

THE BIG FINISH MAGAZINE

VORTEX

ISSUE 193
MARCH 2025
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STORIES



HOOKLIGHT

THERE IS A LIGHT THAT
MUST NEVER BE LIT...

PLANET KRYNOID

REECE SHEARSMITH HAS
TROUBLE WITH SOME PODS...





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THE FUGITIVE DOCTOR

The Fugitive Doctor is back for more adventures this July. Still on the run from her old employers – the sinister Time Lord agency known as the Division – the Fugitive Doctor (played by Jo Martin) embarks upon three thrilling new episodes in *Dead or Alive* with Cosmogon (Alice Krige) hot on her heels.

The new adventures are:

Flying Solo by Tajinder Singh Hayer. *Pilot Officer Mohinder Singh Johal* is an RAF pilot on a sortie during World War Two. Following a close encounter with a flying blue telephone box, his Spitfire vanishes!

The Junkyard Loop by Aaron Douglas. *The Doctor*, pursued as ever by Cosmogon, crash-lands the TARDIS on an off-grid junk planet littered with the remains of time machines from a thousand civilisations.

And *Hereafter* by Tim Foley. *Cosmo* has finally captured the Doctor! But they're stranded together on a planet thanks to an unusual psychic forcefield grounding her ship.

Producer David Richardson says: "The distinct tone of the Fugitive Doctor stories is crystallised in this second box set. The Doctor is still on the run from her Division pursuer Cosmo and caught up in events she crashes into. I certainly don't think the energy and emotional highs of Tajinder's phenomenal *Flying Solo* would fit into any other **Doctor Who** range. Plus John Dorney pops back as Alexander the Great – we had brilliant fun exploring a little thematic link to *Farewell, Great Macedon* in the *Lost Stories* range. Aaron's *The Junkyard Loop* is wildly, imaginatively bonkers, while *Hereafter* digs in deep in terms of character exploration. Of course it does – it's written by the legendary Tim!" **VORTEX**

THE FUGITIVE DOCTOR DEAD OR ALIVE

- RELEASED: JULY 2025
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

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EDITORIAL

I **DON'T** think I've ever hidden the fact that I'm Scottish from you, dear reader of *Vortex*. As a result, I do have a particular bias to anything **Doctor Who**-related which comes from north of the border – whether it be the Doctors themselves, their companions or the brilliant writers, actors, producers, sound designers and musicians.

So I'm particularly looking forward to the next instalment of **Dark Gallifrey**, as Missy – played by the brilliant Michelle Gomez from Glasgow – takes centre stage in the range.

I've not yet met Michelle and interviewed her, much to my chagrin. I did once see her posting on social media that she was back in Glasgow, in a particular pub, and I was half-tempted to pop down and see if I could have a quick chat, but my sensible head got the better of me and I let her get on with having a good night out with her friends!

Anyway, Missy's going to encounter the Seventh Doctor in this set, as the first Scots Time Lord meets another. Quite how this will work out remains to be heard – and I can't wait.

If you want to give yourself a treat right now and hear this pair in action, get yourself a copy of **Doctor Who – The Monthly Adventures: Valhalla**. Michelle's CD extras interview will have you chuckling away – the line between Michelle and Missy is almost impossible to distinguish... **VORTEX**

Kenny



THE FIFTH DOCTOR, ADRIC, NYSSA AND TEGAN
ARE SET FOR THEIR MOST EPIC ADVENTURE YET...

HOOKLIGHT

TRADITIONALLY, THE Fifth Doctor Adventures from Big Finish have been four-part tales, with the odd two-parter or even a six-part story thrown into the mix. In 2025, get ready for what can only be described as the biggest adventure to date, quite literally, as *Hooklight* is an adventure in 12 parts.

Peter Davison stars alongside Matthew Waterhouse, Sarah

Sutton and Janet Fielding, with scripts from Tim Foley.

Producer David Richardson tells *Vortex*: “*Hooklight* came about because I wanted to break a few boundaries in **The Fifth Doctor Adventures** range. We’ve never had one continuous story of this length for this team before, and I wanted something totally fresh, original and written by Tim. So that was Tim’s brief really, and he

came back with the most audacious proposal which was full of planet-destroying peril, monsters, more peril and... well, let’s leave some things to be a surprise for now!

“*Hooklight* is an adventure that pushes every one of the leads to the limit, as well as bringing in a whole wealth of new characters who each have their own fascinating backstories. There’s the phenomenal Celia Imrie as Dr Kessica Myles,



Above (l-r): Peter Davison and Celia Imrie

who broke my heart as I listened to the recording. Celia is one of the biggest stars in the UK – she fitted us in just before heading off to film *The Thursday Murder Club*. She's simply an awesome talent with the most beautiful twinkle in her eye.

"Then we have Kieran Bew as Davlin Crux, a character who will spend a lot of time with Adric. Kieran is one of the leads in *House of the Dragon* with a huge story during the show's second season. As with Celia, we're so grateful that he managed to fit us in during a gap in filming."

Script editor John Dorney tells *Vortex*: "Hooklight is an astonishing thing. David was keen to get Tim to write a 12-part epic for the Fifth Doctor team, and I was delighted because Tim's obviously brilliant. You read his first draft and it's pretty much done, it's that good. I had a great time working with Tim on *A Friend of the Family* – another big, epic storyline – for *The Diary of River Song*. It was a tantalising prospect to see what he would do when given six hours rather than four to fill.

"There's so much scope with



Above: Matthew Waterhouse

the Fifth Doctor's team, and Tim absolutely fulfils the promise of that. It's a huge galaxy-spanning, interconnected, complex piece of work that goes in all manner of directions with exciting surprises buried away in it.

"I think the brief from David was literally just to write a 12-parter. I don't think it's really got anything

from the history of the show in it, so Tim was pretty much given entirely free reign. It's the antithesis of something like say, *The Daleks' Master Plan*, but it does have a massive range of locations and within that, tones as well. For example, one companion basically gets a solo episode. It has an amazingly ambitious structure that hopefully people will be on board for."

