



SEASON ONE
PRESS PACK

INDEX

<i>SERIES SYNOPSIS</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES</i>	<i>4-5</i>
<i>CAST LIST & BIOGRAPHIES</i>	<i>6-10</i>
<i>EPISODE SYNOPSIS</i>	<i>11-12</i>
<i>MAP</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>PRONUNCIATION GUIDE</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>CAST AND CREW INTERVIEWS</i>	<i>14-33</i>

SERIES SYNOPSIS

Adapted from Bernard Cornwell's best-selling *The Warlord Chronicles* trilogy of novels, *The Winter King* is a bold and revisionist take on the well-loved Arthurian legends.

In fifth-century Britain, having been banished by his father High King Uther, Arthur Pendragon returns to his homeland of Dumnonia to keep the peace until his infant brother is old enough to take the throne. He is reunited with Nimue, a powerful druidess, druid leader Merlin who looked over him growing up as a bastard son, and Derfel, a young man who Arthur rescued as a child from a Saxon death pit.

As he steps into his role as reluctant leader, Arthur discovers that there is doubt over his intentions, and that maintaining peace amongst the warring British tribes with the Saxons encroaching ever further is a gargantuan task. As he tries to forge allegiances in order to hold back the Saxon incursion, he is beset by unexpected challenges from within, some from those he believed closest to him.

Nimue and Derfel, who share a close bond and deep love, are separated as Nimue follows her own path and defends her Pagan religion against the rise of Christianity. Derfel throws himself into his quest to become a warrior, and dedicates himself to Arthur and his attempts to maintain peace and defend Britain. Both he and Nimue plan to one day exact their revenge on Gundleus, the King of Siluria who killed Derfel's mother, leaving Derfel for dead in a death pit, and attacked Nimue in his attempts to murder the infant king.

Arthur meets Guinevere on the eve of a strategic marriage to Ceinwyn, the tribe King Gorfydd's daughter, and their love affair changes the course of both his life and the future of the country. He is forced to make decisions with massive ramifications which compel him to face the trauma and wounds of his past so that he can move forward with his vision of a united Britain. As he tries to rationalise the fallout, he discovers that the enraged Gorfydd is forging an alliance with the Saxons, and Britain itself is in jeopardy.

CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES

Arthur

Iain De Caestecker (*The Control Room, Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D*) as **Arthur**, who begins as an exiled bastard before becoming the greatest hope for Britain.

Derfel

Stuart Campbell (*SAS Rogue Heroes, Clique*) is **Derfel** who transforms from left-for-dead orphan to the truest of all warlords.

Nimue

Ellie James (*Giri/Haji, I May Destroy You*) is **Nimue**, a child first saved by Merlin because she can see the gods – now an adult, Nimue's path to power will be physically and emotionally testing.

Merlin

Nathaniel Martello-White (*Small Axe, I Hate Suzie*) is **Merlin** – a politician, powerful, enlightened and absolute. Fearless in the face of a King's wrath he follows his connection to his Pagan Gods in all things.

Bedwin

Steven Elder (*The King, A Spy Among Friends*) as **Bishop Bedwin**, the deeply kind and affable Bishop of Dumnonia.

Owain

Daniel Ings (*I Hate Suzie, The Crown*) is **Owain**, one of Arthur's closest childhood friends and like a son to High King Uther.

Uther

Eddie Marsan (*The Thief, His Wife and The Canoe, Deceit*) is **Uther**, High King of all Dumnonia, old and battle-tested. He commands over almost all, bar Merlin.

Morgan

Valene Kane (*The Fall, Gangs of London*) is **Morgan**, Arthur's sister and another bastard child of King Uther. She is a sharp-tongued and independent-minded pagan and student of Merlin.

Sansum

Andrew Gower (*Outlander, Carnival Row*) as **Sansum**, Bishop Bedwin's fanatical novice, who holds great sway over the Christians of Britain.

Guinevere

Jordan Alexandra (*Mammals, Boiling Point*) as **Guinevere**, the exacting and ambitious exile Lady of Henis Wyren.

Ceinwyn

Emily John (*My Policeman, The Secret*) as **Ceinwyn**, the daughter of Gorfydd and sought-after princess of Powys.

Gundleus

Simon Merrells (*Good Omens, Knightfall*) is **Gundleus**, King of rival kingdom Siluria. Imposing and savage, Gundleus is prepared to slaughter whoever he needs to in order to secure power.

Sagramor

Ken Nwosu (*Killing Eve, The Letter for the King*) as **Sagramor**, a warrior who is Arthur's friend and brother in arms.

Gorfydd

Aneirin Hughes (*Keeping Faith, Dream Horse*) as **Gorfydd**, the ruthless, manipulative leader of Powys and a long-time enemy of Dumnonia.

Cadwys

Billy Postlethwaite (*The Great, Chernobyl*) as **Cadwys**, a shrewd and wily warrior-king with a loyal and dedicated tribe.




Ladwys



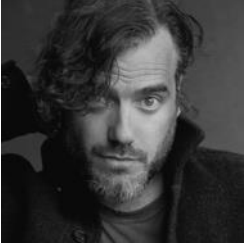
Tatjana Nardone (*Devils, State of Consciousness*) as **Ladwys**, a pagan-warrior, and rebellious lover to Gundleus.




Lanval






Matt Mella (*Trigger Point*) is **Lanval**, a young warrior and friend to Arthur.;




CAST LIST & BIOGRAPHIES

CHARACTER	ARTIST	ARTIST BIO
<p>ARTHUR</p> 	<p>IAIN DE CAESTECKER</p> <p>(He / Him)</p>	<p>Actor Iain De Caestecker has earned global fame for his series regular role as Agent Leo Fitz in the long-running Marvel franchise <i>Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.</i> He can recently be seen starring as emergency call handler, Gabe, in BBC One's thriller <i>The Control Room</i>. He also starred as one of the leads in Ryan Gosling's feature directorial debut <i>Lost River</i>, which premiered at the 2014 Cannes Film Festival. His TV credits include BAFTA-winning <i>The Fades</i> as well as <i>Young James Herriot</i> for which he was nominated for a BAFTA Scotland Award for 'Best Actor/Actress-Television'.</p> <p>He then earned his second BAFTA Scotland nomination for Best Actor in the Film Category for British romantic comedy <i>Not Another Happy Ending</i>. His thriller film <i>In Fear</i> premiered at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival to rave reviews.</p> <p>Other noteworthy film and television credits include, <i>Filth</i>, <i>Overlord</i>, <i>Roadkill</i> and the BBC series <i>Us</i>.</p>
<p>DERFEL</p> 	<p>STUART CAMPBELL</p> <p>(He / Him)</p>	<p>Having had no formal training, Stuart started his career treading the boards opposite James McAvoyn in Jamie Lloyd's <i>Macbeth</i>. He went onto work with Jamie again in <i>Richard II</i> and then in Rupert Goold's adaptation of <i>The Hunt</i> opposite Tobias Menzies.</p> <p>His television credits including <i>Outlander</i>, <i>Clique</i>, <i>London Kills</i>, <i>Baptiste</i> and <i>The Chemistry of Death</i>.</p> <p>2022 saw him star in Steven Knight's <i>Rogue Heroes</i> opposite Jack O'Connell, Connor Swindells and Dominic West. He is currently shooting series 2.</p>
<p>NIMUE</p> 	<p>ELLIE JAMES</p> <p>(She / Her)</p>	<p>Ellie James is known for her recent work in <i>I Am Maria</i> for Channel 4, playing Lesley Manville's daughter, and Michaela Cole's critically acclaimed <i>I May Destroy You</i>.</p> <p>Her other television credits include <i>The Strike Series: A Career Of Evil</i> for BBC and HBO, the Doctor Who spin off <i>Class</i> on BBC3, <i>Red Rose</i> and Netflix series <i>Giri/Haji</i>. She also appears in feature film <i>VS</i>, produced by Bennet McGhee. On stage, Ellie's credits include: <i>Our Country's Good</i> at the National Theatre and Punchdrunk's show, <i>Kabeiroi</i>.</p>
<p>MERLIN</p>	<p>NATHANIEL MARTELLO-WHITE</p>	<p>Nathaniel Martello-White is an actor, writer and director. His directorial feature debut <i>The Strays</i> was released on Netflix earlier this year.</p>

