



THE
MEANING OF
BIG
FINISH

DIVERGENT WORDSMITHS

THE MEANING OF BIG FINISH

**Edited by
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“Purloined from the exquisite biomechanical computer systems of the Catchvane, the Wordsmiths have deciphered, transcribed and generally squabbled over the Doctor's vast gallimaufry of cosmic ventures. While many have been recorded by reliable sources, they are more curious of the accounts that have, as Tellurians would say in their idiosyncratic tongue: 'fallen through the cracks.' The Wordsmiths' efforts to document these lost exploits are furnished in the lathes below, left by a divergent scion and reappropriated for the Earth's admittedly primitive global computer network...”

All characters in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance to real persons, living, dead or analysed, is purely coincidental.

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THE DEFINITIVE BIOGRAPHY: INTERTEXTUALITY IN LANCE PARKIN'S "DAVROS"

By *Alan Camlann*

"When I press this switch, I will die..."

Intertextuality is the shaping of a text's meaning by another text. Fiction thrives on it and nowhere more than in the realm of *Doctor Who*. Across the character's many lives, they have explored the deepest reaches of culture — both cosmically foreign and domestic — across the blackest seas of prose, most textured audio mediums and punctual of graphic novels. It's no exaggeration to say that the Doctor lives, breathes, passes and lives again in more mediums than colours on the Sixth Doctor's particoloured vestments. However, despite this wealth of variety, it's still only occasionally that you encounter a story that so fundamentally uplifts not only its own quality, but that of its surrounding peers. In 2003, Lance Parkin devised a tale that — in the words of historian Lorraine Baynes — would become the “definitive biography” of a character that has plagued the Doctor's travels since Tom Baker's first year in 1975.

Revived from a 90-year purgatory in stasis by Arnold and Lorraine Baynes, representatives of Trans-Allied Inc. (TAI), *Davros* follows the titular creator prior to his role as the Great Healer at the Tranquil Repose funerary complex in *Revelation of the Daleks*. Sadly, his only encounter with the Sixth Doctor (Colin Baker) of three portrayals by Terry Molloy over the classic series' final decade. It speaks to the skill of both Baker and Molloy that a confrontation between their respective interpretations of the character brings to mind the classic clashes of yore. The First Doctor against the Daleks, the Second versus the Cybermen or the Third duelling the Master. We never feel as though we're wantonly retreading old territory. Not in *The Juggernauts*, not in *The Curse of Davros*, nor here where it all began.

Confronted by spectres from his past, Davros is given the opportunity to reform his character, much to the Doctor's well-warranted scepticism, but

is he right this time? Is he too correct to presume that Davros is irredeemable?

Much of what *Davros* explores is supported by healthy bedrock of presuppositions formed over what was then nearly three decades. We as fans and listeners feel as though we know Davros, the Daleks, his homeworld of Skaro and how all three are perceived by the wider universe. It's believed that the creator cannot exist beyond his creations. He is bound to them in perpetuity, yet from those first moments in TAI's covert hanger; we learn that the Baynes are operating independently. The shadow of the Daleks hangs over the entire story, but they never make an actual appearance, even within the context of a cameo. Severing the geneticist's role as mouthpiece for the Daleks, the character of Lorraine draws a definitive line between creator and creation that's carried throughout the tale. Wherever she sees the Daleks have fallen, Davros has risen in admirable defiance. Far from being treated as one of the most despised figures in the cosmos, she sees in him one of the greatest minds in living memory, offering him a position at the company and a place at her dining table. In the corporate atmosphere of TAI, he's no freeze-dried relic, but instead at the forefront of his field. By his own admission, he's matched only by the Doctor himself. Two of a kind locked in one unparalleled rivalry.