YOU DON'T GET ASKED TO WRITE A SIX-HOUR DOCTOR WHO STORY EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK...

TIM FOLEY

WHAT WAS Tim's initial reaction when asked to come up with a 12-part story – fear or joy? He tells *Vortex*: "Joy! So much joy! Not only was David asking me to go big, he was asking me to be original – no returning monsters, no familiar places. You don't get asked to write a six-hour **Doctor Who** story every day of the week, I probably will never be asked to write one ever again! It's effectively a mini-series, so I knew I would have to make this very, very special.

"David asked me to consider the television show *Foundation*, which was just premiering, as a source of inspiration. I read the books yonks ago and forgot there was a continuation of the novels in the 1980s – around a similar-ish sort of time to Season 19 of **Doctor Who**. So I started to think of other 'epic' stories that were from the early 80s. There were tonnes of examples – everything from *Star Wars* to French animations – but I really clicked with the BBC Radio adaptation of *The Lord of the Rings*. This was an epic and this was audio, and there was something about a quest narrative that I thought would lend itself to six hours of action and adventure.

"With these audios I never try to just recreate an era. That's a part of it, but I also try to go deeper and weirder and sometimes darker than the TV show allowed. I'm a child of "the wilderness years", and you can usually see that in some of my other Big Finish work – but even more than ever, I would categorise this as a Fifth Doctor Virgin Missing Adventure."

Looking at the first six episodes, Tim says: "Our TARDIS team arrive in Morning, one of the earliest parts of the universe, and discover something in a museum that really shouldn't exist. Hooklight is a dangerous substance and the Doctor must make sure it's safely destroyed – but there are many different parties who want their mitts on this powerful weapon. In the first half of our quest there'll be twists and turns galore, and we'll uncover an ancient secret at the heart of this unusual light."

"You'll meet tonnes of unusual characters – the Halcyons, Davlin Crux, Dr Kessica Myles, Merla – but who is friend and who is foe?"

VORTEX ASKS Tim how he goes about creating enough story to sustain an epic adventure like this.

He replies: "I don't want to make out that this was the easiest gig ever – the word count alone would make you dizzy! – but I had my initial premise and the drama just sort of sprung from it. A one-hour story can be experimental and conceptual, and ultimately quite complicated – but for a really big story, you just need one simple kick that powers the whole engine. The Doctor must destroy this lamp of Hooklight – that's our drive – and from that spirals all sorts of subplots and subterfuge and strange encounters."

"We tell this story over many planets and many periods, and in this I really had the space to flesh them out whilst keeping the main storyline pumping away. It's a writer's dream. After writing something with this many strands, I found it hard to go back to the one-hour format!"

Tim explains the biggest challenge: "Balancing the sheer size and scale of the story, while making sure it is small and tight enough to pass through someone's headphones. I don't want the listeners getting



Above: Sarah Sutton

THIS IS A PROPER EPIC – IT'S LORD OF THE RINGS PROPORTIONS!

SARAH SUTTON

confused, the quest is going to be tricky enough as it is without us losing anyone along the way!

"Oh, and when you find out what the Hooklight actually *does*, then you'll understand that certain elements of the story were tricky to plot out..."

Tim had many highlights from this production. He tells *Vortex*: "I couldn't have asked for better

casting – Celia is astounding, and Kieran's character Davlin has an outrageous introduction but he leapt at it with aplomb; I was giggling on my headphones. I felt so supported on my writing journey by David and John, and the cast and the crew rose to the impossible challenge."

The regular cast also enjoyed working on this adventure.

Matthew, back as Adric, says: "I've worked on other long audio serials – The *Dark Shadows* serial *Bloodlust* was 13 episodes, I think – but this is the longest *Doctor Who* I've done. We recorded it over six days across a fortnight. The length doesn't make too much difference for us, we simply work scene by scene as usual, though of course it is a challenge for the writer."

"Oddly, the small difference is that the regular cast have fewer scenes together than usual, because we all have to have our own strands



Above: Janet Fielding



Above (l-r): Matthew Waterhouse, Sarah Sutton, Alan Cox, Janet Fielding, Peter Davison, Celia Imrie and David Holt

of story to sustain the length. We seemed to be constantly passing each other at the studio door!

"But we all thoroughly enjoy making these adventures. It's always fun and we lark around quite a lot, though of course it's hard work too. Usually we receive

the script before it is fully cast so there's always a surprise on the day. It was lovely to be reunited with Celia, who I worked with on **Shilling and Sixpence Investigate.**"

Sarah, playing Nyssa once more, adds: "This is a proper epic – it's *Lord of the Rings* proportions! With

three companions in the script, it's not unusual that we get separated, but in *Hooklight*, all three of us get our own mini spin-off series.

"It's been lovely having Matthew and Janet doing Big Finish because that's the team I really remember working with on TV **Doctor Who**. Selfishly, from Nyssa's point of view, the stories Nyssa has on her own with the Doctor are particularly great as they work off each other very well."

John concludes: "I think by the time you get to the end of *Hooklight 1*, you'll desperately want to hear *Hooklight 2*. If you don't, there's something wrong with you!"

Writer Tim adds: "Cliffhangers? I don't know what you mean. I'm sure this first box set ends without any sort of surprise whatsoever... I'm confident the listener will not be leaping about and squealing at the top of their voice... What do you think is going to happen to our heroes? I guess you'll just have to listen to find out!"

And David says: "I'm very grateful to Senior Producer John Ainsworth for agreeing to my request to change the 2025 schedules thus moving *Hooklight 2* up a few months so it's released just one month after *Hooklight 1*. I felt it was important that the audience should have the opportunity to hear them as closely together as possible, rather than be hanging around for some time during which important plot points might be forgotten. It's a recognition of the scale of the story – this is a **Doctor Who** event – and I hope listeners will buy into its ambition." **VORTEX**

THE FIFTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES HOOKLIGHT 1



- RELEASED: APRIL 2025
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

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The Companion Chronicles return with some familiar voices recounting their adventures with the First Doctor...

