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ISSUE 107 • JANUARY 2018

The Diary of River Song

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EDITORIAL

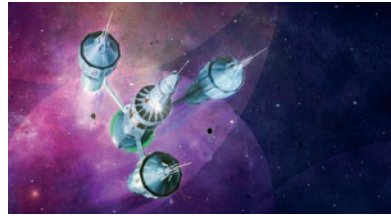
ISSUE 107 • JANUARY 2018

B LAKE'S 7 is 40. That's scary. It means that I'm three-and-a-half years older than the show!

My memory of **Blake's 7** in its first couple of years is very hazy, but I have several recollections of Series 3 stories, and never missed an episode of the fourth run.

To my eyes, the *Liberator* is the greatest design of a spaceship ever. You can keep your X-Wings, TIE Fighters, USS Enterprises and Battlestars – to me, the *Liberator* is just a total design classic, completely unique, just as the TV series was in which it appeared. When it was destroyed in *Terminal*, I remember being absolutely gutted that such a thing of beauty was gone.

What really set **Blake's 7** apart was the cast. Each and every one of the regular cast were perfect for their roles; the late Gareth



Thomas consummate as righteous Roj Blake, Paul Darrow so cynical as Avon, Michael Keating suited Vila to the ground – and that's before we even mention Jacqueline Pearce as Servalan. Oh, and Glynis Barber was my third-ever TV crush after Lalla Ward and Erin Gray!

I can't wait to hear what Mark Wright has written to commemorate the occasion – like everyone at Big Finish, the production team love their subject matter without fail, and that's what makes every release so special. **VORTEX**



T ORCHWOOD'S MONTHLY range continues this year with a host of exciting new tales from Cardiff – and beyond.

As well as Captain Jack, Gwen, Ianto, Owen, Rhys and Norton Folgate all returning, Captain John Hart and Bilis Manger join the fray.

SNEAKPREVIEW

TORCHWOOD: MONTHLY RANGE

The fourth run of six plays begins with *The Death of Captain Jack* by David Llewellyn. Producer James Goss reveals: "If you've ever wondered what Torchwood would be like with Captain John at the helm, wonder no more. Nothing from the world of Torchwood emerges unspoiled – and that includes Queen Victoria and Ianto's dress sense!"

This season the range sees the writing debut (as well as playing Ianto Jones) of Gareth David-Lloyd with the release of *The Last Beacon* in April.

Gareth said: "I've had great fun doing it, especially being able to put my own take on the actual words Ianto says, rather than how he says them. I've loved this material, and I've enjoyed the subject matter of all the scripts because they're topics set close to my heart."

Other titles confirmed in this run are *We Always Get Out Alive* by Guy Adams, with Gwen and Rhys – out in May, *Goodbye Piccadilly* by James Goss – out in June, and *Deadbeat Escape* also by James Goss, featuring Murray Melvin as Bilis Manger – out in August. **VORTEX**



River Deep

Kenny Smith uncovers the latest adventures for River Song...

PROFESSOR RIVER Song has, to date, encountered the Eighth, Seventh and Sixth Doctors in her previous Big Finish box sets. Her reverse time travel continues, as this month she meets him in his fifth incarnation.

However, the Doctor isn't the only familiar face that she encounters as an old foe also shows her face.

Producer David Richardson says: "Previous River Song box sets have all been about adventures and encountering past incarnations of the Doctor.

"On the surface the Diary of River Song Series Three is no different, but we're digging a bit deeper beneath River's skin – the addition of Madame Kovarian

allows elements from River's past to surface, and that's part of a long game for us. River's past is a huge, largely unseen tapestry and over the course of future box sets we'll be going there and finding out more of who she is as a person."

Script editor Matt Fitton continues: "We have had River working her way back through the Doctors, one by one – or two at a time, sometimes – so now it's the turn of the Fifth Doctor to meet her.

"There are reams of stories to tell of her solo travels – and we do fit them in along the way – but it's nice to tick off each of our Doctors too. There'll be plenty more River to come!

"Once we'd decided on the Fifth Doctor, David suggested we bring in Frances Barber as Madame Kovarian from TV series six in the Matt Smith era.

"That opens up the whole story of River's past, where she came from, her birth, all that goes with Demon's Run and the whole arc that ran through the series. We thought there was something we could do with that, by bringing Kovarian in for a couple of episodes, and the Doctor for a couple.

"It's River's own past and the Doctor's past clashing together.

"We've got the Doctor in episodes two and three but his presence is felt throughout, really."



Above: Alex Kingston

“The series begins with River being very mercenary...”

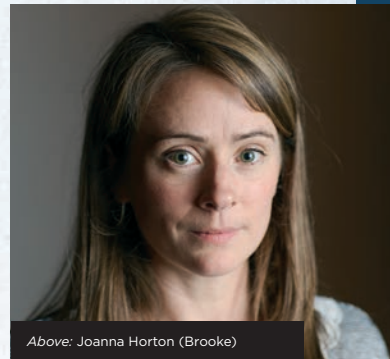
MATT FITTON

The Lady in the Lake by Nev Fountain opens the series.

On Terminus Prime, clients choose their own means of demise. Something exciting, meaningful or heroic to end it all. But when River discovers that there are repeat customers, she knows something more is going on. She uncovers a cult, whose members can apparently cheat death, and that's not all they have in common with River...

NEV SAYS: “I recall that Matt Fitton said, ‘Alex wants to do something a bit historical, perhaps something

to do with Aztecs’. If you want to know anything about the story, I can tell you a) it’s not historical, and b) it’s got nothing to do with Aztecs. But seriously, folks, the



Above: Joanna Horton (Brooke)



Above: Alex Kingston

brief got me started on a long train of thought about River and where she came from.

“In a huge dollop of serendipity what I eventually came up with fitted very nicely with Matt’s planned arc for River. It’s got a suicide cult, some long lost relatives of River, and a man called Kevin who plays chess dressed up as Death.” Matt adds: “Nev has written a very funny and dark opening story as the series begins with River being very mercenary and looking to collect lots of loyalty points so she can spend them. She goes to Terminus

Prime, a world that sells death as a form of euthanasia where you can die any way you want to. But she discovers there are repeat customers so starts to investigate that, uncovering a bigger conspiracy linked to her own past.”

