

THE **BIG FINISH** MAGAZINE

VORTEX



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THE SIXTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES

THE ELEVEN

ONE OF Big Finish's most exciting accomplishments in recent years has been the creation of the Eleven. First introduced in the Eighth Doctor's **Doom Coalition** series, this renegade Time Lord retains the personalities of his previous incarnations which co-exist with his current persona.

Played by Mark Bonnar, we've heard him face the Seventh and Eighth Doctors, and now he's about to encounter another incarnation in **The Sixth Doctor Adventures: The Eleven**. Colin Baker stars as the Sixth Doctor alongside Miranda Raison playing Mrs Constance Clarke.

The box set will contain three adventures: *One for All* by Lizzie Hopley, *The Murder of Oliver Akkron* by Nigel Fairs and *Elevation* by Chris Chapman.

Producer David Richardson says: "The Eleven is a favourite character of mine, largely due to the performing powerhouse that is Mark Bonnar. We're so lucky to have him working for us at Big Finish. A while back Mark had mentioned that his real-life wife Lucy Gaskell (yes Kathy Nightingale in *Blink!*) would be interested in doing a Big Finish, and we were very keen, but it's taken a little while because I wanted to find the right part. And Miskavel is a great part – the Eleven's wife! Oh, what mayhem they can create together... And it's a lovely box set in which our three writers take these characters and really run wild with them." **VORTEX**

■ RELEASED: SEPTEMBER 2021
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EDITORIAL

SINCE DOCTOR Who returned to our screens we've met many new companions, joining the rollercoaster ride that is life in the TARDIS.

We all have our favourites but I've always been a huge fan of Rory Williams. He's the most down-to-earth person we've met – a nurse in his day job – who gets dragged into the Doctor's world through his relationship with Amelia Pond. And despite everything that he goes through, he's the most level-headed companion the Doctor has ever had – and loyally devoted to Amy until the very end.

I had the honour of having a lovely Zoom chat with Arthur Darvill, the actor who brings Rory to life, as he is soon to star in his own new Big Finish series, **The Lone Centurion**. It's going to be fast, furious and really, really fun.

And we've also got the small matter of a new series with David Tennant back as the Tenth Doctor in a new run of adventures called **Dalek Universe**. It's such an exciting set-up, and with so many memorable creations from the mind of the late, great Terry Nation featuring in it, it's hard to know where to begin. Oh, actually, that's not strictly true! **Dalek Universe** starts with a Fourth Doctor adventure, *The Dalek Protocol* written by Nicholas Briggs. Let the nightmare begin! **VORTEX**

Kerry



KINGDOM COME

THE TENTH DOCTOR IS BACK IN A BRAND NEW SERIES OF CONTINUING ADVENTURES...

DAVID TENNANT returns as the Tenth Doctor in **Dalek Universe**, nine hour-long episodes across three box sets, where the Doctor is pulled out of time and sent back to the era before the last great Time War. Along the way he

encounters his old travelling companion Anya Kingdom (played by Jane Slavin) – the undercover Space Security Service (SSS) agent previously known as Ann Kelso, and her android colleague Mark 7 (Joe Simms). Together they find themselves

battling for survival in a universe full of Daleks, Mechnoids, Movellans... and Davros!

Before you enter the **Dalek Universe**, make sure to listen to the prologue to the series – *The Dalek Protocol* – which stars Tom Baker as the Fourth



Jane Slavin

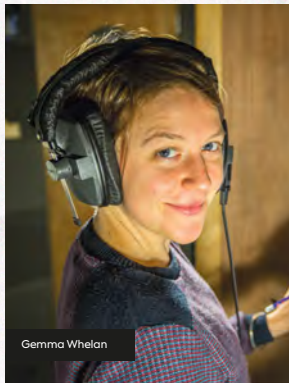
**EVEN IF YOU
ARE KILLED AND
YOUR HEAD IS
CHOPPED OFF,
THEY WILL FIND
A WAY TO BRING
YOU BACK!** JANE SLAVIN

Doctor and features Leela (Louise Jameson) and K9 (John Leeson).

Producer David Richardson explains: “**Dalek Universe** begins with *The Dalek Protocol* in which the Fourth Doctor and Leela encounter Mark 7 and the SSS. Or actually it starts with **The Diary of River Song Volume Eight**, in which River Song first meets Anya Kingdom and Mark 7. Actually, no, it first begins with **The Fourth Doctor Adventures Series Eight**, which first introduces Anya...!!

“How exciting it is to work on storytelling this huge and detailed. To have characters that are on such a big journey with all these separate strands leading to the Tenth Doctor and Anya Kingdom, meeting again on the planet Mira just as time itself is about to fall apart. For those who wish to explore it all, it will be a rewarding experience. And for those who listen to just **Dalek Universe**, it will stand by itself and make perfect sense. The best of both worlds!”

The Dalek Protocol has been written by Nicholas Briggs who tells us: “Initially it was one of those lovely suggestions from



Gemma Whelan

David Richardson. He asked for a proper sequel to *Death to the Daleks*, with the Doctor returning to Exxilion. And then he said, ‘Oh, and what about putting Mark 7 in it’. I was very excited. Then he said, ‘Oooh, and Anya Kingdom too’. I was even more excited but rather concerned about breaking the integrity of the Doctor’s timeline – but we soon thought of a way out of that!

“*The Dalek Protocol* sets up the relationship between Anya and Mark, essentially. And they work really well together. It’s a nice vibe.

“It’s a story that’s very much in two parts even though it’s a four-part. Some of the story is on a spaceship, heading into danger. The other part is on Exxilion with an old friend of the Doctor’s and a

new enemy for him too. But there are plenty of Daleks as well!”

Jane Slavin is delighted to be back in Anya Kingdom’s space boots.

She tells *Vortex*: “I was determined that Anya was going to come back. I just thought the **Doctor Who** world is such that, even if you are killed and your head is chopped off, they will find a way to bring you back! I was initially really upset at the end of Ann Kelso as I loved that character, but Anya has turned out to be just as interesting, especially in these Dalek stories with David Tennant. They are just wonderful adventures, she’s got many areas to explore.”