FAMILY AFFAIRS

FAMILIES TAKE many forms.

Across time and space – and sometimes closer than they would think – the Doctor’s friends have encountered all sorts of family members who have touched their hearts.

Since 2007, **The Companion Chronicles** range has told stories set in the world of **Doctor Who** from the perspective of the Doctor’s friends, and April’s release, *Families*, is narrated by companions of the First Doctor.

Producer Dominic G. Martin says: “**The Companion Chronicles** range means a lot to me as it is what

introduced me to Big Finish in the first place. I remember many years ago listening to Nev Fountain’s *Peter and the Piscos Paradox* as my first foray into the audio side of **Doctor Who**, and it obviously left a positive impression.

“I’ve always liked the idea of having some kind of connective tissue between standalone stories so I was delighted to give it a shot here. This release is very much, as the title says, about family. Not quite in *The Fast and the Furious* sense (I don’t even drive!), but various different types of familial bonds, whether it be generational, platonic or those we

have loved and lost – all those kinds.

“Family is more than just blood relations and **Doctor Who** has demonstrated that many times. So it’s a loose theming device more than anything. I wanted these stories to have a touch of optimism and the writers absolutely excelled at that.”

The Temple of Light by Jonathan Morris opens the set.

Time has stopped. The TARDIS has frozen. And yet, Vicki finds herself with an entirely unfamiliar civilisation while the Doctor, Ian and Barbara are nowhere to be seen...

Dominic says: “*The Temple of Light* is bit of a mind bender, a truly

adventurous tale. We put Vicki in a particularly bizarre circumstance which I dare not spoil, but it's certainly a very introspective one. We have the wonderful man of many voices Duncan Wisbey effectively creating a world around us, and Maureen O'Brien gives a sterling performance as Vicki tries to wrap her head around it all while the Doctor, Ian and Barbara are nowhere to be seen. It's a very fascinating and personal tale – stunning work from Jonny.”

Writer Jonny says: “A few years ago I wrote a story for **The Early Adventures – The Crash of the UK-201** – where Vicki was the central

everyone will work out the twist within the first five minutes, I want them to have the thrill of discovering it. What I found the most fun was creating the ‘world’ the story is set in, there are all sorts of things in there from *Alice in Wonderland* to *The Wizard of Oz*, and even an obscure musical called *Quincy's Quest*. It is a lovely flight into the imagination.”

STARDUST AND *Ashes* by Ian Potter is the second story in the set. *Reflecting on all she has lost, Susan recalls a time long ago, when she and her travelling family were trapped, their lives at the mercy of a machine intelligence.*

all within the context of something deeply personal to Susan. I cannot sing the praises of Carole Ann Ford enough, she was just incredible, and thanks to Ian for giving them such magnificent material to work with. It sums up why **The Companion Chronicles** format is just so special.”

Ian says: “I'm delighted to be writing another **Companion Chronicle**. It's one of my favourite ranges because it gives great performers who spent too much time on television **Doctor Who** asking ‘What is it, Doctor?’, a chance to shine. You can shift the focus, expand and contract time by moving between framing device,



Above (l-r): Peter Purves and Stephen Noonan



Above (l-r): Maureen O'Brien and Duncan Wisbey

character; I think she was in every scene. So that wasn't too far away from being a **Companion Chronicle** where the main thing is to tell a story focussing on the companion – either because it's about them or because it's being told from their point of view.

“Years ago, when Big Finish first started doing **The Companion Chronicles**, they were more like talking books, but by the time we get around to stuff like *Mastermind* and *The Ghost in the Machine* they are effectively small-cast plays. And this is another small-cast play.”

Jonny adds: “It's really difficult to discuss the story without giving away spoilers. Even though I'm sure

THERE'S A TOUCH OF 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, A TOUCH OF ALIEN...

DOMINIC G. MARTIN

But everyone can learn from circumstance and from those around them – even in the ashes of hope, we can sometimes see stardust.

Dominic says: “*Stardust and Ashes* is beautiful. There's a touch of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, a touch of *Alien*, but

narration and dramatisation, or even devise a real time drama for a companion where the Doctor never quite appears. They're a lot of fun!

“For Susan's voice I went straight back to her episodes in **The Eighth Doctor Adventures** and tried to imagine where she stood emotionally between *To the Death* and the **Short Trip All Hands on Deck** that took us into **Susan's War**. Most of the work is done by Carole Ann of course, who I knew could still capture young Susan from hearing *After the Daleks* but who has also been developing the character in maturity since (and this is faintly alarming) 1983!

“A lot of the story is built around

Susan's grief after the death of her son, Alex, which hangs over the framing device, but the story she recounts within that is a spin on the traditional idea of the Doctor and companions exploring a deserted space ship, slightly informed by where Susan finds herself now."

The White Ship by Paul Morris is the third adventure in the set.

The Doctor and Steven land in Normandy, where Henry I is preparing to set sail for England. Steven gets mistaken for Stephen of Blois, the cousin of Henry's heir and the future king... on the day the White Ship sank.

Dominic explains: "The White Ship introduces the fabulous Stephen Noonan to **The Companion Chronicles** as the First Doctor, alongside the legendary Peter Purves. It's a historical based on the



Above (l-r): Carole Ann Ford and Duncan Wisbey

I'VE ALWAYS HAD A HANKERING TO WRITE A DONALD COTTON-STYLE HISTORICAL STORY...

PAUL MORRIS

real White Ship in 1120 from the history-loving brain of Paul. Stephen and Peter are a joy to hear working together, their chemistry is superb. *The White Ship* is a great romp back in time but only to an extent as – if you know your history – it's already set where this is going to go."

Paul says: "This is the second **Companion Chronicle** I've written for Steven. Last time I put him in a situation where a rather straight-faced astronaut was dropped into the deep end of the world of comedy. This time – despite having been asked to write a script with a humorous slant – I wanted to put him through the emotional wringer, not least because I've always been inspired by Simon Guerrier's stories for the character.