	<p>(He / Him)</p>	<p>His extensive television credits include <i>I Hate Suzie</i> opposite Billie Piper, Steve McQueen's <i>Small Axe</i>, Channel 4's <i>Deceit</i>, Sky's <i>Guerilla</i>, and <i>Collateral</i> for the BBC. His film credits include <i>Daphne</i>, <i>Silent Night</i>, and <i>Life Just Is</i>. On stage, Nathaniel's credits include <i>People, Places and Things</i> (National Theatre and West End); and <i>Edward II</i> and <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> at the National Theatre. For writing, <i>Blackta</i> premiered at the Young Vic in 2012; and <i>Torn</i> premiered at the Royal Court in 2016.</p> <p>Nathaniel was named Screen International Star of Tomorrow in 2017, and was the first Artist to be featured as a multi-hybrid for his work as an actor, director and writer.</p>
<p>BISHOP BEDWIN</p> 	<p>STEVEN ELDER</p> <p>(He / Him)</p>	<p>Steven Elder has played leading roles in several feature films, including <i>Hounds Of War</i>, <i>Miss Willoughby</i>, <i>Seized</i>, and <i>The King</i> with Timothy Chalamet, Joel Edgerton and Robert Pattinson; <i>Gallowwalkers</i>, and <i>Blackbeard</i>.</p> <p>He has performed leading roles in television, both in the US and UK: for the BBC, ITV, Sky Atlantic; Canal Plus, Disney, Amazon, Sony, and for CBS. These include, <i>A Spy Among Friends</i>, <i>Carnival Row</i>, <i>Grace</i>, <i>The Bay Series II</i>, <i>The Feed</i>, <i>Endeavour</i>, <i>Trauma</i>, <i>George Gently</i>, <i>Apple Tree Yard</i>, <i>Vera</i>, <i>Rillington Place</i>, <i>Silent Witness</i>, <i>Versailles</i>, <i>In The Club</i>, <i>The Tunnel</i>, <i>The Hour</i>, <i>Lost</i>, <i>The Day Of The Triffids</i>, <i>The 39 Steps</i>, <i>New Tricks</i>, <i>10 Days To War</i>, <i>Monarch Of The Glen</i>, <i>The Vice</i>, <i>Afterlife</i>, <i>Judge John Deed</i>, <i>Robin Hood</i>, <i>Lie With Me</i>, <i>Inspector Lynley Mysteries</i>, <i>Cromwell</i>, <i>Redcap</i>, <i>In Deep</i>, <i>Waking The Dead</i>, <i>The Bill</i>, <i>Holby City</i>, <i>Casualty</i>, <i>Eastenders</i>, <i>Coronation Street</i>. His theatre work includes performing with The Royal Shakespeare Company, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre In London, And In London's West End.</p> <p>Steven also co-wrote the feature film, <i>Skin Trade</i>, starring Dolph Lundgren, Ron Perlman, and Peter Weller.</p>
<p>OWAIN</p> 	<p>DANIEL INGS</p> <p>(He / Him)</p>	<p>Daniel Ings is best-known for his numerous roles in film, television and stage. He recently starred in the main role of Cob Betterton in the popular award-winning HBO/Sky Atlantic series <i>I Hate Suzie</i> and its second season <i>I Hate Suzie Too</i> opposite Billie Piper. The series was nominated for Best Drama at the 2021 BAFTAs.</p> <p>His TV credits include Archie Osborne in the hit BBC One drama <i>The Gold</i>, <i>The Crown</i>, <i>Lovesick</i> and <i>Sex Education</i> for Netflix, <i>W1A</i> for BBC 2, <i>Instinct</i> for CBS and Hugh Laurie's adaptation of Agatha Christie's <i>Why Didn't They Ask Evans?</i> alongside Will Poulter and Lucy Boynton for ITV. Other TV appearances include <i>Black Mirror</i>, <i>The English Game</i>, <i>Peep Show</i>, <i>Psychoville</i> and <i>Uncle</i>.</p> <p>His film appearances include <i>Pirates of The Caribbean: On Stranger Tides</i> and <i>Eddie the Eagle</i>.</p>

		<p>It was recently announced that Daniel will star in Guy Ritchie's Netflix's series adaptation of his 2009 film <i>The Gentlemen</i>.</p>
<p>UTHER</p> 	<p>EDDIE MARSAN (He / Him)</p>	<p>Eddie Marsan is best known for his role in the film <i>Happy-Go-Lucky</i> for which he won the London Film Critics Circle Award, National Society of Film Critics Award and BIFA award. He most recently starred in BAFTA nominated <i>The Thief, His Wife And The Canoe</i> for ITV, and just finished shooting the Amy Winehouse biopic <i>Back To Black</i>.</p> <p>His extensive film credits include <i>Tyrannosaur</i>, <i>Still Life</i>, <i>Hancock</i>, <i>Sherlock Holmes</i>, <i>Mission Impossible III</i>, <i>Deadpool 2</i>, <i>The World's End</i>, and <i>Snow White And The Huntsman</i> and Mike Leigh's <i>Vera Drake</i>, for which he won the BIFA for Best Supporting Actor. His television credits include <i>The Power</i>, <i>Ridley Road</i>, <i>Deceit</i>, <i>Moby Dick</i>, <i>Jonathan Strange & Mr Norell</i>, <i>The Sarah Jane Adventures</i>, <i>Law And Order: UK</i>, and all seven seasons of <i>Ray Donovan</i> for Showtime.</p>
<p>MORGAN</p> 	<p>VALENE KANE (She / Her)</p>	<p>Valene is known by audiences for her performances in all three series of BBC2's BAFTA-nominated <i>The Fall</i>, in which she played Jamie Dornan's first lover, Rose Stagg, and as Lyra Erso from <i>Rogue One: A Star Wars Story</i>. In 2023 she starred in the BBC's <i>Blue Lights</i> and independent film <i>5½ Love Stories</i></p> <p>Her writing credits include 6-part darkly comic female heist series <i>Mother Country</i> (currently in development with Story Films) and feature film <i>Our House</i> (also in development).</p> <p>Her TV credits include <i>Gangs of London</i> for HBO/Sky Atlantic, <i>Hanna</i>, and <i>The Other Guy</i>. Further roles include Sharon Horgan's <i>Women On The Verge</i>, <i>Death And Nightingales</i>, <i>Counsel</i> and kidnap drama <i>Thirteen</i>, all for the BBC. Lead film roles include <i>Profile</i>, <i>Sonja: The White Swan</i> and <i>First Person</i> for which she won Best Actress at Sherman Oaks and Philadelphia Film Festival 2020.</p>
<p>SANSUM</p> 	<p>ANDREW GOWER (He/ Him)</p>	<p>Andrew Gower is an actor and musician widely recognised for portraying 'Bonnie Prince Charles Edward Stuart' in the multi award-winning global hit series <i>Outlander</i>, <i>Black Mirror</i> episode 'Crocodile', Amazon's <i>Carnival Row</i> and <i>YOU</i> for Netflix. Other TV highlights include <i>Being Human</i>, <i>Frankenstein's Wedding</i>, <i>Capital</i>, <i>Miss Scarlet And The Duke</i>, <i>The Village</i>, <i>Poldark</i>, <i>Monroe</i>, <i>Misfits</i>, <i>Black Work</i> and <i>A.D. The Bible Continues</i>.</p> <p>His film credits include <i>Rosewater</i>, <i>Out Of Darkness</i> and more recently he starred in the feel-good comedy feature <i>Running Naked</i>. In theatre, Andrew played the role of Winston Smith in George Orwell's <i>1984</i> at the Playhouse Theatre, as well as appearances <i>The Conquest Of The South Pole</i>, and <i>First Time Voters</i> directed by Phoebe Waller-Bridge and Vicky Jones.</p>