THE FIRST box set of **Dalek Universe** features guest stars Mark Gatiss, Kevin McNally and Gemma Whelan. *Buying Time* by John Dorney (who is also one of the script editors) kicks off the series. *The far future – Anya Kingdom of the Space Security Service is on a mission investigating an SSS ship crashing on a distant jungle planet. Unknown to her superiors she’s searching for something very specific... but what she finds is completely unexpected. Her old friend, the Doctor. With a completely different face and no idea what he’s doing there.*

The adventure continues in *The Wrong Woman*, also written by John,

where the team's investigations have taken an unexpected turn but the signs all still point to businessman, Sheldrake, who is preparing to launch commercial time tunnels.

John reveals: "**Dalek Universe** is a plan we've had on the back burner for a while. It was an idea we started developing at the end of 2019, scheduled for a bit further

John was also pleased to bring back Anya. He continues: "We always felt there was more we could tell with Anya, even to the degree of properly specifying how she was related to Sara Kingdom, and that's something we look at as we dive into this series, it was part of the impetus.

"There is also a story arc to be told, with her arc of

history with the Doctor. At the same time they were still – broadly speaking – a bit of a blank slate, and Anya is similar to a degree.

"She's had an encounter with the Doctor but we don't know much more about who she really is, so there's plenty to explore, and that was part of the thinking to bring her back."

WITH ANYA AND MARK BEING SPACE SECURITY AGENTS, THERE IS SOMETHING INHERENTLY TERRY NATION ABOUT THEM.

JOHN DORNEY

in the future, but when lockdown happened and David Tennant was available it meant that we could bring it forward and release it sooner than we originally intended.

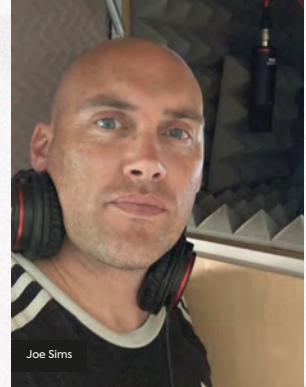
"We had been looking at developing more stories with Jane Slavin's Anya Kingdom, and when Nick was writing his Fourth Doctor story, *The Dalek Protocol*, he teamed Anya up with Mark 7. Joe Sims, who plays Mark 7, has a previous working relationship with David Tennant as they were both in **Broadchurch**. That's when I started working on an overall arc for this series.

"Part of the stories came about as, with Anya and Mark being Space Security agents, there is something inherently Terry Nation about them. When I was coming up with ideas for my scripts in this first set, I thought, 'This doesn't feel right, it doesn't feel like something you can drop a Space Security agent into – it needs to have a James Bond in space feel'. Otherwise, it's weirdly disconnected.

"That led to getting rid of the TARDIS, for example, setting it instead in a fixed location and time, the same period as *The Daleks' Master Plan* and *The Syndicate Master Plan*, and the fall out from that, with some of the routes into the story, and it became clear we could have a lot of fun bouncing around the Terry Nation universe. It's almost more of a Terry Nation universe than a Dalek Universe!"

redemption, and that all fed into telling this specific adventure at this specific time.

"When I wrote *The Syndicate Master Plan*, I thought there was something brilliant about the delegates as they had some



Joe Sims





David Tennant

WITH DALEK *Universe* taking place after the Fourth Doctor story, John had a challenge on his hands. He explains: "I was always determined that you should be able to listen to the David Tennant box sets and be able to follow them without any prior knowledge. The plan initially was for *The Dalek Protocol* to be released a few years later and gaps could be filled in afterwards, so I was careful to make the Tenth Doctor *Dalek Universe* stuff stand alone and also not spoil any of the surprises from *The Dalek Protocol*."

"*Buying Time* and *The Wrong Woman* are a two-part story, a Tenth Doctor Russell T Davies-style adventure with a cliffhanger in the middle. I can't really say too much about *The Wrong Woman* but one of the things I was keen to do was to make it feel like you're starting with a finale. The size and scale then just gets bigger and bigger as you figure out what's going on. There are lots of twists and surprises going on."

"I also wanted it to be fast and funny. I remember reading something where either Russell T Davies or Steven Moffat talked



about how they would do a finale: they would create big moments and set pieces and work out how to connect them. I realised I'd got a few big moments I could hang the story off, and work a path between them, which gives a crazy journey on a large scale and hopefully a great sense of fun. The cheekiest way of putting it is it's a little bit tarty, saying, 'Look at me!'"

THE HOUSE of *Kingdom* by Andrew Smith concludes the set as the Doctor, Anya and Mark 7 are on a space station which is attacked. They escape to the house of Anya's grandfather, Merrick Kingdom, on Neptune (which is being terraformed by the Mechnoids) but family tensions soon surface.

John says: "One of the joys of being about to tell a story over nine parts is you can do a variety of tones and explore different things. The brief for Andrew was that this is where we look into Anya's family history, and what she knows and what the

THE CHEEKIEST WAY OF PUTTING IT IS IT'S A LITTLE BIT TARTY, SAYING, 'LOOK AT ME!' JOHN DORNEY

Doctor knows. There's the question of what happened to Bret and Sara in the television series? We know Bret is gunned down but Sara effectively vanishes after killing her brother – so where does that lead? That was our start for this story. But at no point does the Doctor mention this to Anya, so we have potential for dramatic energy there.

"We were always thinking early on about using the Mechnoids and for a while they were going to be in my two-parter, though I wasn't sure how to tie them into the main story. Eventually I emailed

Andrew and asked if he had any ideas for the Mechnoids. Within a week, he emailed me back a plot using them. Hopefully people will have fun seeing them back!"

ANDREW, WRITING for the Tenth Doctor for the first time, says: "I was really excited to have the chance to write for another Doctor, actually. The thing with the Tenth Doctor is that he says things before he's fully formed a thought, and it tumbles out. Right from the TV special *The Christmas Invasion* he does that, and it's all down to David Tennant's delivery. I didn't have any issues with it, I felt I was doing it correctly, right from the start: I didn't get any notes on the tone or the character after the first draft.