"I seem to have accidentally developed a niche for writing stories set in particular periods of history. In this case, the initial spark came from my interest in the historical King Stephen and the potential for comedic mistaken identity that he provided. But once I discovered the



Above: Dominic G. Martin

White Ship tragedy, I knew that was a gift of a story which took things in a very different direction.

"I've always had a hankering to write a Donald Cotton-style historical story. In other words, one that is broadly comic for the first three acts and turns dark at the end. I've never found the right event to dramatise in such a way, until now. And while the structure isn't identical, hopefully it still gives the listener a jolt that is surprising but tragically inevitable – and all entirely true!"

Paul adds: "The icing on the cake for me was being told that Stephen might be available to voice the First Doctor. It could have been tempting to expand the Doctor's role, but that wasn't possible with the way the story needed to be structured, so instead I gave him more dialogue in the scenes that he shares with the



Above (1-2): Lauren Cornelius and Stephen Noonan

king, which is really just a bonus. We kept Stephen busy voicing the main guest character too, the larger-than-life Berold, a character I would have had to invent if not for the fact that he, astonishingly, actually existed!"

THE Y FACTOR by

Christopher Cooper concludes the set. Aided by septuagenarian jujitsu expert Edith Garrud, the First Doctor and Dodo Chaplet encounter an alien fungus that warps evil thoughts into evil deeds.

Dominic reveals: "Along with Stephen, Lauren Cornelius makes her **Companion Chronicles** debut as Dodo. *The Y Factor* is an incredible 1940s thriller where they have to deal with a very grim alien fungus. But in doing so, they meet the very real Edith Garrud, jujitsu expert and suffragette. It's an exciting tale

performed wonderfully while also being a touching tribute to writer Christopher is actually Edith's great grandson. A little bit of meta theming there that came about through sheer, wonderful coincidence!"

Chris says: "I pitched the idea that my great grandmother, who famously taught suffragettes the martial art jujitsu so they could defend themselves against heavy-handed police officers, helped the Doctor and Dodo save planet Earth from certain doom. An injection of artron energy into my own DNA!"

"Dodo becomes separated from the Doctor in post-WWII London and is rescued from some ruffians by Edith. She insists on helping Dodo find her friend, which leads the three of them to uncover a terrifying alien plot that almost ends the Doctor's life.

"I'd had the idea for a story

featuring Edith lurking in my notebook for a long time, so it's been fantastic to get the opportunity to make it happen. She's always been a legendary figure in my family, and it's lovely to pay tribute to her.

"My Mum has often said that Edith was just 'Nana' to her, not this mythic suffragette. So I wanted to tell a story about Edith later in life including her family and the 20th century that she lived through, whether things got better or not. Having Dodo's 1960s perspective gave me a way to comment on the world today, 50 years after Edith died, and whether anything ever really changes – or at least how long meaningful change takes."

Dominic concludes: "The recording sessions were a joy. The cast were on top form the whole

AN INCREDIBLE 1940s THRILLER WHERE THEY HAVE TO DEAL WITH A VERY GRIM ALIEN FUNGUS.


DOMINIC G. MARTIN


way through, directed by Lisa Bowerman who I adore working with. Everyone was so lovely and enjoyed being there. Every time I go into The Soundhouse there's an atmosphere of positivity, I hope that others feel the same. Richard Fox, our sound designer, was magnificent in transforming the sessions into stories." **VORTEX**

THE COMPANION CHRONICLES FAMILIES



■ RELEASED: APRIL 2025
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

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TWO UMBRELLA-CARRYING SCOTTISH TIME LORDS ARE SET FOR A FACE OFF...

Missy

DEMEANOURS

DARK GALLIFREY returns with more exciting adventures where various renegade Time Lords face off against different Doctors. In the first release, **Dark Gallifrey – Missy: Part One**, it's the maddest and baddest incarnation of the Master against another Scottish Time Lord... But it's not a tall thin man with white hair – it's a little fellow carrying a question mark umbrella.

But how? That's got people posing questions marks of their own!

Producer Robert Valentine says:

“Dark Gallifrey: Missy is an epic steampunk fantasy in which Missy finds herself in a sort of pocket universe where the laws of space, time and external causality are a bit removed from the continuity we know. For that reason, this is a Doctor/Missy encounter that doesn't go the way we're used to when these two arch enemies meet each other, and that was something we were all really eager to explore. That's one of the great things about the **Dark Gallifrey** range; in terms of storytelling, it can take us to

places we couldn't otherwise go.

“Missy is written by Rochana Patel, who is one of the best writers I've ever worked with at Big Finish – it's just an absolute delight when a Rochana script lands in your inbox. When we recorded with Michelle Gomez, she adored the script and in particular the way Rochana writes for Missy. Michelle asked to be put in touch with Rochana so she could say thanks.

“This adventure is a great excuse to allow Missy and the Seventh Doctor to meet. Of all the classic Doctors, Sylvester McCoy's is the perfect



Above: Michelle Gomez as Missy

foil for her. Two Scottish-accented, umbrella-wielding schemers face to face is one hell of a hook. It's almost as if they were made for each other.”

Script editor John Dorney adds: “**Dark Gallifrey** is a lot of fun to work on. It's a big sprawling range, but the key thing for me is giving the writers a large amount of creative freedom and the space to tell whatever story they want, while trying to impose as few rules on them as possible.

“What we've heard so far in the *Morbius* trio and the three *The War Master* releases, amounts to a prologue and an epilogue – but they're not really that. *The War Master* adventure takes place last chronologically, but it's not the final story in any real sense. We have a very definite idea of what the final story is going to be – and that's still a few years away.

“As I've mentioned before, the idea with this range is that people can pick and choose as many or as few of the episodes as they want, and can listen to them in any order. If anything, you get more of a sense of what the meat and potatoes of **Dark Gallifrey** is with *Missy*, because it's set in the middle and there's a

WE WANTED DIFFERENT VOICES ON **DARK GALLIFREY**, SO THE WRITERS MIGHT NOT BE WHO YOU WOULD EXPECT.