Almost uniquely, *Davros* is also one of the very few stories to have two releases telling the same identical tale from differing perspectives. Parkin's contribution to the *I, Davros* series with *Corruption* furthers that intertextual link by melding the flashback scenes of the former with the political machinations of the latter. Through Davros's interactions with his politically-aggressive mother, Calcula, and a firsthand examination of Shan's budding romance with Counsellor Valron, we're given yet another layer to consider as listeners. We're invited to question the reliability of memory and the importance of context across any narrative. Scenes which are otherwise replicated word-for-word in both scripts are performed in markedly different ways. The first handled with vulnerability and raw energy, the second with cool precision and professionalism. One recounted solely

within Davros's own mind as he muses over a change in character, the other to a Dalek tribunal tasked with judging his worthiness after his capture in *Revelation of the Daleks*. It begs the question of which interpretation — if either — is a more accurate representation of the objective reality. Is *Davros* the “truer” account of his memories due to his own personal introspection? Is *Corruption* more authentic because of its introduction of characters we see act independently of Davros himself? Or are both subject to some degree of revisionism?

Indeed, it's the nature of continuity in *Doctor Who* to revise itself. Elements are cannibalised and reused for sequels, prequels and *gaiden*; to innovate, as *Davros* does, but also innervate and re-inject new life into older tales. As much as the audio drama is a meditation on the nature of redemption, it's also a powerful reinforcement to the events of *Revelation of the Daleks*. Each conversation embeds an additional layer of context within both its own framework and that of its successor. Davros's discussion with Shan, for instance, over the logic of recycling corpses for protein in Skaro echoes his solution to the Galactic Famine. Suddenly, his line about “consumer resistance” regarding the food product takes on an even darker tone that can be felt throughout the story. In Tranquil Repose's grim parlour, Tasambeker's romance with Jobel becomes a grotesque means for Davros to exorcise any lingering feelings regarding his former colleague. His sudden wealth and connections with Necrosian entrepreneur Kara could easily be the result of expertise and resources acquired during his time at Trans-Allied Inc. Even Arnold and Lorraine's private debate over the viability of cloning prefigures the geneticist's foremost safeguard from assassins, Orcini and Bostock, in the catacombs beneath the funerary complex.

Over a decade later, *Davros* continues to be the benchmark for intertextual integration. Deconstructing and reconstructing expectations, exploring the subjectivity of both memory and its relation to continuity, and enriching the narrative tapestry of its peers. It cemented the monstrous creator's place as one of the series' most richly textured villains with one of their most celebrated Doctors. As this story was commissioned to celebrate the series' fortieth anniversary, it seems fitting that it should receive praise on Big

Finish's own twentieth. *Davros* is testament to Big Finish's informal mission statement for their contributions to *Doctor Who* — to uplift, to enrich and to celebrate each great contribution to the show's long history.

“This is not the end, this is only the beginning!”

BIG FINISH SURVIVORS

By Richard Cross

Across the course of nine series, *Survivors* would develop into one of the most continually highly-praised audio titles released by Big Finish during the first two decades of its work. *SciFi Bulletin* declared the first series to be “the best thing that Big Finish has ever done”; *Planet Mondas* heralded series two as “wonderfully written, paced and superbly acted, and chilling to the bone”; *Mass Movement* celebrated series four as “endlessly inventive, fascinating and thoroughly addictive”; *Starburst* called series seven “simply unmissable”; while *Cultbox* concluded that series nine delivered “a stunning finale for what must be celebrated as a consistently compelling audio drama.” But as work began on the first *Survivors* scripts, this level of critical acclaim was far from guaranteed.

By 2013, Big Finish’s commitment to extending the breadth and diversity of its audio range further beyond the core realm of *Doctor Who* was not in doubt. The company’s executive producers were actively reviewing which new genre properties it might be possible to bring into the Big Finish fold. One such series that many of the team were keen to see produced was Terry Nation’s acclaimed post-apocalyptic drama *Survivors*, which ran for three series on BBC 1 between 1975 and 1977. *Survivors* told the story of small groups of British survivors who emerge from a deadly viral pandemic to find civilisation in ruins and the remnants of global humanity hanging on by a thread.

The series explored how different individuals and settlements attempt to build new lives and new types of community in the post-Death world, and examines what happens to questions of morality, of social responsibility and of human imperfectability in the face of a worldwide catastrophe.

Commissioning *Survivors* would add an edgy, dark and unsettling drama to its roster of titles, and serve as a clear testament to Big Finish’s new intent.