"The energy of this Doctor is something else, and it affects the pace of the story – boom, boom, boom! They don't stand around for long, they get on with it. He's a Doctor who doesn't wait for things to happen, he gets things done and is in people's faces. That energy is all over the play."



THE ENERGY OF THIS DOCTOR IS SOMETHING ELSE, AND IT AFFECTS THE PACE OF THE STORY – BOOM, BOOM, BOOM!

ANDREW SMITH

"The brief I got was rather open and there was the option to use the Mechnoids. I've actually studied the Mechnoids before, doing my usual research and taking lots of notes and thinking about what they were about. I had a lightbulb moment when I saw where they could fit into this story, which was really fun to do. There's an element regarding Varga plants (deadly plants native to the planet Skaro) which I was able to use as well."

Although monsters feature in the adventure, they aren't at the heart of the tale. Andrew reveals: "We look into Anya Kingdom's family. It was an odd thing, trying to work out what her relationship would

be to Sara Kingdom and Bret Vyon, and what was Sara's relationship to Bret. She says he was her brother after she kills him but that's it. So I worked something out. We've got her grandfather in this story too, Merrick Kingdom, and her grandmother was mother to Sara and also Lena, who is Sara's sister. Anya is Lena's daughter.

"Her grandparents divorced and her grandmother married someone else whose surname was Vyon, so he's Uncle Bret. I drew up a family tree and circulated it to the other writers after I ran it past David and John – I had to get it all straight in my head!

"It was nice to play around with the Kingdom family. Family is always a

rich source of narrative possibilities – conflict and threat, loss, emotion and all that sort of thing. Relationships are always a good well to draw from, and I made the most of that.

"It comes up in the story that Anya doesn't like her grandfather very much. After her mother died they have a fractious relationship and she unexpectedly ends up on a planet with her grandfather.

"She has to sort the relationship out – is there actually affection there under the surface? And when push comes to shove, does a blood relationship outrank other plots or interests people might have?

"And then I threw in the Mechnoids. We have them doing their thing of planet building, and there's one we call Archie, who's kind of a butler for Anya's grandfather. That was quite nice as he has a bit of character. His designation is RG-183. RG phonetically becomes 'Archie'. Every time I use a number in my writing it has significance for me – 183 is the first part of my old police warrant number."



HOME RECORDING WAS ALMOST THERAPEUTIC, IN A WAY, AS THE WORLD WAS IN SUCH A STATE OUTSIDE OF OUR HOMES AT THAT POINT DURING LOCKDOWN.

JANE SLAVIN

RECORDING THE series in lockdown posed its own problems for the cast, especially during the hottest months of 2020. Jane reveals: "I'd bought some kit before we officially locked down. I'd always wanted to have recording equipment at home, and I never thought it would make its money back, but that I could record poems and stories for people – or even myself.

"The first thing I did was with Tom Baker, just reading in, and very soon afterwards David Richardson said Big Finish was going to do a series of box sets with David Tennant.

"Home recording was almost therapeutic, in a way, as the world was in such a state outside of our homes at that point during lockdown. And because it was **Doctor Who** we knew we were going to be OK in the end! It was a real tonic for the actors.

"Our director Ken Bentley was wonderful. He sent us text messages saying things like, 'It's going to be 34 degrees today – a



Mark Gatiss

handy hint is to put a wet towel in the fridge then put it round your neck if it gets too hot.' It was just lovely little things like that which really helped. However tricky it got, and if anything technical let us down, Ken was very calm, gentle and funny – I felt he was looking after us. David Tennant was so good natured – he always

has been, he's not even vaguely grumpy – and Joe Sims was excited to be pretty much a companion."

Jane is no stranger to working with David Tennant, saying: "I've worked with David before on the radio and it was a thrill to be working with him on a **Doctor Who**. I really want to act my way through the Doctors! I'm lucky enough to have worked with Jon Pertwee and obviously Tom – I hope to be in something with them all at some point.

"David's really diligent in the way he works, he puts his whole heart into it. He knows the subject and if there was a line that was out of sync in some way or he felt it needed clarifying, we would talk about it. He's quite forensic!" **VORTEX**

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THE GLORY OF RORY

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE LONE CENTURION AS HE WAITS FOR THE PANDORICA TO OPEN?

IF EVER there were a time for friends, Romans and countrymen to lend their ears – it's now... In the television episodes *The Pandorica Opens*/*The Big Bang* we learned about

the lone centurion – a mysterious Roman soldier who stood guard over the Pandorica, warning off those who would attempt to open it. A constant warrior whose story appeared in the folk history of a dozen civilisations,

the solitary soul was revealed to be Rory Williams, the husband-to-be of Amelia Pond.

Having made several appearances as different characters in Big Finish productions, this April Arthur Darvill



Arthur Darvill

idea of a series set during his time as the lone centurion. It allows us to focus on Rory away from the Doctor and Amy, but also doesn't compromise the ongoing storylines that were established on screen. Even then Arthur was a little uncertain but happily the concept intrigued him. So we met up for a coffee in London one evening, thrashed a few thoughts around about how it could play out, and walked away with **The Lone Centurion** raring to go!"

TALKING EXCLUSIVELY to *Vortex*, Arthur says: "I've always been really hesitant to come back as Rory. Whenever that's been suggested, I've always

IT FELT LIKE THE RIGHT TIME TO ADDRESS THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM AND ASK IF [ARTHUR] FANCIED REVISITING RORY. SCOTT HANDCOCK

reprises his role as Rory once more. Producer Scott Handcock reveals: "The series came about in a really weird way actually. I've known Arthur for about a decade, ever since we worked together on TV **Doctor Who**. He's come in and played a few parts for things I've produced for Big Finish, first a villain in **Bernice Summerfield**, then a **Dark Shadows** and a **Torchwood** – and of course **Frankenstein**. At the **Torchwood** recording in 2017, he happened to mention his mum, Ellie, had been doing some radio work with the BBC and would love to do a Big Finish, so we got her in too. Then around a year and a half ago, Ellie mentioned that Arthur would love to do something more, and it felt like the right time to address the elephant in the room and ask if he fancied revisiting Rory.