JOHN DORNEY

light dusting of the story arc in it.

“If people listen to all of them, it'll build to give a sense of the scale of the entire range. But, ultimately, you don't actually need to hear them all – you won't feel like you're missing anything if you don't.”

John was delighted to work with writer Rochana. He explains: “We wanted different voices on **Dark Gallifrey**, so the writers might not be who you would expect. I hadn't worked with Rochana before this. I'd talked with her about a few other things in the past because I'd heard she is a strong writer who'd be able to deliver something interesting.

So I wanted to bring in Rochana as she's someone who's a bit newer on the scene at Big Finish and see what she might contribute. And she's done an amazing job."

WRITER ROCHANA tells *Vortex*: "The brief was simple; a three-part *Missy* story, with a strong supporting cast of characters who can carry some of the scenes on their own. Plus, for one episode only, the Seventh Doctor.

"I was also told that it should stand on its own so you don't need to have heard any of the other **Dark Gallifrey** titles or **Missy** box sets in order to enjoy this one.

"There's a saying amongst writers, 'Never throw away any of your ideas' and this is very much one of those stories. I needed an epic tale capable of filling three full hours of audio-drama with a cast of well-developed characters. So, I opened up my hard drive and looked through some old notes. And there, lurking amongst all the forgotten files, was a young adult novel I'd been writing but abandoned a few years earlier, and I thought, what if I dropped *Missy* into that..."

Vortex asks Rochana what she can say about the story?

Rochana says: "Not much! I often think audiences know far too many plot details in advance these days – which I don't agree with! I want the listener to go in unaware with no idea what to expect, particularly in the later stages of the story.

"It's steampunk. It's *Missy*. The Seventh Doctor is involved. That's all you need to know. Enjoy the ride!"

John adds: "When we were selecting the combinations of which Time Lords would meet which Doctors, some of the combinations felt a bit too obvious, so working out who could go where was really interesting.

"The brief to Rochana had few details but one of the pointers was, 'You can have the Doctor for one disc.' Most of the time, the writer would put them in the finale because that makes sense, but Rochana went for the Doctor in her middle episode and it is interesting seeing what that does to the narrative. It's a nice angle which takes *Missy* in a direction that you won't, hopefully, expect.

Rochana adds: "Most writers love to say that their decisions are purely creative, but for



Above: Michelle Gomez

me it's often logistical.

"I'd never written a two-part story before, let alone a three-part story, so I was really worried about the middle episode sagging; the easiest solution – stick the Doctor in there!

"Many writers would default to putting the Doctor in the final episode, for the climax, but then it very much becomes the Doctor saving the day, which just didn't feel right for this adventure.

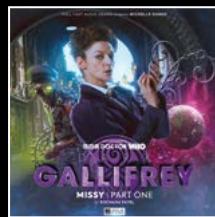
This is a *Missy* story. She's the protagonist. I wanted the story and the conclusion to belong to her."

Sylvester worked with Michelle in Marc Platt's *Valhalla*, years before she was cast as *Missy* – how did the writer enjoy bringing the two actors together again?

Rochana explains: "It's a clash of Titans! Honestly, as a writer, you could lock those two characters in an empty room and you would still have no shortage of material! "One of the biggest advantages of working on audio is that we can

make these vast, sprawling epics in a way that just can't be done on TV at the moment. Twenty-four episodes, focused on the villains, can you imagine...? Well, yes, we can! Here's **Dark Gallifrey!**" **VORTEX**

**DARK GALLIFREY
MISSY: PART ONE**



■ RELEASED: APRIL 2025
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

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BOOK CLUB

EVERY MONTH THE BIG FINISH BOOK CLUB SPOTLIGHTS A RELEASE FROM THE BIG FINISH CATALOGUE, WITH A SPECIAL DISCOUNT ON THE DIGITAL DOWNLOAD PRICE.

THE FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES: ZYGMON HUNT



Above (l-r): Gillian Kearney and Tom Baker

WHEREVER YOU delve in Big Finish just now, there seem to be Zygons (or are there?)!

They've popped up in a variety of ranges, but so far we've heard very little of their 'pets' – the Skarasen. For those missing the creature that was mistaken for the Loch Ness Monster, you need to listen to **The Fourth Doctor Adventure Zygon Hunt**.

Writer Nicholas Briggs recalls: "In *Zygon Hunt*, I wanted an environment in which the Skarasen would be right at home. I also had this idea that the leadership of Earth's defences were very decadent and wanted a high-risk holiday – *Zygon Hunt* is actually a thinly disguised 'base under siege' story.

"The reason this structure is so often repeated is that it works really well for a contained **Doctor Who**

ZYGMON HUNT IS ACTUALLY A THINLY DISGUISED 'BASE UNDER SIEGE' STORY.

NICHOLAS BRIGGS

adventure. If you put yourself in the position, story-wise, where someone can just 'phone up the world for help' as it were, then your story is broken. The scale becomes meaninglessly large and you lose all personal emotional contact with your characters, especially if your story is only an hour long. So, I wanted the arrogant humans to have been led into a trap by the Zygon posing as the leader's former, part-time lover, Mina Challis."

Is it difficult to write for Zygons on audio, given that on television we can see shiny skin or other tell-tale signs behind their disguises that give away their true nature?

Nick says: "The point of having aliens that transform is for everyone to be misdirected – and that works better on audio. The strength is the moment of transformation, the reveal. It's best for the other characters and the audience not to know that a character is a Zygon in disguise, you can have more fun by making it far less obvious."

At the time of writing *Zygon Hunt*, Nick had already been working with Tom Baker and Louise Jameson

together in studio for a while.

Nick confirms: "Yes, I had certainly got a handle on how I thought it best to write for their characters. I always concentrate on Leela's individuality. She never reacts the way anyone else would, she has a unique perspective.

"And the trick for Tom is to make the Doctor's reactions very real and have him intolerant of any wrongdoing. Tom objects to the Doctor having too much compassion! He says he starts sounding like 'the Archbishop of Canterbury'! So in this, I made sure I gave him an absolute pig of a character to face up to in Greg Saraton.