Jac laughs: “River’s got a very distinctive voice, but I do tend to default to a Bernice voice for strong female characters, so I did have to watch out for that! On the surface there are a lot of similarities between Benny and River, but they

know who she was? Jac explains: “Oh, I didn’t have to do any of the ‘coming up with’ – he just didn’t know her, that was it. How he forgets about her afterwards – well, that was someone else’s problem! I’m looking forward to finding out



THE DIARY OF RIVER SONG *Series Three*

OUT THIS MONTH
CD: £23.00, Download: £20.00
EXTRAS Bonus disc

Directed By: Ken Bentley
Starring: Alex Kingston, Peter Davison, Frances Barber

THE LADY IN THE LAKE BY NEV FOUNTAIN
A REQUIEM FOR THE DOCTOR BY JACQUELINE RAYNER
MY DINNER WITH ANDREW BY JOHN DORNEY
THE FURIES BY MATT FITTON

HAVING WRITTEN many stories for Bernice Summerfield (Big Finish’s other popular archaeologist) Jacqueline Rayner wrote the next story *A Requiem for the Doctor*.

River has joined the Doctor and his friend Brooke on their travels, and they stop off in 18th century Vienna. Brooke thinks history is dull – until people start dying. Mozart’s legacy is not just his music. River has more than one mystery to solve before a killer is let loose on the people of Vienna – and on the Doctor.

HOW DID she find writing for River, given that she has done a fair bit of the other archaeologist in the Doctor’s life?



Above (l - r): Joanna Horton, David Richardson, Rosanna Miles, Toby Hrycek-Robinson, Peter Davison, Alex Kingston and Issy Van Randwyck

have a completely different attitude and outlook on life.”

How did Jac find having to write for Peter Davison’s Doctor meeting River, and coming up with a way so that he wouldn’t





Above (l - r): Peter Davison and Alex Kingston

“The brief said the Doctor would be on an adventure but without realising he’s on an adventure.” JOHN DORNEY

how their acquaintance ends...” She adds: “It’s a tale of music and murder in Vienna – but it’s equally a tale of the Doctor’s two companions, and how they get along (hint: not very well).”

Matt continues: “Jac’s story is set in Vienna soon after Mozart’s death. In a way it’s a traditional *Doctor Who* historical adventure, with River as a companion to the Fifth Doctor, and with Jac bringing lots of humour and emotion to the adventure. But the Doctor has another, unexpected, companion with him and

River has to work out how this ‘Brooke’ fits into everything.”

THE NEXT story, *My Dinner with Andrew* by John Dorney, sees the Doctor and River at The Bumptious Gastropod...

The most exclusive, most discreet dining experience outside the universe. For the restaurant exists beyond space-time itself, and the usual rules of causality do not apply. Anything could happen. It is here that the Doctor has a date. With River Song. And death.

VORTEX SUGGESTS that the outline of the story sounds like something similar to a Douglas Adams creation. John nods: “I suppose it does kind of have an element of that, but here we have a restaurant outside time, where there’s only ever one sitting. You can always get a table though you have to book, but since it’s outside time they need to rearrange the chronology of the restaurant. This one sitting lasts for all eternity. As a result, the usual rules of cause and effect don’t happen.



“I got the brief about a year-and-a-half ago, but didn’t start writing it until about six months ago.

The brief said the Doctor would be on an adventure but without realising he’s on an adventure. Someone is constantly trying to kill him – all I knew from early on was that it was going to be set in a restaurant. I think I was out for a meal at the time when I had the idea! “But I had to do a bit of work on the idea to make it more interesting and to make it work, so it’s not just any restaurant.”

A big part of River meeting the earlier Doctors involves him not remembering her, so as not to affect the web of time.

John explains: “I seem to recall there were some comments that having the Doctor lose his memories of meeting River every



Above (l - r): Alex Kingston and Frances Barber

time she met an earlier incarnation was happening a lot, so I thought it'd be fun if I made that amnesia a big part of the story. It meant there would be use of the lipstick.

"So, it's all a bit of slapstick now as I thought I'd try to make the Doctor forget as many times as possible in the one story, and there's lots of kissing involved which makes it slightly farcical."

Matt continues: "John Dorney's story has a Douglas Adams vibe to it, but it's more of a farce: only instead of opening and closing doors and running in and out of rooms, we've got time used as a doorway, with River jumping through hoops trying to stop the Doctor getting assassinated."

THE SERIES concludes with *The Furies* by Matt Fitton.

Stories of the Furies abound across the cosmos: vengeful spirits hounding guilty souls to death. Madame Kovarian taught them to a child raised in fear, trained to kill, and placed inside a spacesuit. Kovarian knows the universe's greatest threat, the Doctor must be eliminated. An assassin was created for that purpose. But if Melody Pond has failed, Kovarian will simply have to try again...

“There’s lots of kissing involved which makes it slightly farcical.” JOHN DORNEY



MATT EXPLAINS: "Kovarian is a dream to write for because you know you have Frances Barber! You can imagine just how she might deliver the lines. Looking back at those episodes on TV, she's a powerful presence, while still being rather mysterious.

"I wanted to add some history between her and River, because there's a whole period unaccounted for before River goes into the orphanage when she was raised from a baby to a child. What must the upbringing of a potential assassin have been like, under Madame Kovarian's care? With Kovarian, that opens

up River's past. There's obviously been a relationship with Kovarian, but we didn't see much of it on TV.

"We only saw her get killed in an alternative timeline so she was there for the taking, for this story anyway, and I can't see her giving up on her quest very easily..."

The director of all four stories is Ken Bentley, who enjoyed bringing Peter Davison and Alex Kingston together. He says: "Alex has been having a great time working

with all the Doctors and I knew she'd love working with Peter. There were also one or two particular challenges for Peter in this series which I thought would be the source of a lot of fun on the day, so I was very much looking forward to recording this box set!