Writers, producers and directors at the company were all enthusiastic, and (in contrast to some other short-listed properties) it was clear who held the rights to the series. The company had extensive experience of negotiating with the Nation estate, so securing a deal was a far from daunting prospect. Everything seemed good to go. But, in reality, there were some major issues still to address.

A key unknown was the level of audience interest in *Survivors*. When Big Finish polled listeners about which classic TV drama series they would most like to see adapted for audio, *Survivors* scarcely registered in the resulting wish lists. Nation's end-of-the-world drama would certainly be a bleaker, harsher and potentially more harrowing series than any other that the company had yet produced. Would existing subscribers be won over to *Survivors*, would the series draw in new listeners to the world of Big Finish; or would it simply not find a receptive audience?

With the rights to the series cleared, Big Finish reached out to original *Survivors* actors Ian McCulloch and Lucy Fleming, who'd played the roles of the rugged Alpha-male Greg Preston and the independent (if sometimes fragile) Jenny Richards. Neither had done much in the way of radio work, but both were intrigued by the idea of reviving *Survivors* on audio and were keen to be involved once they had heard of Big Finish's plans. In the 1990s, McCulloch had made repeated efforts to bring *Survivors* back to TV screens through different revival pitches to the BBC and has remained a passionate advocate for the show (particularly of the action-and-adventure focus of the first series, shaped by the perspectives of Nation himself).

With the two stars on board, scripts for the first four episodes of the first series were commissioned, while efforts to track down Carolyn Seymour, who played the pivotal role of Abby Grant in the first TV series continued without success. A chance discussion led to a cold call to one of Seymour's social media accounts. While she was surprised to learn of Big Finish's plans, she was immediately eager to get involved, all the more so once she heard that both McCulloch and Fleming were on board. This meant that all three of the original series leads would be involved in the audio incarnation

of *Survivors*. (The fourth candidate, the driven and impassioned Charles Vaughan, played by the inimitable Denis Lill, was a character introduced in first series episode “Corn Dolly”. Created by Jack Ronder, rather than by Nation, he was a survivor beyond Big Finish’s gift to use).

The *Survivors* audio series retained original producer David Richardson, script editor Matt Fitton and director Ken Bentley throughout its entire run, whilst recruiting the services of an impressive ensemble of scriptwriters (many of whom became regular contributors). Andrew Smith wrote muscular and energetic stories; Louise Jameson brought emotionally literate characters to the fore; Christopher Hatherall crafted first-rate tales of confinement and countdown, amongst many others. From the first series outline to the final one, writers were asked to deliver a combination of standalone audio stories and whole boxset story arcs.

Fitton, Richardson and Bentley shared the clear sense that the series would focus on the action, thriller and adventure themes of the *Survivors*’ story, which they judged were far better suited to the audio drama format. This meant downplaying those aspects of the TV canon which addressed issues of sustainability, agriculture and the everyday travails of the long-term battle for survival. The core drivers for the drama were the competing solutions to the challenges of survival different individuals and groups propose, and the choices and sacrifices required to secure them. This made for drama that could explore the full gamut of the human experience and the best and worst that people are capable of in conditions of extreme adversity.

For Big Finish, the first series remained something of a gamble for an untested property. These four CDs had to stand on their own merits as a convincing quartet of stories, were no further releases to be forthcoming. Bringing back the characters of Greg Preston and Jenny Richards, it turned the clock back to the time of the Death (the original pandemic) to introduce new characters confronted by the disintegration of London and the rise, to the status of settlement leader, of the cruel and flawed Gillison. It concludes with the shocking mass murder of his subjects by the now

completely unhinged cult leader; an outcome that Greg and Jenny are unable to prevent.

It included as a coda, the voice of Abby Grant welcoming their return to The Grange; an enticing hint of the far more substantial focus on her character now being planned. The scripts were too far advanced when Seymour was signed up to allow for anything more substantial. The first series was an fantastically strong opener, that garnered near universal praise from reviewers and across social media. It was the precursor of a further eight series of original adventures, which when taken together delivered *not quite* as many episodes as the original TV series (38 in total) but which came *pretty close* (36 in the end). It was considerably more than the TV revival of *Survivors* had achieved in 2008-10 (12 all told).