"The other thing with Tom is not to write the Doctor as 'kooky' or 'eccentric', which a lot of writers try to do. The strangeness of the Fourth Doctor comes out through the unfiltered nature of his imperatives. He cuts to the essentials of a scene and always undermines expectations, manners and protocol. He has no time for the frippery and pointless customs of human society.

"The trademark bonkers quality comes from Tom himself. It's best to give him more of a blank canvas onto which he can splash a bit of colour." **VORTEX**

THE FOURTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES ZYGMON HUNT



- RELEASED: AUGUST 2014
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD

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PODS CAST INTO SPACE ARE ABOUT TO CAUSE TROUBLE ON THE COLONY WORLD OF SUNLIGHT...

THE GREEN DEATHS

I **ROBERT BANKS** Stewart's Krynoids, the alien species that first featured in the television episode *The Seeds of Doom*, are one of *Doctor Who*'s most nightmarish monsters. They strip away your individuality and convert your body into one of their number, ready to propagate.

Planet Krynoid: *Nightfall*, the first box set of a new Big Finish range, is a three-hour disaster adventure set on the seemingly utopian planet of Sunlight.

For a hundred years, Sunlight has been a beacon of hope shining across a troubled galaxy, an artificial paradise on a frozen world offering safe haven for the super-rich, and employment for even the poorest of labourers. At

least, that's what the adverts say.

Unfortunately for Governor Robert Hodan, one of his engineers has just discovered a pair of strange-looking pods lodged in a satellite.

So Sunlight, that glittering verdant oasis, will never be the same again.

Because, as the Doctor knows only too well, on planets where the Krynoid gets established, the vegetation eats the animals...

Governor Robert Hodan is played by Reece Shearsmith (*The League of Gentlemen*, *Psychoville*, *Inside No. 9*), making his Big Finish debut.

The three episodes in the box set are *Sunlight* by script editor Jonathan Morris, *Sunset* by Jonathan S Powell – the series producer and director – and *Darkness* by Chris Chapman.

Producer Jonathan says: "*The Seeds of Doom* is my favourite serial of all time so to be given the chance to play in the Krynoid sandbox is a dream come true. The timelessness of *The Seeds of Doom* is partly owed to the terrific triffid-ish idea of being mauled by a pot plant, but more so I think to its cast of fully realised guest characters we meet along the way – Amelia Ducat, Scorby, Harrison Chase and Dunbar – to name a few.

"That's what I wanted to do with this series, to create a living, breathing world of real people... then have lots of fun watching the Krynoids tear it down! Because script editor Jonny and I worked so closely constructing this quite intricate world of Sunlight together, it felt



Above: Reece Shearsmith

important that we both write some of it ourselves. So he took the first episode in which things start to go wrong, then I took the second where we're treated to a guest appearance by Paul McGann's Eighth Doctor.

"And then for episode three, Jonny suggested Chris, and I was very happy about that, because I've never worked with him before and I like working with new people and, of course, I've heard great things about his writing. Jonny and I were quite prescriptive about where it was heading, and obviously Chris inherited (most of) the characters from episodes one and two, but he absolutely made it his own, taking the narrative to some exceedingly dark and exciting places."

Sunlight opens the *Nightfall* set, and Jonathan reveals: "I was working with Jonny on something else and he must have thought it was going well because he asked me to do this too. And now I'm producing a series called **Planet Krynoid**, Big Finish's answer to *The Last of Us*/*The Walking Dead*. How could I refuse?"

greatest hits, doing all the stuff they had done before in *The Seeds of Doom*. Which I would say was the right approach for their first return, in a story with only 45 minutes to play with. But with this, my feeling was that we would need to go, 'Okay, what don't we know about the Krynoids? What other things can they do that might be scary or open up story possibilities?' So this is not just them doing what they've done before, we're fleshing them out, so to speak. Except they're not flesh, they're obscene vegetable matter. Vegetabing them out!

BIG FINISH'S ANSWER TO THE LAST OF US / THE WALKING DEAD. HOW COULD I REFUSE?

JONATHAN S POWELL



Above: Ian Conningham

JONNY HAS prior experience of writing for the Krynoids. He explains: "**The Eighth Doctor Adventure Hothouse** was the first Big Finish **Doctor Who** story to bring back the Krynoids, and it took a fairly traditional approach to the monsters; essentially, they were reprising their

"But the most important thing with Krynoids, as a menace, is that you need to give them a strong build-up, create a sense of dread and horror by having them gradually creep into the story, rather than kicking off with a Krynoid army lurching about the place causing mayhem; there's plenty of opportunity for that later on. So I've deliberately kept *Sunlight* quite small-scale, with it focussing on a couple of characters becoming infected with the Krynoid mutation, where you have the classic horror movie progression of one small thing going wrong, then another worse thing going wrong, and so on - the threat snowballs."

Sunset continues the adventure. Jonathan tells *Vortex*: "*Nightfall* is set on the Earth Empire colony of *Sunlight*, a verdant oasis turned into a frozen world. There's a wealth and class gap, the rich living in the luxury tower complex Atrium, while the poverty-stricken workforce labour in the squalor of the Fringe below. But when a pair of Krynoid pods find their way to the surface,

everything unravels very fast indeed.

"When writing a Krynooid story you have to treat them as what they are: an infection. Mostly mute, uncompromising, practically unstoppable. The drama therefore comes not from them but from the way the characters handle them. I found the touchstones of *The Last of Us* and *The Walking Dead* especially helpful, and probably a little bit of the recent lived experience of coronavirus too. You have to take it seriously."

THIS CAN BE A WHATEVER KIND OF MASSACRE WE WANT IT TO BE.

JONATHAN S POWELL

And the adventure concludes in *Darkness*. Writer Chris says: "There's that lovely line in *The Seeds of Doom* that Robert Banks Stuart drops in, where the Doctor says on planets where the Krynoids take hold, all animal life is consumed – or words to that effect. Jonathan and Jonny came up with this plan, using the idea of something that scares the Doctor.