"The Doctors are all very different in both how they approach the role and how they approach their work. Actors are generally very good at accommodating each other's process so that hasn't phased Alex at all, and it's been great fun to watch her adapt to working with each Doctor, particularly their senses of humour. Alex is one of the easiest people in the world to get along with, and each Doctor seemed to relish the opportunity to appear in this series."

Matt concludes: "It's been great working on these box sets. We aim for them to be fast moving and funny: a mix of emotion and drama, and River seeing the humour in it all. We try and give Alex dramatic and emotional stories to play, as well as crazy time travel shenanigans. Though she's said herself that she tries to hide the pain." **VORTEX**

VORTEXMAIL

Email: feedback@bigfinish.com and put 'Vortex Mail' as the subject...

IN THE MIX

I would just like to thank Big Finish for creating such amazing stories. Firstly, are there any more plans on mixing more of New **Who** and Classic **Who** together (I love the **Classic Doctors, New Monsters** box sets)? Secondly, it would be amazing to have both the Eleventh and Twelfth Doctors having their own adventures with Big Finish one day. Could this ever be a possibility? Keep up the great work.

● CARL ROBERTS

Nick: There will certainly be some more New/Classic series mash-ups, but I hope you'll forgive me if I don't reveal exactly what they'll be yet. As for the Eleventh and Twelfth Doctors... as soon as the actors in question would like to work with us, we'll be more than happy to work with them. But, you know, they're busy people. But we have certainly been in touch with both their agents. Peter wants to have a break from being the Doctor and Matt is extremely busy, although we've been given indications that this is something that he may like to do at some point.

CASTING NEW SHADOWS

I've been enjoying the fantastic work of Big Finish for over a decade now. You folks put out some brilliant audio dramas. I wanted to inquire about **Dark Shadows**. There's not much known about potential 2018 releases. I am wondering if the **Dark Shadows** series is being continued, and if there are any details, even the smallest, that Big Finish can

reveal at this time. I also want to say thank you Big Finish for the many hours of listening and re-listening to many great audios.

● SCOTT N

*Nick: Hi Scott, our **Dark Shadows** maestros have been delighting us with their plans for the future. More news soon!*



ICE HOT

Listening to *Cold Vengeance* in the new **Tenth Doctor Adventures** series was brilliant, simply because to me, the Ice Warriors are one of the quintessential villains, along with Daleks, Cybermen and the Master, that all Doctors must face at some point. I was glad that the Tenth Doctor finally got a chance. But in saying that... what about the Fourth Doctor? Unless I'm mistaken, there has yet to be a single Ice Warrior story with Tom Baker, in any form!

You should absolutely fix this, right away! It could be utterly brilliant.

● ALEX H

Nick: This is, of course, an excellent idea. We must do this!

THANK YOU

I only started listening to Big Finish in September 2015 thanks to your



first **Torchwood** audio, but since then I've been expanding what I listen to constantly. One thing I love about your **Doctor Who** audios is that no matter how bad I might be feeling, I can just put on my headphones and escape into a universe(s) where anything can happen. It motivates me to be able to get through each day, and helps me to worry less. I'd like to say 'Thank you' to all the people who have ever worked at Big Finish, as well as everyone who buys your audios, for allowing such a wonderful thing to be able to be a part of my life, and the lives of others.

● THOMAS WADE

*Nick: Thomas, this kind of email is the reason we carry on. This is exactly what we're trying to achieve. I hope everyone in the Big Finish team reads this. In fact, I must forward it to them all. **VORTEX***



BACK AND FOURTH

Kenny Smith reveals the new series of the Fourth Doctor Adventures is slightly different...

IT'S HARD to believe, but the Fourth Doctor is now entering his seventh series of all-new audio adventures with Big Finish.

For years, fans had hoped that Tom Baker would embrace Big Finish, and now that he has there's absolutely no stopping him. The 2018 run of adventures features a slight change from the previously established format, however, as rather than having one release each month there will be four adventures grouped together in a box set.

Producer David Richardson reveals: "I'm very excited by the move to box sets. It means that people will be able to binge on the episodes, and ultimately we'll be able to do more interlinked stories. Also, as time goes on, you'll find we're moving more towards four-part stories too, which has really given us an opportunity to play with the scale of the subject matter and depth of the characters.

"While we're very keen to make stories with the Fourth Doctor as fans remember him, we're also stepping out into new territories too. We've been making these a few years

now so it's time to shake things up a little, while still holding on to all the elements that made them such a success in the first place."

Series 7 opens with *The Sons of Kaldor* by Andrew Smith, which sees the Doctor and Leela facing the Robots of Death once more.

Andrew reveals: "The brief I got was a little more detailed than normal. David Richardson sent the original email in January 2015, having spoken with Chris Boucher about using the Robots of Death in a story with Tom Baker, and suggested the basis of it was a base under siege.

“It was originally a base with humans and robots, but the humans have died out and now there’s something outside, trying to break in. All you can hear is a constant banging on the door, with someone, or something, wanting to get in. It was really good fun to

completely ‘get’ the robots and know how to do them.

“I’d originally pitched a different idea which linked back to Taren Capel, with some people carrying a torch for him, and another one was set on a sand miner, but David wanted to move away from the

TV trappings and come up with the opposite of what we had.

“David was the one who came up with the title, *The Sons of Kaldor*, and it’s a title that has a rather ambiguous meaning by the end of the story.”

For the second story, David Llewellyn has written *The Crowmarsh Experiment*, his first Fourth Doctor tale. He tells Vortex: “The brief was to write something set on Earth around the time when the Fourth Doctor/

“WE’VE BEEN MAKING THESE A FEW YEARS NOW SO IT’S TIME TO SHAKE THINGS UP A LITTLE...”

DAVID RICHARDSON



Above (l – r): Tom Baker and John Leeson



Above: Dan Starkey

write. *The Robots of Death* is one of my all-time favourite **Doctor Who** stories, definitely in my top three, and some days it can be number one. *Robophobia* is one of my favourite Big Finish stories, and I listened to that three times in the week when it first came out. I love what Nick Briggs did with it.