Big Finish's schedule had already pencilled in production on the second series of *Survivors* for an autumn 2015 release date, but so strong was the reception that they were keen to fast-track some more *Survivors* material. The result was the unexpected and very welcome *Survivors* audiobook, an unabridged reading of Terry Nation's 1976 *Survivors* novelisation brilliantly voiced by Seymour (who was now keen to ramp up her involvement).

Series two took the show in the darkest, most horror-infused direction of the entire run. It's most talked about because of its grim final two episodes ("The Hunted" and "Savages") and its shocking descriptions of cannibalism, but its earlier episodes hinted at other important motifs: the standalone action and adventure of "Dark Rain" and the engaging female-focused drama of "Mother's Courage". Both were bold indicators of the breadth of drama the show would go on to offer. Boxset three is a self-contained mini-series, which began by returning to the onset of The Death (for a second time), in the memorable quarantine-on-the-high-seas story "Cabin Fever" before exploring the threat posed by the malevolent, merciless and highly ambitious gang-leader Vinnie. Excitingly for fans, Vinnie is confronted by an imposing male antagonist in the shape of the returning Jimmy Garland (Richard Heffer re-inhabiting the character as if he'd never been away). The heroic death of new everyman Daniel Connor

(expertly voiced by John Banks) in the series finale confirmed that the ruthlessness of the series in relation to the survival of its characters was as sharp as ever.

In series four, for the third (but not for the final) time, the drama returned to the onset of *The Death* to introduce junior civil servant Evelyn Piper (Zoë Tapper, who played Anya in the 2008 TV revival) and depicted the chaotic unravelling of central government and the authorities' unpreparedness for what is to come. The unusual villain of the piece is the charismatic Theo (Ramon Tikaram) a guru spouting pseudo-hippie mumbo-jumbo which disguises his manipulation of others and his accumulation of unaccountable power.

The horrific prospect of the return of the plague, in a mutated and virulent form, is the chilling premise for series five. It's a fantastic concept which sees the writers push the idea of a reunion of Abby with Greg and Jenny as far as it's possible to go without conflicting with the established canon, while threatening to engulf the world anew with a fresh pandemic, spread by a reckless and self-serving patient zero (Neve McIntosh on excellent form). Series six returned to the freedom provided by standalone storytelling. Beginning with "Beating the Bounds" (which revisits the theme of viral vulnerability), and including the exemplary "Trapping Pit", and the thrilling "Revenge of Heaven" (which explores the illusion of viral immunity) it also brings Greg's timeline back in sync with the conclusion of the TV series and signals his unfortunate demise.

Series seven saw the drama move beyond the television timeline, meaning that *Big Finish* were able to depict the longed-for reunion of Abby and Jenny and to make clear Abby's continuing torment and regret at failing to find her son. This unfolds in the context of a high-stakes thriller which introduces the (as yet unnamed) endgame villain, and hints at the restoration of electric power which could kick-start a new era of industry.

With the enthusiasm of the original cast and the writing team undimmed, there was every prospect of *Survivors* developing into a *Big Finish* perennial.

But what had become apparent with each new series' release was a growing disconnect between the ebullient critical reception for the show and sharply declining sales. Things were reaching the point at which the property would cease to be economically viable. The news that the release of series eight and nine would bring the full-cast *Survivors* audios to a close was met with a mixture of disappointment and acceptance that the company had little other option. The knowledge that the end was coming at least allowed the team to scope out a proper big finish.

Series eight has strong action and adventure motifs, but at its heart is the character of the cruel and vicious Robert Malcolm. His life story is introduced by a final switchback to the onset of *The Death*. It follows the complete collapse of his moral compass and slide into warlordism and the building of a child army. Things conclude with the most impressive heart-in-the-mouth battle scene in the finale "Village of Dust", but not before Abby has engineered a soul-destroying reunion with her psychologically scarred son Peter. Series nine delivers a riveting, compelling endgame which shows the final winner-take-all showdown between the Federation and the Protectorate and the deeply morally conflicted resolution of the Peter and Abby conundrum. There's a satisfying sense of reckoning, of settlement and of closure (although one that still leaves the door open to future dystopian storytelling).