Aysha Antoine
(Locusta)

"I knew Arthur was a little unsure at the idea of Rory returning – his main concern was spoiling the arc that had been developed on TV. And that's really why I leapt on the

gone, "Well, yeah, okay, maybe, let's do some other things first – but then Scott finally wore me down!

"To be really candid the reason I didn't want to do it was that I felt the work we had done on **Doctor Who** was quite sacred. That storyline was very precious to me – I didn't want to do anything that interfered with it.

"And then, after some time had passed, I had a proper chat with Scott about it. He pitched the idea of the lone centurion, and I just thought it was a brilliant one as it doesn't interfere with anything else, and there's real scope for light and fun. If it had been dark and moody, I wouldn't have been interested. The amusing comedy side of it really appealed to me, and I saw it as such a good opportunity for the writers to have a field day with the material.

"I think Rory's such a great character as so often, for so much of it, he's on the outside looking in. I always saw him as representing

the audience's point of view – especially in the first TV season.”

THE OPENING story of this box set sees Rory travelling to Rome in search of the Pandorica but he finds himself forced to perform as a gladiator in the Colosseum, attracting the attention of the Imperial household. Scott explains: “After I heard Arthur was up for some audio recording, the idea of revisiting Rory became

work with him on something a little more light-hearted after so much **Torchwood!** Arthur was also really keen to make something fun and tackle more comedy, which nicely steered us away from stepping on the toes of other Big Finish immortals like Captain Jack or Dorian Gray.”

Scott confirms there's a huge amount of fun in this series: “The finished episodes are fantastically silly. They've been a joy to record, and an even greater joy to listen to

“Our first volume, set in Ancient Rome, opens with Rory in the gladiatorial ring, and events spiral out from there. It's actually a perfect place to set a series like this. It's a world populated with so many larger than life characters – emperors and assassins and soothsayers – that plunging Rory (with all his memories of the 21st century) into the thick of it proves a really enjoyable clash. And he can't just walk away because he's on a very personal mission to protect the Pandorica. That's sort of the key to the character: he isn't a superhero, he can't defeat his enemies single-handed, but he's fiercely loyal and will lay down his life for the woman he loves. Even though she's not present, the stories really honour the Rory/Amy relationship.”



Robyn Holdaway
(Decima)

irresistible, and I found myself chatting through ideas with James Goss during some downtime at 2019's Big Finish Day. We latched onto the idea of a **Blackadder**-esque series that flitted through different timelines, and James was great at suggesting possibilities beyond the initial volume in Ancient Rome. It's been lovely to

in the edits. That's the wonderful thing about working with someone like Arthur. Even in the most ridiculous of situations, he finds the emotional truth. He's not afraid to send himself up when the script requires it, but everything he does, all the choices he makes, come from a very human place.

APPROPRIATELY FOR
A ROMAN, I LOVE HIM
LIKE SALT! (NOT TRYING
TO IMPLY HE GIVES
ME HYPER-TENSION
THOUGH!) JACQUELINE RAYNER

THE ADVENTURES begin with *Gladiator* by David Llewellyn. *Kidnapped*, Rory is taken to Rome and thrown into the arena where his hapless inability to die brings him to the attention of the Emperor.

David says: “I often get asked to write opening episodes, especially by Scott, so I can only assume it's something I'm reasonably good at! Endings are a pain. If I had my way every story would end with, 'and then they all went home and everything was lovely', or 'and then everything exploded and they all died'. Beginnings are exciting because absolutely anything can happen!”

What kind of brief did Scott give David? He replies: “It was quite open. We were going back to Rory's days in Ancient Rome, and he was to become bodyguard to one of the Caesars. I remember pitching an idea that was a bit

Samantha Béart
(Anna)

like Rosemary Sutcliffe's *The Eagle of the Ninth* but that didn't quite work, so we settled on the idea of Rory starting off as a gladiator.

"What was stressed from the start was that this didn't need to be a historically accurate Rome, because it's not quite our Ancient Rome, so that gave us licence to have fun. It's probably the closest thing to **Carry on Cleo** or **Up, Pompeii!** I'll ever write. Or maybe **I, Claudius** if it had been written by a young Evelyn Waugh instead of Robert Graves. There's gladiatorial combat, skulduggery, a bowdlerized Greek tragedy and murder most foul."

THE SECOND adventure is *The Unwilling Assassin* by Sarah Ward. *The Roman Empire has a new official assassin – lethal, cunning and utterly unsuited to the job. Can Rory Williams succeed at assassination without actually killing anyone?*

Sarah tells *Vortex*: "The brief was pretty flexible. Rory, a gladiator in the Roman Empire whose strength is legendary, stands guard over the Pandorica. As an Auton he is indestructible but hates harming others. I was asked to write the middle story where Rory is an unwilling assassin who has to carry out killings. Only

Rory has no intention of killing anyone and concocts ingenious plans to avoid his duties.

"I love escaping into imaginary worlds. I fell down the rabbit hole into an alternative Roman Empire and loved every minute of it."

The set concludes with *I, Rorius* by Jacqueline Rayner which sees Rory wanting a return to his normal life.

Drowning in a sea of plots and conspiracies, Rory just wants his life back. But in Ancient Rome, people don't retire, they die. And that's a bit difficult when you're immortal.

Jac grins: "Appropriately for a Roman, I love him like salt! (Not trying to imply he gives me hypertension though!)"

"Scott brought together three writers who have a background in

IF I HAD MY WAY EVERY
STORY WOULD END
WITH, 'AND THEN
THEY ALL WENT HOME
AND EVERYTHING WAS
LOVELY'... DAVID LLEWELLYN

ancient history in some way and presented us with the overview of how Rory's time in Rome would go. I rather enjoyed getting to round off his adventures there."

How much fun is there to be had with this character and the settings?

Jac tells us: "Almost too much! Scott and James had to rein me in so the comedy bits wouldn't overtake or undermine the drama and heart that Rory deserves."

