about keeping them in line with TV adventures yet to come."

Chris agrees: "Writing for Constance and Flip was great fun. I only had *Quicksilver* as a reference for their new relationship and how they are with the Doctor, but I found that was a really clear template. I love that they're not bitchy to each other, that they are entertained, I think, by their differences. They make a great combination so it was a shame that I needed to split them up by the end of episode one!"

Jonny is, of course, the creator of Flip. How did he find writing for Constance alongside Flip, giving them both lots to do, without being biased in Flip's favour?

He grins: "I don't really think of Flip as my creation any more. I just happened to write her first two stories. She's taken on a life of her own, thanks to other writers and Lisa Greenwood.

"The trick, if it is a trick, is to play to the character's differences. Flip is contemporary, instinctive, spontaneous, while Constance is from the 1940s, cautious and analytical. So even if they are placed in the same situation, their reactions will be very different." **VORTEX**

### THE BEHEMOTH IS OUT THIS MONTH

CD: £14.99 • Download: £12.99

**EXTRAS** Interviews



# AWAY WITH A MANGER

Everything continues to change in Cardiff this month, as Kenny Smith finds out how Series Five of *Torchwood* continues...

**T**ORCHWOOD DOESN'T have one particular person embodying their regular arch enemy, given that they are currently fighting the on-going plans of the Committee.

But there is a shadowy figure that they've encountered on a couple of occasions – the mysterious Bilis Manger, who managed to release Abaddon in the first series finale.

Now, the official fifth season continues this month, with the release of the second set of *Aliens Among Us*, comprising *Love Rat* by

Christopher Cooper, *A Kill to a View* by Mac Rogers, *Zero Hour* by Janine H Jones and *The Empty Hand* by Tim Foley.

Producer James Goss reveals: "Bilis is such an exciting character – Cath Tregenna's creation was such a vital part of the first series of **Torchwood**, and Murray Melvin managed to be both sinister and utterly enigmatic.

"What better way of reassuring people that this really was **Torchwood** than having Bilis Manger turn up as the manager of Cardiff's most luxurious new

apartment complex? And what could possibly go wrong?!"

Director Scott Handcock adds: "Bilis is absolutely a different kind of villain, particularly within the world of **Torchwood**. He's very still and enigmatic. He bides his time and uses it to great effect.

"So many villains have grand schemes that rely on a single instant, whereas with Bilis, you get the sense that his exploits cover a far larger period, and are so intricate they all spin off and play into one another to achieve



Above: Paul Clayton and Ramon Tikaram • Below left: Alexandria Riley • Below right: Murray Melvin

“JACK IS TRICKY, AS THERE IS A BIG TEMPTATION TO GO OVERBOARD WITH THE JACK-ISMS.” Christopher Cooper



his ultimate goal. We know so little about Bilis too, it's hard to get a handle on what his motivations are. Yes, he's sinister, and he's absolutely Torchwood's adversary on screen, but there's always that possibility he's looking at a much bigger



picture and striving for something ultimately better...”

Bilis is a villain with a difference as he's not running around armed to the teeth with different weapons. He's elderly, and, in Scott's word, 'still'. Scott continues: “It's

interesting that you use the word *elderly*, as I don't think of Bilis as being old in that sense, but, yes, I suppose he is...

“Murray was an absolute dream to work with. He'd prepped the script, knew the character inside-out, understood all the references, and had an effortless twinkle both in the green room and in studio. We're very lucky that actors of his calibre have so much love for **Torchwood** over a decade on!”

**I**N **LOVE** *Rat*, the first story in the set written by Christopher Cooper, Captain Jack Harkness is dead, and that's the simplest thing that's happened to him in the last few days!

Chris tells *Vortex*: “James and Scott are both very clear in what they think **Torchwood** is, and where they want to take it, and their series bible was a great place to start. Their **Torchwood** is very grounded, despite all the alien anarchy, and they wanted Cardiff to feel real, which definitely



informed the story I wanted to tell. And there had to be a weight to events and consequences.