<p>GUINEVERE</p> 	<p>JORDAN ALEXANDRA</p> <p>(They / Them)</p>	<p>Jordan Alexandra has worked both in television and film with roles in ITV's <i>Granchester</i> and the 2022 feature film <i>Surprised By Oxford</i>. Jordan can also be seen in the acclaimed film <i>Boiling Point</i> for Netflix, in the role of Bryony.</p>
<p>CEINWYN</p> 	<p>EMILY JOHN</p> <p>(She / Her)</p>	<p>Emily John's credits include <i>Y Gyfrinach/The Secret</i> for S4C & BBC WALES and the feature film <i>My Policeman</i> with Harry Styles and Emma Corrin for Amazon.</p>
<p>GUNDLEUS</p> 	<p>SIMON MERRELLS</p> <p>(He / Him)</p>	<p>Simon Merrells is best known for his portrayal of Marcus Licinius Crassus in <i>Spartacus: War Of The Damned</i> for Starz. His other film and tv credits include <i>Good Omens</i>, <i>Knightfall</i>, <i>The Tomorrow People</i>, <i>12 Monkeys</i>, <i>Legends of Tomorrow</i>, <i>Dominion</i> and the feature <i>Index Zero</i>.</p> <p>His theatre credits include stints at the National Theatre, RSC, & <i>On the Waterfront</i> and <i>Oedipus</i> directed by Steven Berkoff for both of which he was nominated for 'The Stage Award' for Best Actor.</p>
<p>SAGRAMOR</p> 	<p>KEN NWOSU</p> <p>(He / Him)</p>	<p>Ken Nwosu starred as the lead Thomas in ITV 3-part drama <i>Sticks & Stones</i> written by Mike Bartlett and was most recently seen in ITV's <i>Hollington Drive</i> and <i>Rain Dogs</i> for the BBC. His other credits include the Netflix series <i>The Letter For The King</i> and the feature <i>The Witches</i> opposite Octavia Spencer.</p> <p>Ken's performance in <i>An Octoroon</i> at the Orange Tree and National Theatre saw him win the Off West End Award for Best Male in a Play. Other notable theatre work includes <i>White Noise</i> at the Bridge Theatre, <i>Three Sisters</i> at the National Theatre and <i>As You Like It</i> also for the National Theatre.</p>
<p>GORFYDD</p> 	<p>ANEIRIN HUGHES</p> <p>(He / Him)</p>	<p>Aneurin Hughes is best known for playing Chief Superintendent Brian Prosser in the BBC4 Welsh police drama <i>Hinterland</i>. His extensive television credits include all three seasons of <i>Keeping Faith</i> as well as recurring roles in <i>Eastenders</i> and <i>The Light In The Hall</i>. His other television credits include <i>Father Brown</i>, <i>Coronation Street</i> and the BBC production of <i>Under Milk Wood</i> with Sir Tom Jones.</p> <p>His film credits include <i>Dream Horse</i>, <i>Just Jim</i> and the Welsh language film <i>Cameleon</i>, which he won a Best Actor BAFTA Cymru for his role as Delme.</p>

<p>CADWYS</p> 	<p>BILLY POSTLETHWAITE</p> <p>(He / Him)</p>	<p>Billy Postlethwaite is a film, television and stage actor. He recently just wrapped production on Joy Wilkinson's British thriller <i>7 Keys</i>. He can currently be seen in <i>Silo</i> for AppleTV+ opposite Rebecca Ferguson. His other recent television credits include a guest regular role in HBO's <i>Beforeigners</i>, <i>The Great</i>, <i>Chernobyl</i> and <i>Game of Thrones</i>.</p> <p>Film credits include <i>The Unbearable Weight Of Massive Talent</i> with Nicholas Cage and Pedro Pascal, <i>1917</i> and <i>Tomb Raider</i>. Billy's Theatre credits include <i>Game For Lovers</i>, <i>A Midsummer Night Dream</i> And <i>The Mother</i>, and was nominated for the Ian Charleson Awards 2019, for his performance as <i>Macbeth</i> at The Watermill Theatre.</p>
<p>LADWYS</p> 	<p>TATJANA NARDONE</p> <p>(She / Her)</p>	<p>Tatjana Nardone is best known for her work on TV series <i>Medici: Masters Of Florence</i>, <i>Loro2</i> by Paolo Sorrentino as well as her leading roles in indie feature films <i>Redwood</i> and <i>State Of Consciousness</i>. Her other credits include <i>The Paradise S1&2</i>, <i>Heirs Of The Night</i>, and <i>Devils</i> for Sky.</p>
<p>LANVAL</p> 	<p>MATT MELLA</p> <p>(He / Him)</p>	<p>Matt Mella is a film, TV and voice actor and has appeared in shows such as <i>Trigger Point</i>, <i>Salade grecque</i>, <i>Hollyoaks</i>, <i>The Syndicate</i>, <i>The Bureau</i> and <i>Plus belle la vie</i> where he appeared in 25 episodes. Matt has also extended his talents into the world of gaming where he has voiced characters in video games such as <i>Age of Empires IV</i> and <i>Valkyrie Elysium</i>.</p> <p>His feature film roles have included <i>The Last Letter from Your Lover</i> and WWII thriller, <i>Warhunt</i>.</p>

EPISODE SYNOPSIS

Episode One

High King Uther rages at his bastard son Arthur and exiles him. Arthur finds a young boy, Derfel, close to death. He leaves Derfel in the care of Merlin and his prodigy Druidess, Nimue. Eight years later, Uther has a new heir. Merlin sees a vision of terrible destruction in newborn baby Mordred's future. Derfel is shocked to re-encounter the man who attacked him as a child, Gundleus.

Episode Two

Uther dies. Merlin finds Arthur and asks him to return to Britain. Gundleus arrives at Avalon, and kills the baby King and Queen Norwenna. His men destroy Avalon and kill its inhabitants. Nimue is raped by Gundleus. Nimue and Derfel escape and find other survivors, who reveal that the Edling King is still alive. The survivors are surrounded, and all appears lost, when Arthur and his men arrive.

Episode Three

Arthur takes Gundleus prisoner. Nimue struggles with the trauma of her rape and plans to kill Gundleus. Arthur learns that Gundleus' uncle Gorfydd is preparing for war. Nimue tries to pull Derfel into her plans, but Derfel can't betray Arthur. Nimue is furious and decides to leave Caer Cadarn. Arthur releases Gundleus on the condition that he brings Gorfydd to Mordred's naming ceremony.

Episode Four

Nimue returns to Avalon, where she is found by Merlin. Derfel and Owain travel to collect taxes from King Cadwys, but he convinces Owain to raid a nearby mine to settle the debt instead. The raid turns violent. Merlin discovers that Nimue is pregnant but refuses to help her perform an abortion – she runs away from Avalon. Finally, Gundleus returns with Gorfydd to Caer Cadarn.