Arthur adds: "I got to work with my wife, Inès [De Clercq], who's in one of them, which was great. We recorded them at home because we were in lockdown, but we've got quite noisy neighbours so I built a duvet fort around my sofa to muffle the sound. I loved being able to come downstairs and go to work in my little 'hut'. We just had a real laugh. You can't see anyone when recording but you can hear them, it's such a different type of acting."

Normally when you're recording audio plays you can see each other, but this required a different level of concentration as you are really listening to everything.

"It's amazing what technology can do now – everyone really went for it and got the tone straight away."

ROB HARVEY is responsible for the sound design and music on this tale. He admits: "Having the opportunity to really be all over a series like this is a dream. And having a character like Rory to write music for is

WE'VE GOT QUITE NOISY NEIGHBOURS SO I BUILT A DUVET FORT AROUND MY SOFA TO MUFFLE THE SOUND.

ARTHUR DARVILL

everything. He's a modest, lovable altruist with a moral compass and he knows exactly what's right. He has no ego and will always do the right thing so long as he protects his Amy trapped inside the Pandorica.

"He's a hero in that sense but he's not standing in front of millions with his chest puffed out. He's just making sure he makes a difference in small meaningful ways. For me that's the most exciting part to be grappling with. The underdog that has the courage to stand up for the little guy when he sees something's wrong. Being involved in the musical and sound design side of things is allowing me to put my own spin on it. The material I'm writing is not the usual sound Big Finish go for, so for me that's a really fun avenue to explore.

"So far the biggest challenge which has also been the highlight is nailing down the exact tone of the music. Travelling through time in **Doctor Who** stories always has elements of the period, however this walks the line of a historical story with a twist. So it's been fun and challenging researching exactly what Roman music sounds like. You



Ming Anwar
(Juliana)

have a rough idea based upon the instruments we know they had, but we actually have no music from this period written down. So I've had to figure out what needs to be happening. We also know roughly what their trade routes would have looked like in those days, so this gives us more of an insight into what influences their music might have had. I've had to brush up on my harp playing along with instruments like the traditional flute. But then with all that said and done, I've got the challenge of adding in modern influences like the electric guitar for full effect!"

Arthur concludes: "The stories are so good. They are such a romp,

proper standalone adventures and you think, 'This could be actually be a TV show'. I've only listened to little bits of it so far but it always amazes me how good the sound design is. There are loads of little Easter Eggs in there as well, and it's really silly in places – I think we could all do with a little bit of that just now." **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO: THE LONE CENTURION

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DOCTOR WHO: THE LOST STORIES

THE NIGHTMARE FAIR

SINCE 2009 Big Finish has been bringing **Doctor Who** stories which were planned for television, but ultimately never made, to life in **The Lost Stories** range.

The first release in the range, *The Nightmare Fair*, was adapted from Graham Williams's original script, and it would have been aired in 1986 had it been realised for television.

Colin Baker recalls: "I was on an aeroplane with John Nathan-Turner and he pulled the script for *The Nightmare Fair* out of his bag. It was going to be the first story we recorded of the next season – the one which was cancelled. I read it on the plane and said, 'Ooh, I'm so looking forward to doing this' because of the idea of working with the Toymaker, who was a character I remember fondly from having seen his first appearance on the screen. It was a brilliant script, I loved it."

Responsible for adapting *The Nightmare Fair* for audio was John Ainsworth, who was also the play's director. He says: "Some bits were certainly more difficult than others to adapt. However, it wasn't always the scenes that initially looked more

difficult that actually proved to be so! For instance, the opening sequence of the story where a lone man is chased by 'something' through the deserted fairground would certainly look, on the face of it, to be hard to create on audio alone. Certainly producer David Richardson was worried about it. But actually I didn't have too much trouble with it and I think it works nicely."

As well as referring to Graham Williams's original script, John also tapped into the writer's novelisation of the story. John reveals: "The novel which was also written by Graham was a very clear indication of how he wanted the adventure to be. What was particularly interesting – and gratifying – was that occasionally I would add in a little bit of dialogue here and there to the more visual scenes in the script, just to help paint the audio picture. I would then read the same sequence in the novel to compare it and would often find that Graham had inserted almost exactly the same dialogue as I had. So I took that as a good omen that I was thinking along the right lines."

Sound designer and musician Jamie Robertson recalls: "At that

time I was living near Great Yarmouth, and I asked at the local pleasure beach if I could do some recording but they wanted to charge me ridiculous amounts to make an audio just of the sound of a rollercoaster. And I mean a lot of money! It just wasn't reasonable so the ambience sounds are of the Great Yarmouth area and I stitched together several library recordings for the rollercoaster."

John was very pleased with the finished *The Nightmare Fair*. He says: "Of all **The Lost Stories** that I've directed – or at least the ones based on actual TV scripts – I think this was the most successful. That sounds like I'm patting myself on the back for a good adaptation, but I think its success has a lot to do with the fact that it is the most well known of **The Lost Stories**." **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO: THE LOST STORIES THE NIGHTMARE FAIR

- RELEASED: MAY 2016
- FORMAT: CD/DOWNLOAD

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BOOM-DE-AY

THE AVENGERS ARE BACK AND THERE'S A FAMILIAR NAME IN THE CREDITS...

JOHN STEED and Tara King were the final pairing in the original television run of **The Avengers**, where Patrick Macnee and Linda Thorson encountered some of the series's most

outrageous story ideas. And their adventures have continued on audio with Big Finish releasing adaptations of the comic strips which appeared in *TV Comic*. Julian Wadham and Emily Woodward fill the shoes and kinky boots of the legends that are Steed and Tara.

And now for the first time, one of the original leading TV stars of **The Avengers** is appearing in the Big Finish series, as Linda Thorson herself guests stars

in **The Avengers: The Comic Strip Adaptations Volume 05**.

Producer David Richardson says: "Picture this: there I was booking Emily for the recording days, and her lovely agent Phil just happened to say, 'I also represent Linda Thorson, I'm sure she'd love to do one of these!' I could not reply fast enough! And so thanks to Phil, Linda is our guest star in the episode *Mother's Day*, and what an utter joy she is to work with.