"We explore what life would be like in a Krynooid-y apocalypse. We can't do it on Earth so we're on a colony world. It's a really delicious idea and it's close enough to our own world. I don't want to spoil it too much, but *Darkness* is very much set as the world's going to hell, and in *Darkness* it hopefully will be hell! This is a world that's been plunged into black as it's being converted by the Krynooid on a mass scale.

"That's a lot of fun because you've got the freedom of not having lead characters like the Doctor and companions that you have to protect. Anything goes – this can be a whatever kind of massacre we want it to be. We can be a fair bit darker than we might be on a traditional *Doctor Who* story.

"*Darkness* shows how hell happens. I loved writing it, it was really fun. I



Above (l-r): Reece Shearsmith, Em Frerengast and Rakie Ayala



Above: Nye Occomere

was also trying to marry it up with what the two Jonathans had done in their scripts. It can be tricky when nothing's yet been recorded, but it felt very free albeit scary too. I do think the roots are kind of there in classic British science fiction, with things like *Day of the Triffids*, which I had in my mind. It's one of the bleakest, nastiest stories that's ever been told. I was very happy to be channelling a bit of that!"

Jonathan concludes: "Directing this was a mammoth undertaking

because the huge cast meant we were recording bits of all three scripts simultaneously. That's partly why I decided to do it myself because it required such a thorough knowledge of the script and the world to pull it off.

"It was hugely rewarding and an honour to have actors of such a high calibre bringing it to life. Reece Shearsmith is terrific as Governor Hodan and Ian Cunningham's Krynooid noises are an auditory feast!"

VORTEX

PLANET KRYNOID NIGHTFALL



■ RELEASED: APRIL 2025
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/sunlight





TYING IN WITH ZYGON CENTURY, WE'RE ABOUT TO SEE HOW TORCHWOOD TAKES ON THE MIGHTY MORPHING STRANGERS...



Above (l-r): Sid Sagar, Rachel Atkins, Fenella Woolgar and Hugh Fraser

EVERYTHING CHANGES

TORCHWOOD'S approach to alien threats and dangers is very different to the Doctor's: if in doubt, kill it... This month's release, *Rictus*, features the Zygons and is a side-quel to *1901: The Unknowning Mirror*, the first episode of *Zygon Century*: Infiltration.

1901. Six months after the death of Queen Victoria, her daughter Princess Beatrice goes to visit the organisation she's inherited. What is Torchwood?

Meanwhile, something has broken out of a vault deep beneath London. The Smiling Man is coming.

Written by series producer James Goss, he tells *Vortex*: "*Rictus* is a sort of parallel to the *Zygon Century* series, speculating about how Torchwood would handle Zygons. Fenella Woolgar is fantastic as Queen Victoria's daughter who inherits Torchwood.

"It's a story about an identity crisis, with a lot of body horror thrown in. It also uses the Zygons in a way that hopefully other ranges wouldn't quite be able to."

Fenella – who *Doctor Who* fans will remember as Agatha Christie in the *Doctor Who* television episode *The*

Unicorn and the Wasp – plays Princess Beatrice. Fenella says: "Beatrice is a young-ish rather gung-ho woman who wants to have some adventures in life. In real life, she was her mother's companion for many, many years and her mother was against her ever marrying. She was the youngest of the children and everyone else had gone off and abandoned her.

"If you're playing someone who was real, even within the realms of science fiction, it's always fun to do the research. I've did this before, of course, with Agatha Christie. You want to find out about their lives and hours later you find yourself having gone down a very long Wikipedia journey!"

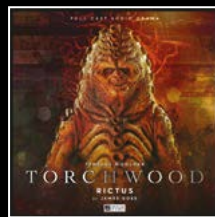
"Beatrice in this play has had a rather dull life. But on the death of her mother, she has a new freedom she wants to exploit. She's been left Torchwood and wants to find all about it.

"I do like the character. She's led such a restricted life that she has a certain naivety about her that may lead to some awkward ways of behaving when navigating her way through the world. She recognises when she's done something wrong

and tries to make reparation for it, which I think is pretty impressive. She has a certain amount of humility.

"But she does also have that entitled thing of, 'It doesn't matter that I'm rubbish at this but I'm going to do it anyway,' which I think probably comes from her being from such a privileged background. I don't like her snobbery, but she's a game gal!" **VORTEX**

TORCHWOOD
RICTUS



■ RELEASED: MARCH 2025
■ FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

ORDER NOW: bgfn.sh/rictus



The dream team of the 21st century are back together on audio...

A STITCH IN TIME

IT'S HARD to believe that 20 years ago, **Doctor Who** fans were waiting nervously for the arrival of Christopher Eccleston as the Doctor and Billie Piper as his new best friend Rose Tyler.

We were all asking questions aloud. Would our favourite television programme work in the 21st century? Would there still be any interest in this mysterious traveller going to different times and locations every week? And then the media campaign began with teaser trailers on BBC TV and radio, as well as full size billboards on the high streets.

After the first episode *Rose* aired, fans breathed a collective sigh of relief. **Doctor Who** was truly alive and kicking on our screens again; the old show was a new favourite.

For 13 weeks, the Doctor and Rose kept us in a state of excitement and their adventures became headline news. The papers ran features asking, 'What is Bad Wolf?' And then, on 18 June, the Ninth Doctor regenerated into David Tennant's Tenth. Chris's era was over.

With just six original novels published by BBC Books, it looked as if there wouldn't be many more adventures to tell with this

incarnation. But that all changed in August 2020 when it was announced that Chris was returning to the role for Big Finish in a brand-new series of 12 full-cast audio adventures across four box sets, starting in May 2021.

Chris said at the time: "After 15 years it will be exciting to revisit the Ninth Doctor's world, bringing back to life a character I love playing."