“I tried to do something a bit different. I’m really pleased that two of my good mates, Toby Hadoke and John Dorney, are in it playing the robots. They



Leela stories first aired, as that was something they never really did on TV. That got me thinking about the sort of story you could tell, and I looked at various films and TV shows from the late 1970s, but the one that kicked things off was the **Hammer House of Horror** story *The Twin Faces of Evil*; that was the tone I was aiming for. Creepy and uncanny and unsettling.

“I don’t want to give too much away, obviously, but it

involves Leela having to question everything she thinks she knows about herself and her adventures with the Doctor. Oh, and as a bit of trivia, it's set the week of 6th March 1978, which just happens to have been the week I was born and when Leela made her last onscreen appearance."

The set concludes with *The Mind Runners* and *The Demon Rises*, a four-part story written by John Dorney. He says: "I was given quite an open brief – I was told



Above (l - r): Dan Starkey, Cathy Tyson, Tom Baker, Julian Wadham, Louise Jameson and Damian Lynch



THE FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES SERIES 7: VOLUME 1

OUT THIS MONTH

CD: £25.00, Download: £20.00

EXTRAS Interviews

Directed By: NICHOLAS BRIGGS

Starring: TOM BAKER, LOUISE JAMESON and JOHN LEESON

THE SONS OF KALDOR by ANDREW SMITH

THE CROWMARSH EXPERIMENT by DAVID LLEWELLYN

THE MIND RUNNERS by JOHN DORNEY

THE DEMON RISES by JOHN DORNEY

“THE STORY ACTUALLY CAME FROM LOOKING OVER MY SHELVES TO SEE IF THERE WAS ANYTHING IN MY BOARDGAMES THAT COULD WORK.”

JOHN DORNEY

I had the Doctor, Leela and K9, and it had to be a four-parter.

"I wanted to do something that was a bit high concept, and I had a few notions lingering in my ideas file. The initial premise of where the story ended up actually came from looking over my shelves to see if there was anything in my boardgames that could work, and then spinning it around and going with the reverse of one of them.

"I thought, 'This is the way things happen if you go from A to B', and I then wondered what would happen if I switched it around and went from B to A.

"Once I had that, I knew I wanted to do a future noir story, grimy, rainy and with a mystery at the heart of it. It has aspects of *Blade Runner*, especially when you think of the title *The Mind Runners*, which is an

influence, but there's not a lot of similarities between them.

"If anything, it's like a big mystery as there's something going on in the town – people are dying and vanishing. It's set in a planet-wide city, which is using up its resources." **VORTEX**



LISTEN AGAIN



AS A new series of Fourth Doctor Adventures begins this month, we turn the clock back five years to January 2013.

AFTER TOM Baker joined the Big Finish stable in six stories featuring the Doctor and Leela, we were treated to a run of seven stories with the Fourth Doctor and the late Mary Tamm playing the first incarnation of Romana.

Tragically, this series proved to be the final work of Mary's long career as she passed away six months before the first story, *The Auntie Matter*, was released.

These stories are a joyous celebration, however, of the first Romana, especially the season opener which also featured the legendary Julie McKenzie as the main guest star.

Writer Jonathan Morris says: "The story is set in 1920s Hampshire and is a kind of a what-if, the what-if being, 'What if PG Wodehouse had written a *Doctor Who* story in 1978?' Well, *The Auntie Matter* endeavours to be the answer to that question.

"It's a frothy, silly, summery, farcical comedy, but with grisly undertones. I'm immeasurably

if in retrospect I still can't quite believe it happened! It will be a memory to treasure for the rest of my life. It's just mind-boggling."

Director Ken Bentley adds: "*The Auntie Matter* is still one of the most bonkers stories I've worked on. You can always rely on Jonny for something unusual, and every now and then and he delivers a real peach.

"The combination of such quintessentially English comedy characters and science fiction turned this into something akin to an absurdist play. Robert Portal did such a

“I HOPE MARY REALISED HOW ADMIRED AND APPRECIATED SHE WAS.” JONATHAN MORRIS

proud of it. I think, through attempting to channel the voice of the Master, it contains some of my wittiest writing."

Jonny attended the studio recording and was delighted with the passionate performances.

He grins: "To hear Tom Baker performing my words and doing it so well, with such attention to detail, with such irrepressible humour and with such panache! Many times I closed my eyes and it was like being transported back to 1978 – or sticking on a DVD of a *Doctor Who* from 1978.

"I count myself inordinately fortunate to have been given such an opportunity; even

fantastic job of bringing Reggie to life that he's on the list of characters I'd like to see return."

Jonny added: "There's a very moving tribute to Mary included on the end of the CD/download. There's not much more I can add, except to say that it was honour to write for her and to hear her performing words I had written, and performing them so beautifully, so precisely, and with such a joyful lightness of touch.

"I feel privileged to have been associated with her, even in a small way. We *Doctor Who* fans love all the actors and actresses from the show dearly, and I hope Mary realised how admired and appreciated she was." **VORTEX**



Kenny Smith gets ready for another short but sweet tale...



ABSOLUTELY AUTHENTIC

DOCTOR WHO: SHORT TRIPS

A series of audiobooks written by many of **Doctor Who**'s most popular authors from the worlds of television, print, comics and audio and read by a host of your favourite Big Finish actors.

THE EIGHTH series of **Short Trips** gets underway this month – and the first new short story has been created by a Big Finish acting regular.

The Sixth Doctor and Peri feature in release # 37, *The Authentic Experience*, written by the supreme Sontaran himself, Dan Starkey.

Producer Ian Atkins says: "With the **Short Trips** range

I've been eager to try and bring unexpected voices and styles to the tales, emulating **Doctor Who** itself in presenting a run of stories which are varied in content, tone, actor and style.