In the final moments of closing episode "Conflict", an American plane flies overhead above the victorious Federation forces, a testament to the return of transatlantic travel and a metaphor for the revival of industry and of civilisation. Listeners know from the series two episode "Contact" that survivors are thriving on the other side of the Atlantic, but it's still an unexpected and a euphoric *denouement*.

Who would have thought that the villainous tramp Tom Price would prove to have been such a reliable oracle? Back in the TV episodes "The Fourth Horseman" and again in "Genesis", Price had reassured the anxious Jenny Richards that the US would be the source of the country's salvation. "The Yanks will have something," he insisted. "In the war, they gave us the stuff

then. The Yanks'll fix us up. Don't worry." Many years on from the traumas of The Death and its brutal, unforgiving aftermath, survivors living in the UK can now face the future with some sense of hope. What more fitting conclusion could there be for what is an extraordinary, riveting and unforgettable audio drama series; and a landmark event in the remarkable history of Big Finish.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF FEAR: MEMORY AS REALITY

By Jacob Licklider

Christopher Falzon's *Philosophy Goes to the Movies* posits that "The answer that both Plato and Descartes give is that the senses are not our only sources of knowledge" in answer to the question of where knowledge originates (Falzon 36). Falzon uses several classic films from throughout cinema history to explain this. It is Descartes who establishes an idea of knowing oneself even within a dream, stating "I will believe that my memory tells me lies, and that none of the things that it reports ever happened" (Descartes 491) and that "the visions that come in sleep are like paintings, which must have been fashioned in the likeness of things that are real, and hence that at least these general kinds of things...are things which are not imaginary but are real and exist" (490). Descartes goes on to establish his central premise, summarized as the oft quoted phrase 'I think therefore I am' explaining that his thoughts and memories make him who he is, no matter how much reality is distorted and how deceiving appearances can be. Falzon's issue with analyzing Descartes is that he does not show any counter arguments to the theory, an example of which is Jim Mortimore's 2004 Doctor Who audio play, *The Natural History of Fear*.

The Natural History of Fear presents its narrative as flashes in the lives of our characters under a totalitarian regime where memories are edited and spliced, people lose their identity and become different people. Going into the play the audience expects the characters played by Paul McGann, India Fisher, and Conrad Westmass to be the Doctor, Charley Pollard, and C'rizz respectively. The Doctor is a time traveler whose primary motivation is to help those in need and Charley is a young upper-class woman from the 1930s Great Britain. They have been travelling with each other through time and space for a while and the audience already knows that they are good people trapped in a bad situation. This story takes place while the

Doctor and Charley are exiled to an alternate universe where there is no passage of time making the reality of events already called into question. They are also missing their time machine so have to wander this planet which is split into many settings allowing for different types of stories through the entire arc. C'rizz is a chameleon like alien from this alternate universe, only introduced in the previous story where he was forced to murder his lover and is hinted at having a hidden agenda. The Doctor and Charley trust him, but not completely. It is important to note the relationship between these characters as immediately *The Natural History of Fear* immediately calls them all into question setting each of our protagonists as people living in this society.

The description on the back of the CD case and the page on the Big Finish website is set up the story with a vague warning from the "Faction Against Character Theft" about the consequences for breaching copyrighted materials and lists the cast outside of our main three as playing "other characters" helping in the deception as the play opens with C'rizz in the role of the Editor, the leader of this society and the Doctor and Charley as a married couple, but these character roles shift with each character being put in the role of Editor over the course of the story. This calls into question if the characters played by McGann, Fisher, and Westmass are the characters the audience is already familiar with. The audience knows that Charley would not turn the Doctor in to the authorities and that C'rizz if morally gray is not an out and out villain, but Mortimore leaves it open ended enough that it could be part of one of the Doctor's plans or something else entirely. The audience follows McGann's character as he attempts to start a revolution amongst the citizens of this society, something that the character would normally do in this situation. Mortimore, however, ends the story with an argument that there is something more than memories that make a man. It is not the idea of Descartes I think therefore I am because McGann's character and indeed the rest of the characters in the play are not humanoid but are a race of arachnids. He is not the Doctor but has had his memory accidentally altered to be the Doctor and could never actually save the people of the society. It argues that personality is more than the sum of