“Jack is tricky, as there is a big temptation to go overboard with the Jack-isms, the banter and the innuendo. If you're not careful,

he can drift that way, but I kind of had some licence to go there in *Love Rat*, as Jack isn't himself. This is extreme Jack, from the moment he comes back to life in a morgue and immediately makes a move on Tyler. But it



## TORCHWOOD ALIENS AMONG US 2

OUT THIS MONTH

CD: £28.00, Download: £25.00

Directed By:  
**Scott Handcock**

Starring:  
**John Barrowman,  
Kai Owen, Tom Price,  
Eve Myles**

Running time:  
**260' approx**

**Love Rat**  
by Christopher Cooper

**A Kill to a View**  
by Mac Rogers

**Zero Hour**  
by Janine H Jones

**The Empty Hand**  
by Tim Foley

## “I WANTED TO WRITE A VERY DOMESTIC STORY AGAINST THIS BACKDROP OF ALIEN WEIRDNESS.”

Christopher Cooper

isn't his fault. Not really. Well, a bit." Chris adds: "I wanted to write a very domestic story against this backdrop of alien weirdness, and the larger arc was really useful in setting up an ecosystem, if you like, in which my story could take place.

"The advantage of being episode one of four, and following on from the big finale of the previous box set, was that I could dial things down for my little domestic tale and leave room for the other three stories to ramp up the action again. The larger story arc is there, and things are set up that will be paid off in the upcoming episodes, but *Love Rat*, I hope, gives the audience a moment to pause for thought before events spiral out of control."



**T**HE STORY continues with *A Kill to a View* where Ritz Towers is a luxury tower block so exclusive not even aliens can get a place there, but the building has more tenants than it has flats – and

there is a very mysterious caretaker; *Zero Hour*, where Deliverables have created thousands of jobs, to deliver post, packages and meals; and *The Empty Hand*, where an innocent refugee has been shot point-blank on the streets of Cardiff by Sergeant Andy Davidson. It's the end of Torchwood as we know it.

**T**HE FIRST box set went down well with fans and reviewers alike, and James adds: "We're stunned and delighted at the reaction – **Torchwood** fans briefly broke the Big Finish server, which is always a good sign that a thing has been popular, but the amount of nice comments, constructive criticism, speculation and sheer enthusiasm has been great. Tumblr contains lists of questions which are amazing, like, will we ever find out Mr Colchester's first name? And who is the person who is coming back from the dead?" **VORTEX**

# VORTEXMAIL

Email: [feedback@bigfinish.com](mailto:feedback@bigfinish.com) and remember to put 'Vortex Mail' as the subject...



## FIRST CLASS

A quick question in the light of the very exciting news about **The First Doctor Adventures** featuring David Bradley: will the release of this series have any affect on **The Early Adventures** featuring the First Doctor? I hope not as **The Early Adventures** is one of my favourite Big Finish ranges!

## DAVID STEEL

*Nick: They won't affect those releases at all. This is just something additional. The actors in our new First Doctor adventures aren't really impersonating the original performances. This is just another take on it, in the light of An Adventure in Space and Time. We actually planned this late last year, long before we knew of David Bradley's return in Twice Upon a Time.*

## CHARLEY IS OUR DARLING

First of all I want to thank you, Big Finish, for making this terrible time (of the series hiatus) a lot better with all of the amazing **Doctor Who** releases! I have two questions: Will the

audio series **Charlotte Pollard** have a third box set? I really want to know what happens next to Charley! And is it possible for us to have audio adventures of the Fifth Doctor with Will and Jane, from the TV story *The Awakening*? Their travels are a gap in the show that have never been explored in any media.

I would love to know what adventures they had!

## ANDERSON ESTEVAM LOPES

*Nick: No plans for Will and Jane, although that's a lovely idea. Charley is definitely coming back for another series. We love Charley. I'm looking at some great scripts for it right now.*



## A NEW COMPANION

I would like to know if there are any plans for another **Big Finish Companion** book. The last two were great.