Episode Five

Derfel feels uncomfortable about the attack on the mine – which Owain is keeping a secret. Nimue aborts her pregnancy, and then is discovered by Merlin who helps heal her. Tristan, prince of Kernow, arrives demanding retribution for the raid at the mine but Owain denies his guilt. Derfel reveals the truth and Arthur fights Owain on Tristan's behalf – tragically killing his best friend.

Episode Six

Arthur and the tribe kings enter peace talks. Arthur suggests that as a show of faith, he marry Gorfydd's daughter, Ceinwyn. She is horrified by the news. Arthur and Derfel travel to Powys and rest for the night by a lake. Arthur meets Guinevere, Ceinwyn's lady-in-waiting, but he doesn't know who she is. They arrive in Caer Dolforwyn and Arthur and Ceinwyn are betrothed.

Episode Seven

A line-up of activities are set for the nights before Arthur and Ceinwyn are married. Arthur is increasingly drawn to Guinevere; they meet secretly and kiss. Gundleus attacks Derfel but Derfel prevails. Arthur breaks the betrothal with Ceinwyn. She tells him that Gorfydd will kill Guinevere. They need to escape now, which they do. Arthur and Guinevere marry in the countryside.

Episode Eight

Arthur believes that Bedwin will be able to negotiate peace with Gorfydd. However, when Morgan and Derfel arrive in Powys, they discover Bedwin being crucified. Morgan is heartbroken. Sansum persuades Arthur into allowing him to build his new church near Avalon, which horrifies Nimue. She curses Sansum. A Christian mob accuses Nimue of poisoning them. They demand justice from Arthur.

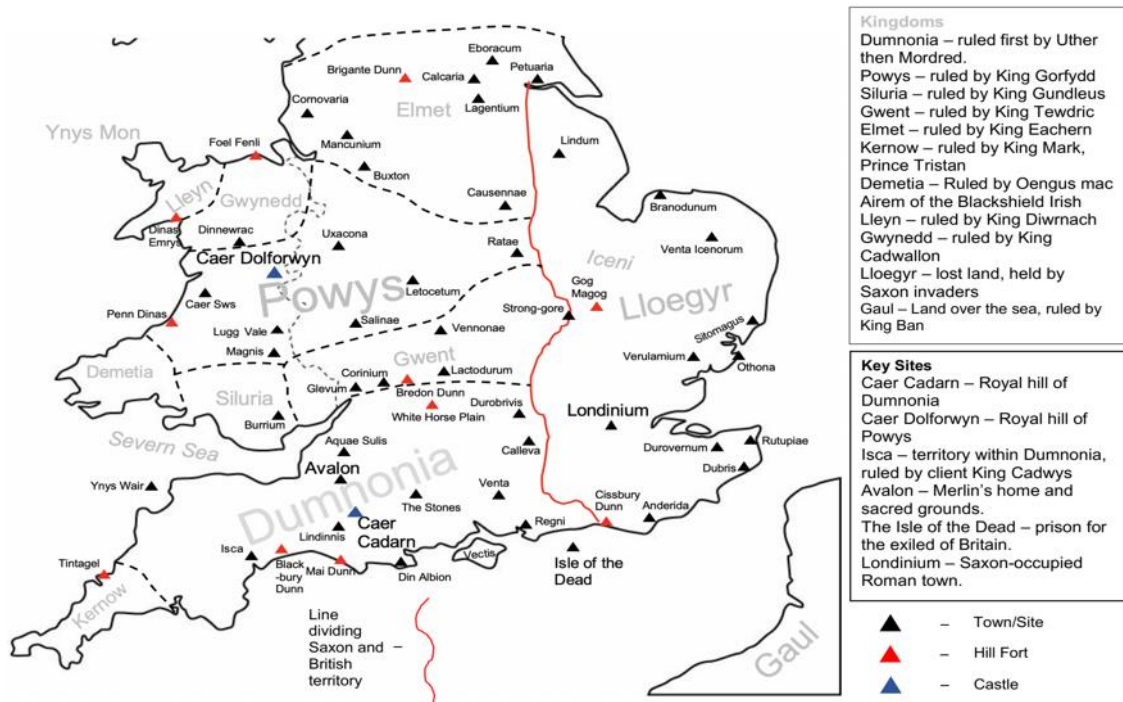
Episode Nine

Derfel and Morgan take Bedwin's body back to Arthur. Ceinwyn reveals that Gorfydd is allying with the Saxons. Derfel discovers that the Christians died of natural causes, but Arthur reveals he has exiled Nimue to the Isle of the Dead. Derfel leaves to find Nimue. Arthur is in his darkest hour but regains his conviction thanks to Guinevere and Excalibur.

Episode Ten

Derfel makes his assault on the Isle of the Dead and finds Nimue. Arthur meets the Saxon King Aelle and hands over information which will benefit their advance into Britain. In return, the Saxons will not attack Dumnonia for an agreed period of time. Arthur follows Derfel to the Isle of the Dead, and narrowly rescues him and Nimue by breaking the cave wall with Excalibur. Arthur has reconciled with his friends. He will need them in the battles ahead. Guilt ridden by the deal he's been forced to make with the Saxons, Arthur vows to fight to save Britain.

MAP



PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

LOCATION	PRONUNCIATION	CHARACTER	PRONUNCIATION
CAER CADARN	KYE-arh Kad-Ann	OWAIN	O-WINE
DUMNONIA	Dum-NO-Eneeya	GORFYDD	GOR-vuth
CALLEVA	Ca-LEY-va	CEINWYN	KINE-win
KERNOW	KER-no	HYWEL	How-el
CAER DOLFORWYN	KYE-arh DollVOR-winn	CADWYS	CAD-wus
POWYS	POW-is	UTHER	OO-thur
		DERFEL	DARE-vel
		NIMUE	Nim-WAY

CAST AND CREW INTERVIEWS

Otto Bathurst (Director and Executive Producer)

What has been your highlight of filming so far?

The big action sequences are fun, but sometimes the more dramatic stuff can be more satisfying. My favourite stuff without doubt is with King Arthur and Excalibur in the armoury. We've got a very interesting twist on Excalibur in this story and it's much more of a slow burn than an immediate discovery. He discovers this sword that he gets a sense is special. And just watching him slowly build the relationship with the sword and what it means for him and what it does is amazing. How it represents the truth for him is going to be a very cool part of this story.

What makes this different from the other depictions we've seen of King Arthur?

I think the Arthur story gets put through rose-tinted spectacles and gets Hollywood-ised and mythologised and can end up being heightened to a degree where we've had fantasy versions of the King Arthur story. The Winter King is a more grounded, much more visceral, raw version of the King Arthur story. My ultimate ambition is for people to watch this and go "oh, so that was the real Arthur story". What we're doing is going back to the roots and telling the true version of the Arthur story. And giving a much more authentic, believable, accessible and raw version of the story.

What about magic in the show?

The whole presence of magic in the show is something we thought about a lot and toned down a lot. Unusual stuff happens but it's very grounded in reality. So yes, there is symbolism, and they have a very strong relationship with nature, animals, and the cosmos. We call that magic now but is that just because we've lost that language? In those times, your relationship with the stars, animals, and symbolism was much, much stronger. Whereas now what they would consider to be obvious and as symbolism is something we think is magic but maybe it's not. Because we've lost that language. We've lost the ability to see or read that stuff. So yes, magical stuff happens but in a much more grounded way.