(l-r): Linda Thorson
and Emily Woodward

She was so delighted to be acting with Julian and Emily (she's been a friend of Emily's mum Michelle Dotrice for many years), and she kept us laughing and shared many stories of her time on the TV series. What a legend – I'd love to work with her again."

Linda tells us: "Patrick Macnee used to say, **'The Avengers is forever. There'll always be an Avengers.'** That was his favourite quote. Little did he know that Big Finish would take it on. I think it goes very, very well on audio. I give it ten out of ten.

"Julian Wadham has got the elegance, the lightness of touch, and the slight sardonic savoir faire of Steed. And Emily Woodward is really something. Talent is in every bone of her body. She's fiercely wonderful. I love her. And I just thought the script was fabulous."

Emily adds: "We were all in masks and Linda came in and told me, 'I was so nervous this morning about meeting Tara King,' which was so lovely and it put

me at ease. We discovered we had many links between us, and it was just such a great day in studio – a wonderful, kind-hearted woman."

MOTHER'S DAY, the fourth story in the set, has been adapted by Sarah Grochala. Script editor John Dorney says: "*Mother's Day* is obviously a special one. We were already excited by the storyline as it features Mother and we could properly use Christopher Benjamin to the fullest. But when the possibility came of getting Linda Thorson involved, an assassin was the obvious part for her to play. She's the big guest star of the episode."

Writer Sarah reveals she included parts of the original comic strip: "I was able to use some but not all of it as the story in the comic was a little simplistic for an hour long drama. It was basically a series of comic skits in which two unidentified villains try to assassinate Mother when he's invited to give a trophy at his old school

sports day. While it worked well for an episodic comic strip, it needed more of a story arc to work on audio.

"I had quite a bit of licence to do what I wanted, and it was an interesting challenge to work out what to keep and what to change. I made some adjustments to the character of Mother's Aunt Gertrude as she was just a foil in the comic strip and I wanted to give her something more meaty to do. I also needed to rethink the nature of the villains of the piece and give a little more logic to why they were trying to assassinate

**PATRICK MACNEE
USED TO SAY,
'THE AVENGERS IS
FOREVER. THERE'LL
ALWAYS BE AN
AVENGERS.'**

LINDA THORSON

Mother. I kept several of the methods of assassination by sports day from the comic strip and added in a couple of my own. I also added in a befuddled estate agent, just for fun!"

WHATEVER NEXT? by John Dorney is the first story in this set. *After an eccentric scientist correctly predicts an imminent asteroid collision, John Steed and Tara King are dispatched to uncover the basis of his precognitive powers.*

John says: "I gave myself a difficult task. The story has a lot of potential but even by **Avengers** standards, it's a little insane! The original plot involves a scientist being able to predict the future, largely because he's being given information by aliens who exist outside time. This veers off into Steed and Tara travelling on an alien spacecraft to meet Father Time himself and all manner of strange things that – and this may come as no surprise – don't end up in my story! So that left me wondering,

how can I make this idea work as an **Avengers** story? I took a good chunk of the original comic adventure, though, and took inspiration from a few Emma Peel stories.

"I also brought back Brodny, the ambassador for 'the other side', who was played by Warren Mitchell on screen. We'd already used Brodny in *Too Many Targets*, where he was played by Dan Starkey. I felt he

The climax is based around the visual pun of having a World War I Tiger Moth piloted by Steed menaced by a giant butterfly, which looks great on the page but again needed something a bit extra for audio.

"I think that the artist had clearly enjoyed doing all the details with the RAF planes from different periods and so forth, so I tried to respect that by using a bit of choice RAF slang which I

"I'm sure that there are some details that might not be exactly how the RAF in the late 1960s might have functioned, but we are in a world where giant butterflies can be conjured up with special fertiliser so I hope I'm allowed a bit of artistic license..."

THE THIRD story of the set is

A Very Civil War by Roland Moore. *Steed and Tara are summoned to investigate a most unusual robbery – where the robbers don't seem to have been interested in taking the money. How does the mystery tie in to a local Civil War re-enactment society?*

Roland says: "I had the original comic strip, which, as with all of **The**



THE ARTIST HAD CLEARLY ENJOYED DOING ALL THE DETAILS WITH THE RAF PLANES FROM DIFFERENT PERIODS... DAN STARKEY

would be a good fit, as a character, for this story and it was good fun going back and watching his TV episodes. There's a running gag in his two episodes, the same gag, which I felt obliged to use in the audio."

HOW DOES your *Garden Grow*?

by Dan Starkey sees the plants around an air force base grow to prodigious proportions over-night, and an explanation is required. Dan reveals: "I took the salient details of the story and added a bit more solid plot and motivation: a story that can be told perfectly satisfactorily in a visual medium doesn't always withstand the audio treatment when you pick it apart. In the original, the farmer character realises he's blundered, sort of says 'sorry' at the end and that's it, which isn't the most dramatic treatment.



think is a reasonable audio equivalent of all these details. Then it was a case of having a more dastardly plan and an explicit villain that the original lacks.

Avengers comic strips, is a series of one-page instalments telling a single story. I know with some of these that parts are sometimes missing, but I was lucky to have the whole thing.

"The comic strip is built around having a solid cliff-hanger at the end of each instalment to make people come back next week. That's sometimes at the expense of any deep motivation or real interaction for the characters. So the story in the comic strip was minimal but it told an exciting tale of a mysterious – impossible – robbery. That's the element that really intrigued me; the 'locked room' mystery of a robbery where nothing is taken. It seems like case closed really early on, except that Steed suspects that all isn't as it seems..."

"I loved expanding this story for audio. The comic gives a great



Linda Thorson

with him, especially with his **Avengers** connection. He said to me at one point, 'I have a poster of your mum on my wall', as his dad wrote a film my mum was in called *And Soon the Darkness*, and my mum is lying as a dead body on the poster. My mum would speak fondly of his dad, and my dad [Edward Woodward] worked with Brian in the 1990s on **CI5: The New Professionals**. It's lovely having that mutual thing before we even get on the blower!