## MICHAEL PARSONS

*Nick: We do indeed have very exciting plans.*

## SHORT STORY TIME

I know that Big Finish's novel adaptation range has (sadly) come to an end, but I was wondering if there was any chance that, having adapted both Russell T Davies and Mark Gatiss's first **Doctor Who** stories for audio, would you consider a dramatisation of *Continuity Errors*, the short story that was Steven Moffat's first published **Doctor Who** work in a *Decalog*? I'd love to hear Sylvester McCoy bring it to life.

## KJ ROSE

*Nick: Yes, we've thought about this many times. Something worth my looking into again.*

## WHO WOULD BELIEVE IT?

I am relistening to *Kingdom of the Dead* – great stuff and will follow through with *Blood Lust*. Can't wait for the next story in the **Dark Shadows** saga. But what I really am writing about is **Torchwood**. Although I like the premise, I have to admit I've never been a big **Torchwood** fan – but **Aliens Among Us Part One** totally changed that. I love, love, love the two new characters and that the Hub is the base. I am totally into the stories and the situations. Thank you! Can't wait for Parts Two and Three!

## CHARLES MENTO

*Nick: So glad we could finally win you over, Charles. What we like and dislike is all very personal, isn't it? And sometimes it can change, which is great. VORTEX*



# FIRED UP

It's standard by four, as Kenny Smith discovers the Liberator is back for a quartet of new tales.

**B** LAKE'S 7 returns with more great adventures in *Crossfire*, a new series of linked box sets.

Featuring four brand-new full-cast episodes set during the third season of the TV series, this first release contains *Paradise Lost* by Steve Lyons, *True Believers* by Simon Clark, *Resurgence* by Mark Wright and *Fearless* by David Bryher.

Overseeing the set as producer and script editor is John Ainsworth.

He explains: "With *Crossfire*, all our episodes will now be chronological, set in the same time period at the very end of the third TV series – between the episodes *Death Watch* and *Terminal*. *Crossfire* is comprised of three box sets,

each containing four episodes, so together they will form a 'season' of 12 stories, just one short of the original TV seasons.

"Perhaps most similar to the second TV season, *Crossfire* will have a story arc that will build to a climax, but each episode will tell its own story with some episodes being completely stand alone."



Big Finish followers will be familiar with the writers of these adventures.

John says: "Steve Lyons was an easy choice to write the opening episode of *Crossfire*, and he'll be returning to write two further key arc-related episodes later in the season. We are picking up on some of the ideas that Steve has already introduced in some of



his previous **Blake's 7** scripts – principally the Old President, as played by Hugh Fraser.

"Simon Clark is new to **Blake's 7**, but has written episodes for Big



## BLAKE'S 7 CROSSFIRE PART 1

OUT THIS MONTH

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EXTRAS Bonus disc

Directed By:  
John Ainsworth, Nigel Fairs

Written By:  
Steve Lyons, Simon Clark,  
Mark Wright, David Bryher

Running time: 240' approx

Starring:  
Paul Darrow,  
Jan Chappell,  
Michael Keating,  
Steven Pacey,  
Jacqueline Pearce,  
Yasmin Bannerman

“WHEN I READ THE LINE  
'SUPPRESSION OF RELIGION'  
SOMETHING REALLY POPPED  
OUT AT ME!”

Simon Clark

Finish's **Survivors** series, as well as adapting his own novel, *Night of the Triffids*, which I directed. I'm keen to bring in new authors and am deliberately including at least one episode in each box set that is a bit more experimental, for want of a better word, much like the Tanith Lee episodes were in the TV series.”

Simon adds: “In order to encourage the writer to give free reign to their imagination, John astutely listed possible jumping-off points for stories, and when I read the line ‘suppression of religion’ something really popped out at me! It immediately occurred to me that due to the Federation’s suppression of religion this would lead to new, secret cults springing up. I started thinking about all those exotic gods worshipped in secret in the catacombs beneath Rome

during the time of the Caesars – a time when followers of banned religions were likely to be fed to lions in the arena!