"Just as I was considering who to approach, Dan's name popped up in a writing capacity at Big Finish (co-writing *Terror of the Sontarans* with John Dorney,

and recreating one of **The Avengers** lost episodes), and so I asked if he'd be interested in going solo on **Doctor Who** and doing a **Short Trip**.

"The range is very much performance-driven in its realisation, and having an actor writing – especially one with such an ear for accent and dialogue – made for a very different feeling beast. I've been in studio with reader Nicola Bryant a couple of times and was eager we had a piece that gave her strong vocal talents a real workout, and Dan's delivered in spades."



Above (l - r): Nicola Bryant and Dan Starkey

“HAVING AN ACTOR WRITING – ESPECIALLY ONE WITH SUCH AN EAR FOR ACCENT AND DIALOGUE – MADE FOR A VERY DIFFERENT FEELING BEAST.”

IAN ATKINS

DAN WAS delighted to turn his hand to writing again for Big Finish.

He admits: "It's great to be able to exploit the specific effects prose can have as opposed to a script: you can switch perspectives and evoke interior states, textures of thought and experience in different ways from a piece of dramatic writing.

"It's the mark of some of the more memorable Target novelisations I still remember from reading as a kid, that they fill in more of the world and 'brain-work' behind the story, enriching the narrative, rather than changing a shooting script into third-person narrative. I will wait to hear how successful I've been in that..."

DAN PROMISES that some surprises are in store: "I hope that it

throws Peri and the listener into some interesting and unexpected situations: I definitely had in my head some of the images from the 1980s *Doctor Who Magazine* comic-strip with its slightly more epic visuals than the small screen could allow at the time, so if you wanted to imagine it as being illustrated by John Ridgeway when listening that would be entirely appropriate!

"I knew that Nicola would be reading it from the off, so I was keen to give her something fun to perform. Hearing my words spoken back, and being able to suggest last-minute edits to the overly florid patches of my prose when we were in studio, was quite an education as well! Just because you can use a ten syllable word doesn't always mean you should..." **VORTEX**



THE AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE

OUT THIS MONTH
Download: £2.99

Written By: **DAN STARKEY**
Directed By: **LISA BOWERMAN**

NICOLA BRYANT (Narrator)

Tired of the old 9 to 5? The daily grind getting you down? Step this way to discover a universe of possibilities! If you're fed up with looking at screens all day, we can offer the authentic experience: whether you want to be as rich as Croesus and swim in gold, or feel the dirt and sweat of honest toil we're ready for your business. Forget the "Same Old", embrace the "New Old"! **VORTEX**



STANDARD

BY 40

Blake's 7 is back this month for a special release to mark the big 4-0!

IT WAS on a cold wet night 40 years ago that **Blake's 7** premiered on British television. On 2 January in the episode *The Way Back*, we discovered that Roj Blake had had his memory wiped after rebelling against the ruling Federation. Re-learning of his past, Blake was then captured by the Federation and sentenced to be taken to prison

planet Cygnus Alpha – but en route he escaped to a mysterious spacecraft found floating nearby. This ship, *Liberator*, allowed Blake and several of the other prisoners to get away and start a fightback against the Federation.

After four TV series **Blake's 7** came to an end, but in February 2012 it returned with the original cast members on audio at Big Finish. And now, the majority of the cast are taking part in the Big Finish **Blake's 7** 40th Anniversary special, *The Way Ahead*.

Joining Paul Darrow, Michael Keating, Jan Chappell, Steven

Pacey, Yasmin Bannerman, Alistair Lock and Jacqueline Pearce are Stephen Greif, who returns as Travis, and Sally Knyvette who once again plays Jenna. And for the first time since the TV series ended, Glynis Barber joins them.

The Way Ahead, by Mark Wright, is the perfect celebration of the television show, with the action taking place in three different time periods all linked by the popular character of Avalon who first appeared in the TV episode *Project Avalon*.

The producer of the **Blake's 7** range is John Ainsworth.



Above (l - r): Stephen Greif, Sally Knyvette, Michael Keating, Jacqueline Pearce, Alistair Lock and Jan Chappell
Inset: Paul Darrow



“OF COURSE, ONE OF THE CHALLENGES WAS TO HAVE A STORY THAT DIDN'T FEATURE BLAKE...” JOHN AINSWORTH

He says: “*Blake's 7* celebrates 40 years since its first broadcast in January 2018. We couldn't let this landmark pass without acknowledging it, and I was keen that we should produce some kind of anniversary special, independent of the on-going box set releases.

“I asked Mark Wright if he would be interested in writing the special, knowing that he was very familiar with *Blake's 7* and would do a great job of it. Happily, he agreed and we then talked at length about what exactly it should include.

“One of the starting points was to have as many of the surviving cast members involved as possible. This desire to some extent dictated the structure of the story with the first part taking place during the first TV

series and the second part taking place during the third TV series.

“We've done our best to include all of the regular characters, and I think Mark has written a brilliant script which manages to encapsulate the essence of *Blake's 7*, as well as being very dramatic and exciting.”

As well as featuring the vast majority of the regular cast who appeared in *Blake's 7*, *The Way Forward* also gave Glynis Barber a chance to join the group. Glynis played Soolin on TV, and had also featured previously as a Mutoid in *Project Avalon*.

John explains: “Unfortunately due to licensing restrictions, we aren't currently able to make use of elements from the fourth TV

series – including the character of Soolin. However, we were keen to involve Glynis Barber so we invited her to play Magda opposite Paul Darrow's Avon in a framing device for the whole story, which is set 20 years after the TV series and borrowed elements from Paul Darrow's novel *Lucifer*.

“Of course, one of the challenges was to have a story that didn't feature Blake – Gareth Thomas sadly having passed away in 2016.

“We've partly addressed this by bringing back the character of Avalon who appeared in *Project Avalon* in the first TV series. Avalon embodies much of the

same idealism and fanaticism that Blake did, so by including her character it allowed us to examine some of the core issues at the heart of the series, as well as link the two parts of the story together.