"After four days of being in the studio and talking constantly, getting notes in our ears, we got to the last Tara and Steed line, and Sam cut and said, 'There's

I LOVED EXPANDING THIS STORY FOR AUDIO. THE COMIC GIVES A GREAT TEMPLATE THAT'S LOOSE ENOUGH TO BUILD UPON.

ROLAND MOORE



Greg Patmore

of the characters was fun. I was also able to add some set pieces.

"In the comic, Steed and Tara King join a re-enactment society and never really do anything before their covers are blown. I wanted to show the dangers of their induction tests into that society and the cat and mouse game that ensued. That also allowed me to build up the threat of the villain and reveal his motivation."

SUPERVISING THE

recording of this series as director was Samuel Clemens, whose father Brian had been the creative co-producer for the majority of the original run of **The Avengers**. Emily, who went into a studio for the recording after months in lockdown, says: "I hadn't worked with Sam before but it was lovely having the chance to record

an absolutely beautiful rainbow outside of my window.' It was lovely. I like to look for signs like that – perhaps his dad sending a message – and it was the first time some of us had worked in a while. With what we're going through, that rainbow was really significant."

Emily adds: "We've got a member of the Clemens family plus the original Tara in this box set – and she's playing a baddie, which is fantastic!" **VORTEX**

template that's loose enough to build upon. Taking the central plot of a robbery where nothing is missing and building on the motivation

**THE AVENGERS:
THE COMIC STRIP ADAPTATIONS**
VOLUME 5: STEED AND TARA KING

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DAVID BRADLEY
RETURNS TO PLAY
THE FIRST DOCTOR
IN HIS FIFTH BOX SET
OF ADVENTURES...

BRAD THERAPY

WE GO back to the future in **The First Doctor Adventures Volume Five**, when the TARDIS heads to Elizabethan England and an alien world. The adventures are brought to vivid life with David Bradley as the First Doctor, Jamie Glover as Ian, Jemma Powell as Barbara and Claudia Grant as Susan, in two stories set during the first television season of **Doctor Who**.

The set opens with *The Hollow Crown* by Sarah Grochala.

When the TARDIS materialises in Shoreditch, 1601, the Doctor suggests going to see a play at the Globe Theatre and his friends readily agree. But this is a turbulent time. There is violence in the street, plots against the Queen, and rebellion is in the air. At the centre of it all stands the most famous playwright in British history – William Shakespeare – who is having troubles of his own.

Sarah tells *Vortex*: "I already know quite a lot about Shakespeare as I work in theatre, and I've been studying and performing his plays for

years. I've read and/or seen most of them – some I've seen a huge number of times! I was also in a few of them when I was an actress. Most of the research I did specifically for this adventure was historical and I read a couple of books on Shakespeare's London. I also read and really loved James Shapiro's book *1599* which is about a year in Shakespeare's life. My episode was set in 1601 but even so, the book was really helpful. I also spent lots of time looking at a map of London from around Shakespeare's

time so that I could make sure that the geography of the city was right.”

Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth I of England, two characters who have met the Tenth Doctor in TV appearances, gave an added element to Sarah's script. She continues: “I loved writing for them, they're two characters that I'm fascinated with! It was also interesting writing for them within the context of what other writers have done for **Doctor Who**. There is a nod to Elizabeth's previous relationship with the Doctor and to the fact that Shakespeare has met the Doctor before. The First Doctor however looks very different to the Tenth Doctor so neither of them recognise this incarnation.”

Wendy Craig stars as Her Majesty, and says: “This is really going back

I WANTED TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT A PAROCHIAL SOCIETY. I LOVED THE IDEA OF A TINY, TINY WORLD EXCEEDING THE LIMITS OF ITS INHABITANTS' HORIZONS

GUY ADAMS



(l-r): Jemma Powell, Jamie Glover, David Bradley and Wendy Craig

to ancient history. I've always wanted to play Queen Elizabeth I. I think she's the most wonderful woman – the most wonderful character. I've not played royalty before as I am always rather more 'below stairs' really!”

THE SECOND story, *For the Glory of Urth* by Guy Adams, is the set's science fiction adventure. *The TARDIS has barely landed in an alien sewer when a distant scream sends Susan racing*

to give aid, and the crew split up. Trying to reunite, the travellers find themselves in something resembling a monastery led by a man half-way between an Abbot and a warlord. They discover that they are in 'Urth', a barbaric place clinging on to its former glory. It's somewhere its populace are never allowed to leave, somewhere keeping many secrets from its people.

Guy says: “With **The First Doctor Adventures**, you tend to either have a historical or a science fiction story. Having written *The*

Great White Hurricane, I think it was time for me to do a nice 1960s-style sci-fi adventure.

“The difficulty with these ranges, in many ways, is you're trying to channel the flavour and atmosphere of the time so they feel of a pace with the original TV series. But at the same time you're a writer living in the 21st century so it's nigh on impossible to keep those influences, thoughts and concerns out of your work, no matter how hard you try. We're the product of our environments, we're full sponges that can't help but leak.

“Hopefully, this script will fit into that early **Doctor Who** world but also contain a few things to discuss that are as relevant today as they were back then.

“I wanted to do something about a parochial society. I loved the idea of a tiny, tiny world exceeding the limits of its inhabitants' horizons – there is nothing beyond Urth. So when the TARDIS materialises on this enclosed, claustrophobic society, the crew are soon split up and deal with several different threats in true 1960s **Doctor Who** style, with monsters in sewers and monsters at the very top of society too.”

GUY ADDS: “When I'm writing for the First Doctor, the voice in my head is somewhere between William Hartnell and David Bradley. I find it very hard to not let my ears get a little bit infected by the performance, and David's performance is brilliant – it's his performance of the First Doctor as well as a beautiful channelling of William Hartnell.