Kate Brooke & Ed Whitmore (Writers and Executive Producers)

Can you introduce us to the Winter King?

E: I would say in a nutshell that The Winter King is a retelling of the Arthurian legend. It's based on the brilliant novels by Bernard Cornwell and the great achievement of those novels is that he reimagines these iconic characters; Arthur, Merlin, Guinevere, Lancelot and so on, and he brings them to vivid life.

What was your initial feelings about adapting the books? Is it quite daunting task taking the well-known beloved series of books and making them into a screenplay?

K: I think when you have such good material, and *The Winter King* trilogy is such a wonderful trilogy, it doesn't feel daunting. It feels like a challenge, but it feels like a good challenge. I think that Bernard has such a clear take on the myth that we were very clear that we were going to follow his take which is a sort of revisionist take on Arthur.

E: I would say the phrase “embarrassment of riches” comes to mind to describe Bernard’s books. I mean, a lot of early decisions we had was along the lines of “this is all great”, “this is all fantastic”. What are we going to leave out? What are we going to distil? What are we going to prioritize? What are we going to focus on? And they become your kind of guiding star once you have those conversations. We realized early on we had these three incredible characters in Arthur, Derfel and Nimue, with Merlin very important as well.

Did you have any conversations with Bernard at all?

E: In terms of Bernard's involvement, I'd say that his encouragement was critical to us. My analogy is the TV show is still about Bernard’s house but we've had to go in and redecorate some rooms and sometimes move some rooms around because it's a different format, it's a different medium. The most important thing is we are true to the spirit. We worked really hard to make sure that the flavour and the aesthetic of his novels came through in our scripts and then that carried forward into production.

And was there anything you changed? I'm referring to the fact that the book is told from Derfel's point of view as an old man.

K: We did lose that element of it. Also in the books, Arthur, doesn't appear until page 250 and Merlin doesn't appear until page 400. So, we have changed that because we realised that Arthur needs to be front and centre with our other two characters Nimue and Derfel. Arthur is never actually given point of view in the books and so that is a big radical change that we have done.

What have been some of the challenges you faced adapting the book to TV?

E: I would say the biggest challenge is what do you leave out? There's just so much great material and so many great subplots. You have to sort of pick your guiding stars and that's what takes you through the material and what allows you to make the key decisions about what you perhaps park for a further season.

K: I would say as well to be clear about the stakes of the world, because it's a complicated world. We're in a world where there are fighting, squabbling tribe kings, and that in itself isn't a concept that we are very aware of in modern Britain.

The books already have an established fan base. Does that weigh on your mind in any way?

K: They were written in the mid-1990s, so I think that there has been quite a lot of time between when they were written and now. Historians have moved on in terms of what they know about the Celts to a degree, so historical advisors have been very interesting and useful from that perspective.

How would you describe the show to someone who's never heard of it?

K: This is full on, wonderful epic soap opera. This is love. This is revenge. This is betrayal of best friends. This has got a romance at the heart of it between Nimue and Derfel, the two key characters. It's obviously got Arthur and Guinevere. We've got hooks at the end of every episode, which are huge. So, although we've talked about the historical realism of it, it is also fantastic entertainment. I would say switch on for a rollercoaster ride.

Lachlan MacKinnon (Executive Producer)

What drew you to working on The Winter King?

I was drawn to Winter King firstly by the novel itself, written by Bernard Cornwell. It's a really unique novel in the sense that it tells the Arthurian legends in a completely fresh way. So, it's almost like reinventing the story that we're so used to and have heard many times. The key difference is the point of view. We focus on Derfel and Nimue in the novel itself, and through them we reveal Arthur. It's this completely new, original take. Derfel is a young Saxon boy when we first meet him who grows into a warlord over the trilogy of novels. And Nimue - she's a young druidess under the tutelage of Merlin.

What was the process of adapting the book to the script?

The process of adapting the books to scripts was hugely challenging in the sense that there's so much underlying material that Bernard's written that it's very difficult to let go of because there's so many great moments, whether it's character moments or drama.

We've broken the three novels down into five series. So, with The Winter King, it covers about two thirds of The Winter King novel itself. The other aspect of adapting the novels for the screen, which was really interesting, was unpacking the characters because, in the novels we only meet Arthur through Derfel point of view, and that's not until about page 250.

Did you have any conversations with Bernard when adapting the book?

Bernard has been very generous during the process of adapting the material. He's given us the keys to his kingdom and we've run with that and had a really great time doing that. We invited Bernard along to the readthrough with all our cast and he thoroughly enjoyed it. And we had some notes off the back of the readthrough. We embraced those and went with his blessing into the shoot.

How would you describe the series to someone who's never heard it?

The Winter King is an epic retelling of the Arthurian legends seen through the eyes of Derfel, Nimue and Arthur. It's about the thrilling journeys they all go through, and despite being set in the fifth century, their stories feel incredibly contemporary. Arthur is trying to carve a new path in politics and unite the tribes of England against the bigger enemy, the Saxons. But it's not all about the politics, we delve into his personal when he falls in love with Guinevere, and this creates huge shockwaves for his friends and foes alike. With Derfel, he's a young man questioning his identity having been born a Saxon, yet being saved by Arthur. His dream as a boy was to become a warrior, but it's never straight forward, especially in light of his bond

with Nimue. She too must wrestle with the obligations put upon her as one of the most powerful pagans, forcing her to choose between the life she wants to lead and her destiny. The choices our characters have to make and the themes we explore are immense – in fact, positively Shakespearian!

How do you think the King would resonate with today's audience?

I think *The Winter King* will resonate with a contemporary audience because it centres around leadership and justice. And in our show, we see this through the point of view of the characters of Arthur, Derfel and Nimue.

Through each of them we see their triumphs, their successes and their errors. We see them learning from all of those - human stories we can all relate to. We also meet very strong women who are given agency across the entire series. So, for example, Nimue herself has rarely been seen previously in retellings of the Arthurian legends as far as I'm aware, and we see her empowered to be Merlin's successor, because she's the one who's left behind while Merlin goes on his epic mission to find the Horn of Bran. Also, Guinevere has more often than not been portrayed as a femme fatale whereas in our series she is tough and Arthur's consigliere and stands shoulder to shoulder with him when he makes decisions. This felt really fresh and now.

How does the story compare to other interpretations in terms of the tone?

In terms of the tone, *The Winter King* differs from a lot of the films and series which have come before. I think they tend to fall into two extremes. On one hand, the ones which are very much knee-deep in mud all the time, on the other, the ones which are very courtly and heightened. We were trying to really ground the series in the authentic world of the fifth century, a watchword our director Otto Bathurst drove at every stage of the production, from design to costume and performance to VFX. We worked very closely with historian Professor Ronald Hutton to make sure we nailed the feel of that time, because it felt as if a lot of the times, we'd seen those stories being told before. All that said, it had to be entertaining!

How did you go about casting?

When it comes to casting, I think the success always goes back to the underlying material. We were blessed in having *The Winter King* by Bernard Cornwell to adapt, as well as the amazing work that Kate Brooke and Ed Whitmore did with the adaptation.

We were also working with Otto Bathurst (Director / EP), and he's someone the actors really adore working with. So that was a great starting point. And then when it came to the casting process itself, we had Andy Pryor on board as a casting director who is just the best. So that made the whole process much easier.

Some of the actors we've worked with before, like Dan Ings and Nathaniel Martello-White (both were in *I Hate Suzie*), and many other actors who are new to *Bad Wolf*. But we were just completely drawn in by the performances and really haven't been disappointed. And I hope the fans will agree. It's always nerve-wracking waiting for the fans of the novels to see the television series itself, but I'm sure they won't be disappointed.