"I'm pleased to say that we were quite successful in bringing virtually all the regular cast members back together, including Stephen Greif as Travis and Sally Knyvette as Jenna. The only exceptions were Josette Simon, who would prefer not

Ainsworth, asking if I'd like to write the 40th Anniversary **Blake's 7** adventure!

"I immediately embarked on a rewatch of the series, which I do every year or so anyway. Two things jumped out at me: dialogue in *Cygnus Alpha* about Project Aquitar, the Federation's failed teleport experiment that both Blake and Avon were involved in; and then Avalon when I rewatched *Project Avalon*. I really thought Avalon as a character gave us a way

Gareth Thomas and David Jackson are no longer with us.

"That absence was felt very keenly on recording days, but we decided early on that Blake would be a presence in part one while not actually appearing. Blake – and Gareth's – place in the series are such that he's always there as a presence and a symbol of the series – which is what the story became, an examination of those symbols. I was able to get some nice references to Gan in



BLAKE'S 7 THE WAY AHEAD

OUT THIS MONTH

CD: £14.99, Download: £12.99

EXTRAS Bonus disc

Directed By: JOHN AINSWORTH

Starring: PAUL DARROW, SALLY KNYVETTE,
JAN CHAPPELL, MICHAEL KEATING, STEVEN PACEY,
JACQUELINE PEARCE, YASMIN BANNERMAN

THE WAY AHEAD by MARK WRIGHT

PART 1: PROJECT AQUITAR

PART 2: DISSENT

to be involved in **Blake's 7** now, and Brian Croucher. In Brian's case, it was just too difficult to find a way of having both actors who had played Travis in the same story. Sorry Brian! I'm very pleased with the final production. It feels like a great celebration of **Blake's 7**, as well as being a fantastic story in its own right."

Handed the responsibility of writing *The Way Ahead* was Mark Wright, who has numerous credits on previous Big Finish **Blake's 7** adventures.

The two-hour story is told in two parts, *Project Aquitar* and *Dissent*.

Mark reveals the process began with: "A phone call from John

“AVALON AS A CHARACTER GAVE US A WAY IN TO EXAMINE THE THEMES AND THE SYMBOLS OF BLAKE'S 7...” JOHN AINSWORTH

in to examine the themes and the symbols of **Blake's 7**, and how these beloved characters are perceived."

With Gareth Thomas having died in 2016, the celebration was unable to feature Blake, or Gan actor David Jackson who passed away in 2005.

Mark continues: "We had to be realistic from the very start and acknowledge that sadly

there too, and I hope this stands as a worthy tribute to Gareth.

"I find writing **Blake's 7** usually flows very easily – I know the characters' voices so well, and when they're all together there's a rhythm to the dialogue that just pulls you along. Getting the plot together was slightly trickier due to the pressure of wanting to come



Above (l - r): Yasmin Bannerman, Steven Pacey, Jacqueline Pearce, Michael Keating, Alistair Lock and Jan Chappell

CROSSFIRE PART TWO

ALSO OUT this month is another **Blake's 7** release, the box set of *Crossfire Part 2* containing *Funeral on Kalion* by Trevor Baxendale, Cavan Scott's *Shock Troops*, *Erebus* written by Avon himself – Paul Darrow, and *The Scapegoat* by Steve Lyons.

The season concludes with *Crossfire Part 3* which will be released in April. The four stories are *Ministry of Truth*



by Una McCormack, Trevor Baxendale's *Refuge*, *Kith and Kin* by Chris Cooper and *Death of Empire* by Steve Lyons.

A new trilogy of box sets with the overall title of *Restoration* will follow later in 2018. **VORTEX**

up with something that honoured the series but also worked as an exciting **Blake's 7** adventure that spanned across three different time periods. I thought I was perhaps pushing things a bit too far in part two with a big event that happens, but John really went for it."

Talking of the cast, Mark knew from early on that Glynis Barber would be returning.

"Very much so – we knew we wanted Glynis Barber to be part of the celebration, and there were a couple of happy accidents with using Avalon as a character and how that related to Paul Darrow's sequel books. I really enjoyed writing scenes between Avon

and Magda, they really helped pin things down and allow a different perspective on things. She's a slightly incredulous audience for Avon, not quite believing him to be an entirely reliable narrator. And as a fan of **Dempsey and Makepeace**, it was a joy to be writing dialogue for Glynis, who is brilliant."

Given how **Doctor Who's** 50th Anniversary was celebrated both by the BBC on TV with *The Day of the Doctor* and with Big Finish in *The Light at the End*, did that put any pressure on Mark to do a fitting tribute to another of his favourite TV shows?

He grins: "Oh yeah, I was very aware of it throughout the writing

process. Of course, with **Blake's 7** you can't do the same kind of anniversary adventure as you'd do for **Doctor Who** – you're not going to do *The Five Avons!* It had to be packed with the iconography of the series, lots of teleporting, lots of big moments for the *Liberator* – the greatest screen spaceship of all time – Zen, Orac. But also to push things as far as we could, and make it big and epic. When John read part two, he said it was like **Blake's 7: The Movie**, which was exactly what I was going for."

Mark was delighted to attend the recording sessions.

He admits: "I've been lucky enough to be in a lot of Big Finish recording sessions, hearing childhood heroes say my dialogue, but the days spent recording *The Way Ahead* rank amongst my favourite time in a Big Finish studio.

"John pulled off an extraordinary feat of scheduling to get everybody together and co-ordinate pick ups from the station and getting everybody to and from the studio, as well as directing brilliantly. Just listening to these actors who have all this history together was such a privilege."

There was also a special guest in the studio, with another of the original **Blake's 7** regulars on hand.

Mark laughs: "Yes, that was the original Orac. Mat Irvine popped in for a couple of hours with Orac and some original gun props and a teleport bracelet. I loved seeing Yasmin Bannerman tooled up with a *Liberator* blaster and bracelet to get some cover shots.

"It was a joy from start to finish to be involved with this, and such a thrill to be asked. John has done an incredible job, I hope we've done the series justice for the fans – and for the cast – and that *The Way Ahead* stands as a fitting way to mark the 40th anniversary of **Blake's 7**." **VORTEX**



GIVE ME

FIVE

Kenny Smith takes a look ahead to what's in store for the **Doctor Who** Main Monthly Range...