“David's a great actor, and great actors don't just do impressions. They can't – the quality will always shine through and it will become something more multi-layered and textured. Listen carefully and you will hear the delightful elements that are more Bradley than Hartnell.” **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO: THE FIRST DOCTOR ADVENTURES VOLUME 5

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LOVE SONG

I've just finished listening to **The Diary of River Song Series Eight** and I loved it! The relationship between River and Rachel is beautiful and heart-warming. I loved the references to River having adventures with the War Doctor, the Ninth Doctor, the Eleventh Doctor and the surprise cameo! I hope we get to hear some of River's adventures with the War Doctor and the Ninth Doctor. I really enjoyed *Queen of the Mechonoids* and how it sets up **Dalek Universe**. I would like to finish by saying that I really appreciate what everyone at Big Finish has been doing these

past months to ensure that despite what's going on we still get to enjoy your fantastic stories. Thank you so much!

ANDRÉ LUCAS

Nick: You are so welcome, André. It's what we love doing, and when the pandemic stopped us from getting into studios, it almost didn't occur to me that we might have to stop! Benji and I have been recording the podcast remotely (from two different locations) for years, so I immediately set about adapting and refining that process so that we could connect actors and directors. It works a treat.

CDs SHELVED?

I found the letter from Louise Wade and subsequent reply interesting. You have now announced a series 14 of **Jago & Lightfoot** but it only appears as a digital download. I don't buy downloads and I have all the other **Jago & Lightfoot** series on CD. Can I request that you reconsider as I'm sure many fans would wish to keep their collection complete by purchasing the CD version? While I understand environmental and storage concerns, nothing can beat physical media. I currently have all the **Doctor Who**

and spin off CDs from Big Finish and would like to continue buying CDs, so please don't change tack within a series, as you did with **Short Trips**.

JOHN DIVERS

Nick: This is a tricky one, John, as changing sales patterns and concerns such as the environment (as well as storage costs) often necessitate changes in behaviour from all of us. I was a confirmed CD collector for a long time until a couple of years ago when I found the arguments about storage and the environment to be overwhelming, and so I simply

*stopped. All I can say to you at the moment is that there are no current plans to release series 14 of **Jago & Lightfoot** on CD. Huge apologies.*

THE GREAT EIGHT

Around 2017, in the midst of a massive craving for more Eighth Doctor content (after rewatching the *TV Movie* and *Night of the Doctor*), I discovered that this 'lost' incarnation in fact had a full life, and after listening to the **Classic Doctors**, **New Monsters** box sets, and the Charley stories (through which I discovered just how amazing Colin Baker's Sixth Doctor really is), and the Lucie Miller stories, I became completely hooked. One series I've particularly enjoyed listening to over this most recent lockdown is the **Torchwood** continuation in *Aliens Among Us* and *Gods Among Us*. While *Thoughts and Prayers* was a delightful conclusion, I can't help but feel a little greedy. Orr, Colchester, Yvonne and the gang make for such a fantastic team, and I would love to hear more of them.

JOEL MARTIN

*Nick: Glad you are enjoying it all, Joel. James Goss, who runs our **Torchwood** division, has all sorts of surprises up his sleeve.*

UNITING THE NINETIES

I've really enjoyed the various original **UNIT** series Big Finish have created to date, from the original run with Colonel Emily Chaudhry, to **UNIT: Dominion**, and more recently with Kate Lethbridge-Stewart and Osgood. So far we've not heard much from Brigadier Bambera (played by Angela Bruce) and the 1990s television **UNIT** – could we hear more about her, Sergeant Zbrigniev (played by Robert Jezek) and the rest of their team?

ALEX MILLER

Nick: There is some great story potential right there, Alex. I'd certainly never rule that out.



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*"All in now, there's a noise in the sky.
Following all the rules and not asking why."*

BIG FINISH

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Please note that due to factors beyond our control, Big Finish is currently operating a digital-first release schedule. Our warehouse remains open but the mail-out of collector's edition CDs may be delayed. However, all physical purchases of new releases will unlock a digital version that can be immediately downloaded, or played on the Big Finish app from the release date.

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ADVENTURES: *Stranded 2* (BOX SET)

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Return of the Cybermen
(6.1, THE FOURTH DOCTOR)

DW | THE LOST STORIES:
The Doomsday Contract
(6.2, THE FOURTH DOCTOR)

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TORCHWOOD: *Lease of Life* (48)

BLAKE'S 7:
Lucifer: Genesis (AUDIOBOOK) **DLO**

APRIL 2021

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DW | THE TENTH DOCTOR
ADVENTURES: *Dalek Universe 1*
(LIMITED VINYL EDITION)

DW | THE FOURTH DOCTOR
ADVENTURES:
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(THE FOURTH DOCTOR)

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(THE EIGHTH DOCTOR, THE TENTH DOCTOR)
DLO

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Volume 1 (BOX SET)

TORCHWOOD: *Gooseberry* (49)

THE AVENGERS – THE COMIC
STRIP ADAPTATIONS:
Volume 5: Steed & Tara King (BOX SET)

BIG FINISH IN CONVERSATION:
Carolyn Seymour **DLO**

MAY 2021

DW | THE NINTH DOCTOR
ADVENTURES: *Ravagers* (BOX SET)

DW | THE NINTH DOCTOR
ADVENTURES: *Ravagers*
(LIMITED VINYL EDITION)

DW | THE THIRD DOCTOR
ADVENTURES: *Volume 7* (BOX SET)

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(AUDIOBOOK) **DLO**

IRIS WILDTHYME AND FRIENDS:
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(AUDIOBOOK) **DLO**

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JUNE 2021

DW | OUT OF TIME 2:
The Gates of Hell
(THE FIFTH DOCTOR, THE TENTH DOCTOR)

DW | THE WAR DOCTOR BEGINS:
Forged in Fire (BOX SET)

DW | THE ROBOTS: *Volume 4* (BOX SET)

DW | JAGO & LITEFOOT:
Series 14 (AUDIOBOOK) **DLO**

THE WORLDS OF BLAKE'S 7:
Avalon 2 (BOX SET)

TORCHWOOD: *TBA* (51)

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THE **BIG FINISH** MAGAZINE

VORTEX

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WE LOVE
STORIES

THE LONE CENTURION

AS HE WAITS FOR THE
PANDORICA TO OPEN...

ALSO INSIDE

TARA-RA BOOM-DE-AY!
THE AVENGERS