“John liked that initial pitch and I developed the story around Cally, as this one seemed a natural fit for her as she is the most spiritual in nature of the **Blake's 7** crew.”

John continues: “Mark Wright has written quite a bit of **Blake's 7** before, and is a very safe pair of hands as he knows the series and the characters intimately. *Resurgence* is likely to be something of a fan-pleasing episode, I think.

“David Bryher is new to **Blake's 7** as a writer, but he knows it very well and has a good grasp of the characters and their rhythms of speech. *Fearless* is a good episode for Vila, who we see a different side of.” **VORTEX**



## Kenny Smith finds out about the making of Big Finish's second Shakespearian production...

**B**IG FINISH'S range of Classics adds its second Shakespearian release to the fold next month, with the release of *King Lear*.

Leaving his Dalek casing, Nicholas Pegg adapted the play for audio. He says: "The initial decision to do *King Lear* came from David Richardson. Barnaby was signed up to direct the production, and he knew that I'm something of a Shakespeare scholar, so he kindly recommended me to take on the job of adapting the play for the audio medium."

For those who don't know the story, how would Nick sum it up? He grins: "That's really difficult.

Like all of Shakespeare's plays, *King Lear* is about almost everything! It's a play that is still hugely topical and relevant today. But to sum it up in one line? Okay... The old man in charge has a tantrum when his youngest daughter speaks truth to power, resulting in the entire fabric of society being ripped to shreds and spiralling into treachery, murder, madness and war. How about that?"

Nick admits that adapting the play wasn't a straightforward matter. He explains: "I had two distinct tasks. First of all, I had to decide which version of the text we were going to use. There are

two principal surviving versions of *King Lear*: the original one dates from 1605, and then there is a revised text from 1610. Many of the scenes are almost identical, but there are certain passages and scenes which are unique to one version or the other.

"Up until surprisingly recently, editors and theatre directors would often just 'pick and mix' whichever scenes they fancied from the two versions, but nowadays this is increasingly frowned upon – it's not what Shakespeare intended – it's a bit like trying to include two alternative endings to a film.

"By the way, let's just demolish that peculiar myth, which a lot of people seem to believe, that we don't know very much about William Shakespeare himself.

It's absolute nonsense. Thanks to all the documentation which survives connected with his professional commitments, a huge amount is known about Shakespeare. And don't get me started on all that cranky codswallop about him not being the author of his plays...

"So anyway, getting back to the point, one of the many things

from the earlier version were able to assist us in the name of audio clarity. That was my second task: making sure that the play makes sense on audio. A stage play is a visual thing and occasionally I had to contend with the fact that we can't see what's going on. In most cases this simply meant adding a multitude of stage directions and sound effects."

“ I HAD TO CONTEND WITH THE FACT THAT WE CAN'T SEE WHAT'S GOING ON! ”

Nicholas Pegg



Above (left to right): Barnaby Edwards, Lisa Bowerman, Ray Fearon, Louise Jameson, Nicholas Pegg, Trevor Cooper, David Warner, Tony Millan and Raymond Coulthard

that we know for certain about **King Lear** is that the 1610 text was Shakespeare's own revision – the 'author's cut', if you like. It's tighter than the 1605 version, and it contains some of Lear's most celebrated 'mad' speeches which are absent from the earlier text. Also, for a number of structural reasons, it happens to be rather better suited to audio.

"So I decided to remain faithful to the 1610 text except in a few minor instances where certain lines, words or interpolations

The play has been directed by another Dalek operator, Barnaby Edwards, who has brought together a strong cast. Barnaby said: "I saw David Warner's celebrated **King Lear** at Chichester's Minerva Theatre in 2005 and was blown away by it – such intensity, intelligence and raw power. It was one of the most striking performances I've ever had the privilege of witnessing. So being asked to work with David on a second **Lear** was both daunting and hugely thrilling.