your experiences and memories. Mortimore argues that the dream of Descartes where somethings can confirm reality is not enough to know who somebody is and that it is more inherent than that. Mortimore does not elaborate on if this is some sort of soul, but he keeps personality separate.

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TORCHWOOD — THE ABILITY TO NURTURE
THOSE LEFT BEHIND:
A STUDY INTO REHABILITATION AND REBUILDING
OF FICTIONAL CHARACTERS IN EXPANDED MEDIA

By Ethan Gibson

While it was airing on television, Torchwood garnered much success. Awards and accolades were given. Major steps in media inclusivity were made with the first openly pansexual leading protagonist in Captain Jack Harkness. However, for all the great work Torchwood accomplished in its four seasons, there is one major issue that plagues it from beginning to end. For all the work that was done with characters such as Jack Harkness, Gwen Cooper, and later Ianto Jones, this came at the expense of secondary characters such as Owen Harper and P.C. Andy Davison getting their fair share of development. But then came in Big Finish. Known for their work on *Torchwood's* parent show, *Doctor Who*, Big Finish has a long standing relationship with fans for taking characters that were underserved on TV in their own audio dramas. This can be seen by their rehabilitation of the Sixth Doctor and Adric, two much maligned parts of the show's history, and made them not only manageable, but characters that now list people's top Doctors and Companions list.

So how did this all come together in Torchwood's favour. Well, I previously mentioned P.C., now Sergeant Andy Davison and Dr. Owen Harper. But the rehabilitation extends beyond these two, with guest villains such as Billis Manger and Captain John Hart being expanded upon, and integral support characters such as Rhys Williams. And so in an attempt to show instead of tell, I've taken three of these lovely personalities and dissecting their audios in a bit more depth, to really drive home the care that Big Finish take in their jobs as content producers.

First, I want to examine the three stories Big Finish have produced with Billis Manger, played by the acting legend Murray Melvin. Making a surprise

return in *A Kill to a View* by Mac Rogers, then two starring roles in *Deadbeat Escape* by James Goss, and *Dead Man's Switch* by David Llewellyn, Billis Manger has been developed from a memorable one-time villain, to one of the most vile and cruel, yet charmingly offbeat characters in the *Doctor Who* universe. His first appearance, *A Kill to a View*, sees Billis owning and renting out the most excellent apartment flats in all of Cardiff. *A Kill to a View* accomplishes two vital things when it comes to Manger as a character. The first is obvious. After ten years away, it's important to reintroduce the character. However, the second piece is perhaps more important. Instead of pitting Manger against someone like Captain Jack, of whom he had met previously, we see Manger against new and fresh characters, both to us and him. It's through this facing off against the Colchester-Price's that we see how evil Manger is, because now, it isn't some mysterious plot against Torchwood, but simply a ploy to make people kill for his pleasure.

Not content with simply having Billis Manger be a primary antagonist to our lovable, and not so lovable, rogues, Big Finish expanded him into a full-blown "protagonist" himself. In both *Deadbeat Escape* and *Dead Man's Switch*, we see Manger fully realized from the hints given to us in the main saga of Torchwood. And yet, he doesn't become any less mysterious after each story. *Deadbeat Escape* sees him take in those in need of shelter and exploit them for his gain. And *Dead Man's Switch* is Manger's twisted antics inside of a train. Both give answers to who he is, but very little in the way of who he was before this point. This keeps the mysterious air about him, while still allowing for growth between stories. This growth is what builds Billis Manger into an evil antiquity dealer, into a sinister predator obsessed with our fixation on property and greed. This growth is what builds him into a stand-out guest star into a truly chilling reflection of our capitalistic society.