THE DOCTOR, Adric, Nyssa and Tegan are back this month to start a new trilogy of tales in time and space.

Peter Davison, Matthew Waterhouse, Sarah Sutton and Janet Fielding feature in *Kingdom of Lies*, *Ghost Walk* and *Serpent in the Silver Mask*, all of which offer new threats to the time travellers.

There's been a change behind the scenes for this run of stories,

however, as regular script editor Alan Barnes has temporarily stepped aside, and taking on the job for these stories is Guy Adams, who regular listeners will recognise as a writer across the various Big Finish ranges.

Guy says: "It was useful for the splendid Alan Barnes to get ahead on some forthcoming stories for 2018, so Nicholas Briggs asked if I'd be willing

to step in and buy him a little slack by handling the first six Main Monthly Range releases of the year. Obviously my first response was to change my name by deed poll and go into hiding, but once I'd finished screaming, I decided I'd give it a go!"

By taking on the post, it gave Guy the chance to commission the writers. He explains: "The choice of writers was vital. I needed

people that would make me look talented as a script editor by being brilliant all on their own. This is entirely acceptable, it's called delegation. Why have a Drashig and howl yourself? I also wanted to try and use people who were either new to the Main Monthly Range or weren't regular choices.

This month's release is *Kingdom of Lies*, written by Robert Khan and Tom Salinsky.

On the planet Cicero Prime, the kingdom of Cardenas is divided, with the whole population forced to swear allegiance to either the effete Duke or the fiery, hard-

Duchess. It's a wonderful, fizzy farce, with lasers and a homicidal Patsy Kensit."

Tom says: "As far as I can remember, the brief was just the cast. We pitched half a dozen ideas and Guy picked the assassination one. However, our first attempt was an urban dystopia with Tegan trapped in a reality TV show and the target of the assassination being a bloviating, overbearing mayor. For all sorts of reasons that was scrapped early on, and we tried again with the

“IT'S A WONDERFUL, FIZZY FARCE, WITH LASERS AND A HOMICIDAL PATSY KENSIT.”

GUY ADAMS



"I loved Robert Khan and Tom Salinsky's *The Ravelli Conspiracy* for the **Early Adventures** range, so I wanted to tap into their flair for wit and courtly intrigue. I've long admired David Llewellyn's work so he was an immediate choice – he has an innate flair for structure and sharp dialogue. Finally, I've worked with James Goss a great deal on other ranges and knew I could get something miraculous if I just gave him enough room."



edged Duchess. This is a situation both parties have grown tired of. And then the deadly off-world assassin The Scorpion arrives to help with their problem – and he's wearing a long cream coat and striped trousers...

GUY GRINS: "*Kingdom of Lies* sees the Doctor and friends mistaken for assassins on the planet Cicero Prime, caught up in a bitter divorce between the Duke and



Above (l - r): Peter Davison and Patsy Kensit

marital relationship and bucolic setting which all seemed to work much better."

Robert adds: "I would say that the story is a royal fairy-tale, with elements of both thriller and farce, laced with comedy swaps and lethal misunderstandings. The tone is also what you might call medieval steam-punk stirred up with some present-day satire, for those who wish to see it. Let slip Nyssa the Destroyer and her fatal dogs of war!"



DOCTOR WHO KINGDOM OF LIES

Directed By:
BARNABY EDWARDS

Written By:
**ROBERT KHAN and
TOM SALINSKY**

Starring:
**PETER DAVISON,
JANET FIELDING,
SARAH SUTTON,
MATTHEW WATERHOUSE**

On the planet Cicero Prime, the kingdom of Cardenas is divided, with the whole population forced to swear allegiance to either the effete Duke or the fiery, hard-edged Duchess. This is a situation both parties have grown tired of. What use is half a kingdom when, thanks to a carefully

engineered murder, you could have it all?

Surely, neither of them would be rash enough to summon the deadly off-world assassin The Scorpion to help with their problem? And surely, this terrifying figure wouldn't arrive wearing a long cream coat and striped trousers?

OUT THIS MONTH
CD: £14.99
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EXTRAS Interviews

February sees the release of *Ghost Walk*, by James Goss.

In a city of ghosts, no-one knows them better than Leanne. Twice a night she leads tourists on a tour of the most haunted sites – the Hanging Yard, the Witch Pool, the Screaming House, and, of course, the Catacombs.

Leanne's realised the ghosts of the city are real. Something's lurking in the Catacombs – an ancient force that has been growing in the darkness for centuries. Sabaoth is returning and they must be stopped before they devour the world.

GUY SAYS: “*Ghost Walk* is a brilliantly constructed tale from James Goss. Leanne, a guide on a city ghost walk, has never believed in the stories that she tells. She's never believed in ghosts. Then she meets one. He's called the Doctor.”

Concluding the trilogy in March is *Serpent in the Silver Mask*, by David Llewellyn.

On the planet of Argentinia, a tax haven for the ultra-rich, a murderer is working their

“SERPENT IN THE SILVER MASK IS A BLEND OF ITALIAN GIALLO MOVIES AND KIND HEARTS AND CORONETS.”

GUY ADAMS



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

way through the members of the Mazzini family – and the Doctor and his friends have to stay alive long enough to discover the killer's identity.

GUY SAYS: “*Serpent in the Silver Mask* is a blend of Italian Giallo

movies and *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. A murderer is bumping off members of the Mazzini family and only the Doctor and friends can discover who it is.