Julie Gardner (Executive Producer)

What did you love about Bernard Cornwell's Warlord Chronicles that made you want to adapt them for television?

I'm Welsh, I grew up with the Arthur legend. I was obsessed with it and read a lot of different versions. I always felt there was an opportunity to do a new-for-2023 Arthurian legend story.

What I loved about Bernard's novels is they're everything you would want from the Arthur legend. It's a mix of Shakespearean choices – the good of kingdom or personal happiness. How to forge a country whilst making a marriage work. All those big things that you want from a deep-period drama.

Bernard's take is grounded and quite revisionist. As well as Arthur, the stories are told from the point of view of Derfel and Nimue, who are two characters who don't really feature in a big way in the legend. So, you have these seemingly ordinary people who are next to power and you get their point of view.

What are some of the challenges you faced when producing the series?

I think the biggest challenge in producing something like this is working to create a visually coherent world that has beauty, that is inviting for an audience but is also grounded and plausible. The design department, headed by James North, has built the Dark Ages from the ground up. Everything has to be built and designed.

How will fans of the books resonate with the series?

I was in Baltimore shooting another project at the same time as *The Winter King*. I went into a bar and two of the barmen heard me talking about "*The Winter King*". They were big fans of the novels and said "oh, my God. We heard that these were being televised". It was just so fantastic to be in this completely random place and get that reaction. We got talking about the novels and they knew so much detail.

So, I'm hoping, as you always do with readers or fans of a series of novels, that they recognize the things they loved in the novels, but they'll be okay with the things that we've changed and developed. It's always that tightrope.

How important was it to have this series set in Wales and the West of England?

It was always an ambition for Bad Wolf to have the piece film in this part of the world. We're a Cardiff-based company and always want to work locally and in the surrounding area. We were based out of Bristol for the first season, with great access to the West Country and Wales.

The locations are absolutely gorgeous. The cast and crew, and particularly director and EP, Otto Bathurst, have been heroic in leading the charge in some of the locations. They've often been remote and physically gruelling to manage.

How proud are you for what you and production have achieved?

You always know when something's made with passion and commitment and love. And this show is made with those things. So that's all you can really ask for. I'm very proud of all the hard work and commitment that went into this season.

And what do you think will excite audiences?

I'm excited to have a period show that is intimate that has pops of scale, but really is looking at character relationships and is grounded. You sometimes have a little glimpse of magic, but it's rooted in reality. The magic in this show is more about the elements than fairytale magic.

How do you think people will feel after watching an episode?

I hope people feel emotionally connected to the characters and excited by the ongoing story and intrigued by the stakes. Will Arthur make it? Who will live and who won't? Where will the country be and where will Caer Cadarn be by the end of episode ten?

Tell us what makes *The Winter King* appealing to international, worldwide audiences?

We have, I hope, quite a modern, diverse take on the piece. Global audiences right now want to be taken out of their everyday lives. We're all struggling with all kinds of things, so hopefully it'll be an escapist experience for a global audience.

Toby Leslie (Executive Producer)

How did you get involved with *The Winter King*?

We were developing another project with Bad Wolf when Julie approached us with the novel and an early script back in 2018. The fresh approach and rawness of the novel as well as Kate and Ed's take immediately spoke to us, and we knew pretty much instantaneously that it was a journey that we needed to join them on. Five years later and it is amazing to look back on where we have been as well as look at where we can go next!

Tell us about your collaboration with Otto Bathurst. How do you both approach a project together?

We always look for the opportunity for what we refer to as 'Trojan horse' filmmaking in our projects. No matter the genre or subject matter, what is it that makes it a relevant story to be told now and what are the questions that we can ask that are most pertinent for the viewers. Though the Arthur story has been conveyed many times over the years, it was clear that we are living through a time when we could all do with an Arthur and it was fun to explore why the legend remains and why we still talk about this man two thousand years later.

What are you excited for audiences to see?

I'm most excited for people to see the world that Otto and the team have created. It echoes the books rawness and is very much set in the Dark Ages rather than the more traditional medieval settings that Arthur stories are more regularly set within. One of the main reasons

being that there are no surviving Dark Age buildings in the UK, so whilst it was a fun challenge, we had to work hard to develop what the buildings, clothes and technology could have looked like two thousand years ago. The world is raw, authentic and alive and somewhere I would love to visit and spend time.

How will fans of the books resonate with the series?

I hope that they will see that we have used the books as the North Star with all the decisions that we made throughout the making of the show. Whilst making a TV show always elicits certain necessary creative choices, we always went back to the original text and have sought to honour Bernard's ambition for the story throughout. It meant a huge deal to us when Bernard not only joined the read through but subsequently gave the scripts and the show his blessing.

I also hope that they will recognise and enjoy the characters that they hold most dear from the book as they are brought to life in an authentic and brilliant way by our super awesome cast.

What makes *The Winter King* appealing to international, worldwide audiences?

The themes around leadership and what it is to truly lead have never felt more relevant for everyone. Looking at what it is to be in power, whether through choice or necessity, the responsibility that comes with that. That is what we wanted to explore and what Bernard does so brilliantly in his books.

Sherry Marsh (Executive Producer)

How did you get involved with *The Winter King*?

My involvement with *The Winter King* began at inception, about 8 years ago. At the time, I was developing a Louis Armstrong project with Quincy Jones and I met with Jane Tranter and Julie Gardner. I liked them very much and thought they might respond to the books, *The Warlord Chronicles* by Bernard Cornwell. It just so happened that these were always some of Julie's favorite books! It was meant to be and we decided to partner on developing them as a series.

What makes *The Winter King* such an amazing series?

The way that *The Winter King* blends imagination with history makes it a truly unique and amazing series. Our Arthur is portrayed as human and truly heroic. He's a man of honor, loyalty, and valor. He's both tragic and triumphant. You root for him and those around him. Having great characters, great battle scenes and action, along with a riveting story arc filled with political intrigue is the recipe for a hit series.

What are you excited for audiences to see?

I'm excited for audiences to see this retelling of the Arthurian legend—the mythical, Medieval Arthur as you've never seen him before, and told in a way that's both relatable and relevant. He's a hero for our times.

How will fans of the books resonate with the series?

Fans of the books will delight in seeing *The Winter King* give life to Bernard Cornwell's historical yet mythic books.

What makes *The Winter King* appealing to international audiences?

I believe *The Winter King* will become a must-watch series for global audiences. *The Winter King* gives life to an imagined world, yet is based on real history. We offer a fresh view of the Arthurian legend. Our series is grounded in historic record and the possibilities of what might have been, with a touch of fantasy thrown in.

Iain De Caestecker (Arthur Pendragon)

Can you describe *The Winter King*?

The Winter King is a new fresh gritty take on the famous Arthurian legend. It's about the quest for peace in a very fractionated and disjointed Dark Ages-era Britain.

What will excite audiences about the show?

It's got all the characters you're familiar with in that myth, but they are new, more human versions. There are sword fights, horses, big set piece landscapes and romance.

Themes and emotions in this story are timeless. It's in the Dark Ages era - a barbaric and difficult time to live in - yet there are these very human emotions in the story that will resonate with people from all walks of life.

How would you describe your character?

Arthur's quite a forward-thinking and natural born leader but I think some of his methods, especially for the time, are seen as unorthodox. But he's very ambitious about getting his plans across and about making real change. He's all about getting rid of old traditions that don't serve the country anymore and trying to find new ways of doing things.

What's his backstory?