Big Finish's chairman, Jason Haigh-Ellery explained: "I first talked to Chris about returning to the role of the Doctor at the Gallifrey One convention in L.A. Chris said he was enjoying meeting the fans and was pleased that



Above (l-r): Christopher Eccleston and Billie Piper

his Doctor was remembered so fondly – and he indicated he would be open to discussing a reprisal of the role with Big Finish.

“And then the COVID-19 pandemic happened and time moved both quickly and very slowly! Ideas were exchanged and discussions had. I’m so pleased that Chris decided to return to the role – and I’m delighted to welcome him to the Big Finish family as we delve into new adventures with the Ninth Doctor.”

BIG FINISH’S creative director Nicholas Briggs said: “Working with Chris on the TV series was a very special time for me – the beginning of my **Doctor Who** TV career. So, writing for and directing him since has been incredibly exciting. He’s such a powerful performer, it’s been amazing working with him again.” The first 12 adventures feature the Doctor travelling solo, set shortly after his regeneration. He’s travelling around the universe, carefree, getting used to the joys

I DON'T THINK MY DOCTOR EXISTS WITHOUT ROSE. HE'S A 'ONE MAN, ONE COMPANION' KIND OF ALIEN.

CHRISTOPHER ECCLESTON

of exploration once again after the events of the Time War. Chris features in two further series of **The Ninth Doctor Adventures** by the end of which he’s encountered old foes such as the Cybermen, old friends such as Sir Alistair Lethbridge-Stewart, Liv Chenka, Tanya Bell and Bernice Summerfield, plus met a certain Professor River Song...

And now the time is right to reunite this most fantastic of Doctors

with his on-screen companion, Rose. Big Finish revealed at this year’s Gallifrey One that the Doctor and Rose want you to come on their next journey with them!

A delighted Chris says: “I am so happy to be back recording more adventures for the Ninth Doctor with Billie. I don’t think my Doctor exists without Rose. He’s a ‘one man, one companion’ kind of alien. We’ve explored him on his own at Big Finish, as a loner. But there’s a resilience and a bravery and a deep empathy to Billie as Rose, they complete each other.”

Billie adds: “I can’t think of a better time for Rose to reunite with her first Doctor than now. Twenty years after she ran into the TARDIS and towards adventure, here we are again, me and Chris, ready to have fun facing the universe – and the monsters – together.”

DUE TO BE released from

August 2025, the series is being produced and script edited by Matt Fitton. He tells *Vortex*:

“Two decades after the Ninth

Doctor and Rose burst onto our screens, Chris and Billie are back with their brilliant dynamic – the Doctor showing Rose the universe, and Rose showing him the best of humanity.

“Across 12 episodes slotting neatly into the 2005 TV series, we have more Jackie Tyler, more Powell Estate, plus friends and enemies old and new through time and space.

“Our writers have done an amazing job recapturing the spirit of that very special season, and Chris and Billie have embraced these scripts with delight and gusto. They’re having a blast, back on that trip of a lifetime – and they sound amazing.”

Details of these new adventures will be revealed in the coming months, but *Vortex* can exclusively reveal that the first one-word title story contains “hub-caps”, “Titanic” and “mini-Battenberg” in its dialogue! **VORTEX**

DOCTOR WHO THE NINTH DOCTOR ADVENTURES

- RELEASED: AUGUST 2025
- FORMAT: DOWNLOAD/CD

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V FOR VICTORY!

An early response to **V: UK Visitation**... really loved it! Fast-paced, exciting and true to the source material. I tend to listen to Big Finish in release order on many of your ranges. I'm currently around 2015, but I was keen to get started with this title immediately, being a fan of the mini-series back in the day. I hope you have exciting plans to continue this range!

DAVID EDWARDS

Nick: So glad you enjoyed it, David. Hope you like what's coming up equally as much, if not more!

A RAY OF LIGHT

Listening to **Classic Doctors, New Monsters: Faithful Friends** and I must admit I love that Ray is a companion now. Can we please have more of her adventures with the Seventh Doctor in the future?

CALEB THOMAS

Nick: We'll see what we can do, Caleb. It is certainly great to have her back.

GON' WITH THE WIN

I just finished **Zygon Century: Infiltration** and wanted to let you all know how much I really enjoyed it. I don't think I've ever been completely disappointed with anything I've gotten from Big Finish. This one is another good premise and holds lots of potential. The three narratives offered here are all wonderful and very diverse. I'm really looking forward to more. What I'm saying is: more, please!

RICK RUSSELL

Nick: I'm so glad you enjoyed it, Rick. It is, perhaps, not what some might have expected, but the two Jonathans – Barnes and S Powell – have come up with something really rich in atmosphere and full of threat. Delicious.

TAKE IT AS RED?

Very exciting to see you expanding into more newly licensed and original audio series. Any chance this has led to renewed discussions

about doing a **Red Dwarf** series, or any other series you've attempted to acquire in the past?

JESS BAINBRIDGE

Nick: I don't think this is something that we'll be considering any time soon, Jess, especially as we had a negative response when we made enquiries some years ago now.

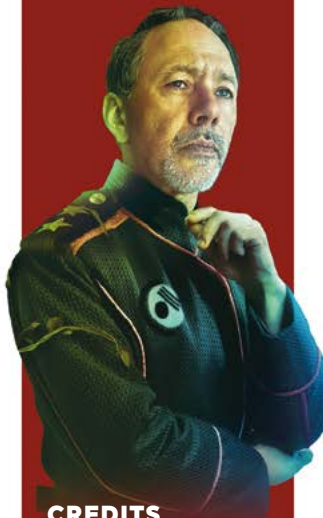
MORE MASTERFUL?

I recently had the privilege to meet Milo Parker and I explained how much I enjoyed his version of the master in the **Masterful** box set a few years ago. Is there any chance we can get more of his young incarnation of the Master either on his own or in a **Masterful** sequel? Also, is there any chance of additional **UNIT** box sets with either Brigadier Bambera or Kate Stewart, as both lines are marvellous?

ANDREW BARRETT

Nick: Some of your wishes may come true, Andrew. **VORTEX**





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