"David was kept in the loop all along the process and made numerous helpful suggestions about how to approach the production, including proposing Mike Grady for **The Fool** (a superb recommendation). He shared the same vision of the play that Nick Pegg and I did – a brutal, elemental, savage world where tenderness is rare and life is fragile.

"The rest of the cast very much took their lead from David and gave wonderfully honest, stripped-down, truthful performances. What is it Keats says? 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty.' Well, we embraced that. For all the savagery of the story and the brutality of many of the characters, there's a terrible beauty to the play. For me, **King Lear** ranks side by side with **Hamlet** as one of the greatest plays ever written. So, no pressure then!"

Nick adds: "I must also add that I was very lucky to be able to seek the assistance of an old friend of mine, Dr Martin Wiggins of the Shakespeare Institute in Stratford upon Avon. Earlier on I had the temerity to describe myself as a Shakespeare scholar, but I'm on the nursery slopes compared with Martin.

"He is one of the most highly respected Shakespeare academics in the world, so I was very fortunate to have Martin on board as my consultant. He cast an expert eye over everything I did, reassuring me when I was on the right path and politely rescuing me when I was not, and making all manner of brilliant suggestions and observations. I'm hugely indebted to Martin, as is the whole production." **VORTEX**

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**EXTRAS** Interviews

# LISTEN AGAIN

## Dark Shadows: Speak No Evil

It's nearly time for Halloween so Big Finish turns up the scares!



used in the series before. He then sent in an idea called *The Patchwork Pierrot* which was fab and featured the character of Tad Collins who we hadn't met before.

"The only real note we had for him was that it was a bit too graphic and brutal with tongues being ripped out! Otherwise, it was a perfect spooky **Dark Shadows** story.

"Scott had recently worked with Arthur Darvill and suggested him as Tad, and obviously we jumped at the chance!"

Current **Dark Shadows** co-producer David Darlington worked on the play as its music and sound designer. He explained: "It was actually just before my producing time so I had no editorial involvement - I didn't even find out about the casting shenanigans until much later. All cool though - I was pleased that it meant I got to edit Arthur Darvill again! I'd just been working on **Doctor Who**, *Day of the Cockroach*, for the BBC at the time. Though it was probably still AudioGO in those days...

"It's an enjoyably creepy story from the days where I still wasn't sure which one was Maggie and which was Angeliqe! Such innocence has long since been thrashed out of me!" **VORTEX**

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**EXTRAS** Interviews

**S**OME PEOPLE have phobias about heights. Others dislike snakes and spiders. And for many, there's coulrophobia - the fear of clowns.

**Dark Shadows** ploughed that seam of terror in *Speak No Evil* in August 2012, as Scott Handcock's play told the story of Tad Collins, a man haunted by an unhappy childhood, who was also rich, arrogant and terribly lonely.

When the circus came to town, he encountered Marie Olson - the tattooed lady - and they hated each other. But when a mysterious and sinister clown broke into Collinwood to steal a book on the occult, Tad and Marie had to work together.

In the leading role of Tad Collins was former **Doctor Who** TV star Arthur Darvill, best known as Rory Williams/Pond.

Co-producer Joe Lidster recalls: "*Speak No Evil* came about when James Goss and I emailed a bunch of writers and asked for pitches back in September 2011. We were looking for good, strong, standalone horror stories - suggesting to writers that they think along the lines of **Tales of the Unexpected**.

"We gave the writers a list of available actors - including Alec Newman. Scott came back to me asking if he should include any of the following in his ideas: '1) *Circuses* 2) *Skin Walkers* (sequel not involving Quentin) 3) *David in Windcliff pre-Kingdom of the Dead* (always loved an asylum story) 4) *Monsters* (**DS** is oddly light on those)'.

"The suggestion of a circus immediately jumped out at me - it's a perfect **Dark Shadows** setting that had never been

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## MAY 2018

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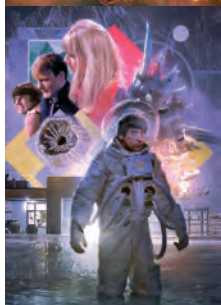
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