As the bastard son of High King Uther, Arthur has not always had the easiest of upbringings. He's grown up under the shadow of his father's reign. King Uther has a reputation for not being the most compassionate of kings. He's powerful but ruthless and, as a result, Arthur has not felt love or acceptance from his father.

On the flip side, he has a surrogate father in Merlin who's taken him under his wing and been the father figure he needed. Merlin has shown him leadership and guidance, and given him knowledge, support, love and care.

Where do we first meet him?

When we first meet him, he is bringing the body of his brother, Prince Mordred, home from

battle. Prince Mordred has unfortunately fallen in battle, and Arthur has to bring his body home to Dumnonia. King Uther is so upset and outraged by his death that he beats Arthur to within an inch of his life and banishes him from Dumnonia and Britain. This leaves the country in a precarious position because the country is at a point of transition and there is trouble brewing ahead.

Can you tell us about the scale of the set design?

The set design is incredible. They're just not built like a typical set. I don't think I've ever been on a studio set that goes from outside to inside in this way. This huge courtyard that you can go through in one shot to the interior of the Caer Cadarn set. I talked to Otto about it and he said one of the aims was to build it as if you were on location, and it does feel like that when you're inside there, you get transported. Usually with a lot of sets you'll have one room here, and another set there, but ours is totally contained, it really picks you up and puts you in that world. All the sets have been like that, incredible.

Can you talk about the presence of religion?

Religion plays a big part in the series. At the start Britain is in a state of transition in terms of religion. There's the Pagan religion which is the dominant religion in Britain but that is starting to die and be replaced by Christianity which came in with the Romans.

Those two religions are competing and it's brewing a lot of turmoil in the country. I would say for somebody like Arthur he is someone that has always been a bit cynical about religion and not wholly believing. He doesn't have much faith in religion but at the same time he's very respectful of Merlin and his powers. He also understands it's not going to go away and should be handled with care.

What attracted you to the show?

The first thing that attracted me to the show was Otto Bathurst. I had seen a TV series that he'd done years ago called Criminal Justice. I just loved it when it came out, and have seen it a couple of times since. I was a real fan of his and that first attracted me to the show.

Also, playing such an iconic character. I don't know if I'd ever have another chance to do it. If I got to tell my younger self I'd be playing someone like this, I'd be jumping for joy. He's such an interesting character. The more I got into it, what really interested me was the idea of what it means to be a leader and the mental and physical toll that has on someone. I think with Arthur that's what really gets explored through this series and I find that really interesting.

What did you think of the scripts?

I think the scripts are fantastic. The first thing I really liked when I read them was there's so many characters but they all feel really individual. When you put them all together the way they contrast with each other I thought really stood out on the page. I also really liked how it felt when I was reading it, like a slow burner. It really gave a chance for the plot lines and the characters to breathe. At the same time, it's a page turner as well.

How do you think the show will resonate with the fans?

I hope that fans of the book come into this and that they recognise the characters from the books and that world from the books. At the same time, you also hope that people come into anything you do with an open mind to take on everyone's interpretations of characters. I think there's something in this for everyone and I hope fans of the books really enjoy it.

*Can you describe the world in which **The Winter King** is set?*

It's set in Dark Ages-era Britain, at a time where there is not only the threat of Saxons knocking on the door, but also a lot of civil unrest brewing in the country. There's different territories and they're all vying for power. There's a lot of political dynamics in this story. So, when we first start the story, it feels like there's trouble brewing ahead.

Have you enjoyed locations?

The locations always look spectacular, but they're not always spectacular to get to. Part of the journey has been getting up to the top of the hill with a big production crew and all their equipment but it's always worthwhile.

I remember recently we were filming at Worm's Head on the Gower Peninsula, probably the most beautiful and memorable location I've filmed at. It was stunning when you looked out. We also filmed near Arthur's Stone. The legend is apparently he picked the stone up and threw it across the sea. It was bizarre for that to be right beside where we were filming. It felt almost like fate.

Is the action something you're used to?

I enjoy doing the action side of it, although I don't know how good I am naturally at it.

We tried not to make the sword fighting feel like an action movie, it's not meant to be overly fancy, it's meant to feel real and brutal, that's the kind of look we're going for with it.

The other side of it is horse riding, which I'd never really done before I tried this. I was saying to my friend the other day that riding a horse is kind of like driving the best sports car you can think of, but it's alive. It's a mad feeling when you really get to the stage of cantering and galloping; it's like flying. I've got a lovely horse who's called Shovel who's massive, but he's just a proper gentle giant and he loves his grass.

Stuart Campbell (Derfel)

*Can you give us a brief premise of the **Winter King**?*

It's a gritty and honest take on the Arthurian legends that's not just based around Arthur and his escapades, but also as seen from the eyes of a young Saxon orphan trying to discover truth in a world where politics, religion, love, all of those key themes are very much at play.

How would you describe your character?

He is nineteen when we first meet him. He's been through quite a lot from an early age. My interpretation is that he found his way into a settlement in the east of England, of Britain. It was a Saxon settlement. He was captured by a king called King Gundleus of Siluria, lost his mother and was thrown into a death pit. He should be dead, but Arthur found him and brought him to Merlin in Avalon, where he now lives there with his best friend Nimue.

Could you tell us more about his relationship with Arthur?

I suppose from the first moment Derfel sees Arthur, he sort of understands and witnesses truth for the first time. A character that's so honest and so everything Derfel wants to be when he grows up. I think he's quite lost, like a lot of nineteen-year-olds probably are, trying to figure out where he belongs.

And Arthur provides a role model. A figure to look up to. From the outset, it can look like he's kind of fanboying him or he's just obsessed with him. I think he just sees somebody who's also a little bit lost and they connect on so many different levels.

Can you discuss his relationship with Nimue?

Again, from the outset, you might think of it as being entirely romantic, but he sees her as just almost like a wild goddess or a wild cat or someone that's just unbelievably unattainable with so many amazing, fantastical qualities. She's Derfel's best friend at Avalon. The two of them for the last eight years have navigated this world and which they live in, and they don't really know much else apart from Avalon. She's obviously very connected to the Gods and can see things and understand things and feels and feel things that Derfel isn't able to. They're just completely best friends.

Can you tell us about the presence of religion in the series and how the characters feel about the Gods?

Christianity and paganism collide and there's conflict in many different ways. That provides an interesting conflict, but also the characters trying to understand each other and find out what your beliefs are and what my beliefs are and trying to communicate with that. I think we see a real progression throughout the series. Derfel is slightly removed from that.

Has it been fun working with such a large ensemble cast?

Absolutely. It's so beautiful to be able to have such a rich and diverse cast and crew bringing in lots of different people's experiences and storylines. As the episodes have been going forward and the shoot's been going forward, Derfel's been sort of growing and seeing all of these different worlds, but also Stuart as well has definitely been growing alongside him the same time as well.

Can you tell us about set coordination behind the scenes of stunts?

There's a guy called Crispin Layfield who is the stunt co-ordinator. We communicate days and weeks before we're going to shoot. There's always a storyline and a dance with every stunt we do. It's never just thrown at you.

We talk about and incorporate character work into what the stunts are going to be and are able to question each individual move, which is really helpful. Crispin is really articulate with the way that he films it and communicates it. There's a big team of guys, with such a rich experience of stunts on lots of different movies, so there's lots of people to pull from. Derfel being this young boy to start with and going on this journey with Arthur gets to do a lot of cool stunts, using the horse, swords, fight sequences, near death sequences. There's a lot that I get to do, and I'm really grateful to be able to do them.

Ellie James (Nimue)

How would you describe Nimue?