A sharp, witty, playful murder mystery with sci-fi seasoning.” **VORTEX**

COMING SOON

JANUARY 2018

- **DW • MAIN RANGE: KINGDOM OF LIES**
(234, FIFTH DOCTOR, TEGAN, NYSSA AND ADRIC)
- **DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: SERIES 7A**
(7A, FOURTH DOCTOR, LEELA AND K9. BOX SET)
- **DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE SONS OF KALDOR** **DLO**
(71, FOURTH DOCTOR AND LEELA)
- **DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE CROWMARSH EXPERIMENT** **DLO**
(72, FOURTH DOCTOR AND LEELA)
- **DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE MIND-RUNNERS** **DLO**
(73, FOURTH DOCTOR, LEELA AND K9)
- **DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE DEMON RISES** **DLO**
(74, FOURTH DOCTOR, LEELA AND K9)
- **DW • THE FIRST DOCTOR ADVENTURES: VOLUME ONE** (BOX SET)
- **DW • THE DIARY OF RIVER SONG: SERIES 3** (BOX SET)
- **DW • SHORT TRIPS: THE AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE**
(81, SIXTH DOCTOR AND PERI)
- **BLAKE'S 7: CROSSFIRE** (PART TWO)
- **BLAKE'S 7: THE WAY AHEAD** (BOX SET)

FEBRUARY 2018

- **DW • MAIN RANGE: GHOST WALK**
(235, FIFTH DOCTOR, TEGAN, NYSSA AND ADRIC)
- **DW • SHORT TRIPS: MEL-EVOLENT** **DLO**
(82, SIXTH DOCTOR AND MEL)
- **DW • THE CHURCHILL YEARS VOLUME TWO** (BOX SET)
- **GALLIFREY: TIME WAR** (BOX SET)
- **TORCHWOOD: ALIENS AMONG US** (PART THREE)
- **VIENNA: RETRIBUTION** (BOX SET)
- **BIG FINISH CLASSICS: THE MARTIAN INVASION OF EARTH**

MARCH 2018

- **DW • MAIN RANGE: SERPENT IN THE SILVER MASK**
(236, FIFTH DOCTOR, TEGAN, NYSSA AND ADRIC)
- **DW • SHORT TRIPS: THE SIEGE OF BIG BEN** **DLO** (83, META-CRISIS DOCTOR, JACKIE TYLER)
- **DW • TALES FROM NEW EARTH** (BOX SET)
- **DW • THE THIRD DOCTOR ADVENTURES: VOLUME FOUR** (BOX SET)

TORCHWOOD:

THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN JACK (19)

THE OMEGA FACTOR:

SERIES THREE (BOX SET)

THE OMEGA FACTOR:

SPIDER'S WEB (NOVEL, AUDIOBOOK AND EBOOK)

■ **SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE MASTER OF BLACKSTONE GRANGE / THE ADVENTURE OF THE FLEET STREET TRANSPARENCY** (BOX SET)

APRIL 2018

DW • MAIN RANGE:

THE HELLIAIX RIFT (237, FIFTH DOCTOR)

■ **DW • THE TENTH DOCTOR CHRONICLES: VOLUME ONE**

DW • SHORT TRIPS:

THE TURN OF THE SCREW **DLO**
(84, EIGHTH DOCTOR, CHARLIE SATO)

■ **BLAKE'S 7: CROSSFIRE** (PART THREE)

■ **TORCHWOOD: THE LAST BEACON** (20)

MAY 2018

DW • MAIN RANGE:

THE LURE OF THE NOMAD
(238, SIXTH DOCTOR)

■ **DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: SERIES 7B**
(7B, FOURTH DOCTOR AND LEELA. BOX SET)

■ **DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE SHADOW OF LONDON** **DLO**
(75, FOURTH DOCTOR AND LEELA)

■ **DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE BAD PENNY** **DLO**
(76, FOURTH DOCTOR AND LEELA)

■ **DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: KILL THE DOCTOR!** **DLO**
(77, FOURTH DOCTOR AND LEELA)

■ **DW • FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: THE AGE OF SUTEKH** **DLO**
(78, FOURTH DOCTOR AND LEELA)

DW • SHORT TRIPS:

FLIGHT INTO HULL! **DLO**
(85, META-CRISIS DOCTOR, JACKIE TYLER)

JAGO & LITEFOOT:

JAGO & LITEFOOT FOREVER (14, BOX SET)

UNIT - THE NEW SERIES:

CYBER REALITY (6)

STAR COPS:

MOTHER EARTH PART 1 (BOX SET)

TORCHWOOD:

WE ALWAYS GET OUT ALIVE (21)

JUNE 2018

DW • MAIN RANGE:

IRON BRIGHT (239, SIXTH DOCTOR)

■ **DW • THE COMPANION CHRONICLES: THE SECOND DOCTOR: VOLUME TWO** (BOX SET)

■ **DW • JENNY - THE DOCTOR'S DAUGHTER** (BOX SET)

■ **DW • SHORT TRIPS: ERASURE** **DLO**
(86, FOURTH DOCTOR AND ADRIC)

■ **TORCHWOOD: GOODBYE PICCADILLY** (22)

■ **SURVIVORS: SERIES 8** (BOX SET)

■ **DARK SHADOWS: MAGGIE & QUENTIN - THE LOVERS' REFRAIN**

JULY 2018

■ **DW • MAIN RANGE: HOUR OF THE CYBERMEN** (240, SIXTH DOCTOR)

■ **DW • THE FIRST DOCTOR ADVENTURES: VOLUME TWO** (BOX SET)

■ **DW • THE EIGHTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: SERIES TWO** (BOX SET)

■ **DW • SHORT TRIPS: TRAP FOR FOOLS** **DLO**
(87, FIFTH DOCTOR AND TURLOUGH)

■ **TORCHWOOD: TBA** (23)

■ **TORCHWOOD ONE: MACHINES** (BOX SET)

■ **CALLAN: VOLUME ONE** (BOX SET)

AUGUST 2018

■ **DW • MAIN RANGE: RED PLANETS**
(241, SEVENTH DOCTOR, ACE AND MEL)

■ **DW • THE DIARY OF RIVER SONG: SERIES 4** (BOX SET)

■ **DW • SHORT TRIPS: THE DARKENED EARTH** **DLO**
(88, SIXTH DOCTOR AND CONSTANCE)

■ **THE AVENGERS: TOO MANY TARGETS**

■ **TORCHWOOD: DEADBEAT ESCAPE** (24)

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