Next, I'm going to "kill" two birds with the proverbial stone and talk about the two releases teaming up Owen Harper and P.C. Andy Davison. *Corpse Day* and *The Hope*, both written by James Goss, are likely the darkest tales of mortality Torchwood has to offer, and this is in large part to the chemistry between the two leads. These are characters we watched on the show for

years, and yet they never made more than passing glances at each other, or so we thought. Big Finish expertly kept us on our toes with this weird buddy cop pairing, yet it paid off in dividends. In *Corpse Day*, the two find themselves working together on a missing persons case that is much more sinister than what first appears. Through this story, we see a team-up that is both darkly comedic and darkly serious, dealing with the issues of death and the afterlife, and they never pull their punches. And if this story didn't drive home this point straight through one's unbeating heart, then the follow-up drives a stake through it just for added twisted kicks.

The Hope is what a zombie/reincarnated dead episode of Torchwood would be if it had listened to *Nine Inch Nails* and the *Cha Cha Slide* at the same time. I apologize if that analogy doesn't make sense, but the irate sense of dread and depression is imbued with an innocence that seems mismatched, but actually works to add incredible depth. With these two stories, and these two characters, Big Finish takes what almost felt as tacked on edginess during the show's tenure on TV, and develops it into something that adds definition and sculpture.

Finally, we come to who I consider the soul of Torchwood, Rhys-Bloody-Williams! Not only did Big Finish finally give us the solo adventures we needed in *Visiting Hours* and *Sargasso* (More PLEASE!), but they also made Rhys an integral part of Torchwood's rebirth in the 2010's. The solo adventures allow for us to see who Rhys is outside of Torchwood and Gwen, whether that is Rhys' relationship with his mother, or how Rhys heroically does Torchwood's job when they aren't around. And while Rhys was always a major player in *Torchwood's* televised series, these are stories that build him up to the most supportive and down to earth member of the team.

Then we have the stories set in the current day, such as *Aliens Among Us* and *We Always Get Out Alive*, where we see Rhys build and care for those who are the face of Torchwood, in a way no one else truly has. Rhys is loyal, perhaps to a fault, but it means he never gives up on those he is family. *We Always Get Out Alive*, written by Big Finish's local David Lynch, Guy Adams, shows his ability and dedication as a father and husband, even

when he's faced with the possibility it isn't reciprocated back to him. And in episodes of *Aliens Among Us* such as 'The Empty Hand' by Tim Foley, we see him care, protect and understand P.C. Andy, no matter how hard it gets¹.

To conclude, Torchwood, at least in my oh so humble opinion, is the best distillation of Big Finish's strengths. Characters are developed from small roles to incredible parts, stories are made by the fans themselves, but done so in a glorious and never excessive way. The actors have returned for many more years, the stories are true and it never feels as if Big Finish hasn't a brilliant way to go forward evermore.

I now finish off this essay, and by extension, *The Meaning of Big Finish* with thanks. First, to Big Finish. I, and the other contributors to this collection, poured the hearts and soul into this collection, and that is only because you have both offered many years of intelligent, well-crafted and cared-for stories. And for those who have read and humoured us. These letters that have been formed to make a string of words that build many different paragraphs have only found meaning themselves because you gave us your time. And I speak for everyone who helped me make this set of essays as special as I think it is, to say that it truly means the world to us. Here is to many happy returns to Big Finish, and for endless more years of storytelling at its finest.

¹ P.S. Big Finish, we need at least a few more stories in which Andy and Rhys work together. Perhaps the only two normal and truly empathetic members of *Torchwood*, they also are the two people who care for Gwen the most. I can see it now... *Rhys and Andy: In Search for Gwen!*

Celebrating twenty years of DOCTOR WHO at BIG FINISH, essayists from the four corners of the internet have joined together to analyse and celebrate BIG FINISH's contributions to the storytelling medium as a whole.

Featuring essays on the long discourse of DOCTOR WHO's definitive mad scientist, the successes of the chilling SURVIVORS revival, philosophical musings on the nature of memory and the rise of TORCHWOOD characters from humble obscurity to venerable greatness.

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