Nimue is the best character I've ever come across. I think she's worldly, she's got a rawness to her vulnerability, but she's got a real strength within that and she's quite proud, not letting anyone see that she's vulnerable. Underneath all the layers there's a girl trying to become a woman.

Where do we first meet her?

We meet her as a young girl about seven years old. She's been lost at sea and washes up onto the shore where Merlin finds her. Straight away she's referencing a communion with the Gods. Merlin's taken back and finds her to have an innate connection with the Gods which is quite a rare thing to be able to express. The connection between them is instantly formed, he takes her under his wing, and she becomes one of his orphans at Avalon.

What about her journey through the series?

She goes through a lot of quite dire situations. It's quite a raw telling of some of the worst things women can go through. She has a rough time, and what's sad is from there it seems to spiral. There's one moment where she really gets attacked and it seems from there everything falls apart for her. Anyone she loves and trusts has another reason to not support her, because there's a big world with lots of politics and a lot going on. On a human level she gets abandoned by nearly everyone apart from Derfel.

What is Nimue's relationship like with Derfel?

Merlin realises that her and Derfel are falling in love and so he tells her that if she wants to live a life of being a druid priestess and have his position, and be so connected to the Gods, she can't be with Derfel. In my head I equated it to having a family or having a career. Will I choose my career and have that sole focus, or will I have a family? Derfel would quite like to have a family with her, but I don't think that's ever going to be enough. Derfel is just the love of her life, but she just loves her connection with the Gods and what that comes with more, in a way.

What about her relationship with Merlin?

So, Merlin is a lot of figures to her. He's a father figure, a teacher, a mentor, and he's also a friend. There's a real bond between them where they will support each other and have each other's back. When Nimue was with Merlin it felt like you could see the girl in her because

she would idolise this man. With everyone else she would hold herself in such a powerful way. I found such a nice vulnerability that came with their relationship. It's complicated; ideally, she would want Derfel, and to be a druidess with all these powers, but Merlin is adamant that's not possible. That's quite a turning point for her having to come to terms with that.

Can you talk about religion and how does the show portray magic?

Magic for Nimue is how she relates to the world. There's magic in everything, she has a really strong connection to nature, and I think signs and symbols and reading into them is a big part for her. If you were going to put it in a modern-day perspective, she's a clairvoyant, she has visions. There are things that you can relate to that aren't so mystical and so far out, they're things that could happen nowadays or anytime. For her it's her life and she sees everything through a lens of magic.

It is open to interpretation but for Nimue it's very real, it's her life, she will read a lot. She has strong visions which are like premonitions and they've in the past proven to be true. She doesn't doubt that she has these abilities and that's why Merlin doesn't doubt it, because they're not made up, and everything comes to a head.

What about hair, makeup and costume?

Nimue's colour scheme is of nature; there's lots of greens and browns and beiges. It's very neutral, I didn't want it to be too glamorous but also, she does have status as Merlin's right-hand man, as a priestess. So, there are little elements of showing that status. A lot of women at the time wouldn't have had any say in anything, or no respect. But because she has powers, she's almost feared by a lot of people, so I definitely feel like they've given me clothes that feel quite powerful but are still rooted to a real natural world.

Nathaniel Martello-White (Merlin)

Can you introduce your character?

Merlin's half-druid, half-warrior. He exists in a place called Avalon, where he oversees a community, somewhat like a cult. We're very close to the gods in that environment. We sell wool as a commodity. We're sort of very respected by Uther and the kingdom in terms of our visions and what we feel about the politics of the land.

When do we first meet him in the series?

We meet him when Arthur has just come back from fighting the Saxons and his brother's been slain. Uther's in a fury and he's blaming Arthur, and then Merlin suddenly appears at the point in which Arthur may be going to be slain by Uther. Merlin intervenes and suggests that Arthur should be banished as opposed to killed. We meet him in this long white coat, we see that he has a lot of state status and influence over the king.

Could you tell us more about his relationship with Arthur?

I helped raise Arthur with Igraine, his mother. And I think Merlin was a part of his evolution as a character. So, I think even though he would never admit that or sort of struggles with sort of accepting that, I think Merlin has instilled some of his own magic and wisdom into Arthur. So, it's like a sibling and it's also a sort of parental kind of relationship, very volatile, you know, which is cool in a way that doesn't feel sort of too sentimental. It's kind of like quite a fraught relationship because we both really want the same thing, but we see it being achieved in different ways.

Could you describe the presence of religion in the series and the relationship to the gods?

In pagan belief, the gods are very much linked to nature. You've got these different gods who represent different elements of nature. We were very staunch in our beliefs in terms of paganism, and I think very anti-Christianity, which for us, ironically, like today, people's opinions about paganism are probably what our opinions were about Christianity back then. And I think it's a sort of creeping narrative in the show because whilst we think the Saxons are the main sort of antagonist or baddie, in fact you've got religion, Christianity, rising sort of in the background, which I think is really threatening.

Can you tell us about Merlin's relationship with Nimue?

It's quite an incredible relationship actually. In the books, Merlin and Nimue are in more of a romantic relationship. In the show it's more like a parental relationship where I essentially raise her as a wizard. I believe she's going to be the most powerful druid the isle has ever seen. We shot this incredible scene where there's this shipwreck and I'm walking around the beach and this young girl is coming out of the water. We have this moment of connection where I realise she's gifted. Then we go on a journey of raising her, nurturing her to embrace her powers and make difficult decisions. But then her encounter with Gundleus sends her off on a really complicated path where our relationship is really challenged. It zigzags between, being absolutely cool and then being directly opposed. I don't want to spoil it, but I think it actually goes somewhere very, very dark actually towards the end, not in this season, but in later seasons.

Eddie Marsan (Uther)

How would you describe Uther?

I would describe Uther as the man who identifies the nation and culture of Dumnonia with himself, he thinks they're one in the same thing. So, because the kingdom of Dumnonia is under attack and facing decimation it's an affront to him personally. He's the embodiment of the culture in a good sense, but in a bad sense it's very narcissistic.

What kind of life has Uther lived?

The life that Uther has lived is one of leadership. He was born to be king, but it's not in the sense of a constitutional monarchy - it's an absolute monarchy. So although he has a sense of duty to defend his kingdom he also has unbridled power and he's not a very nice man.

Where do we first meet Uther?

We first meet Uther when his son Mordred is killed in a Saxon raid. Mordred's half-brother Arthur was with him when they were attacked by Saxons and Uther blames Arthur for Mordred's death.

What are Uther's priorities as high king? Does he feel pressure to establish an heir?

Uther's priorities as king are definitely to establish an heir, but in playing Uther you have to acknowledge there's a confusion between the personal and political, he thinks they're the same. So, in a sense he just wants to hold onto power, he's incredibly egotistical and narcissistic but also a strong leader for Dumnonia.

What is Uther's relationship to Arthur?

Uther is Arthur's father, but Arthur is Uther's illegitimate son. Uther feels that Arthur's mother was a very manipulative seductive temptress really. Rather than look at himself and his own morality he will always blame someone else. He will blame Arthur's mother for her corruption rather than look at his own corruption, and Arthur to him is a manifestation of his mother. So Uther's attitude to Arthur is really because Uther doesn't want to look at himself.

Can you tell us about Merlin and Uther's thoughts on him?

The character of Merlin is interesting because there are two religious characters in Uther's life. There's Bishop Bedwin who's the leader of the Christian church in Britain and there's Merlin who's the leader of the old religion and the old ways. Uther is caught between the two, he's a man who has a religious and philosophical panic, because he doesn't know which one to follow. One he has to follow for political reasons and the other he's always drawn to because it's his old religion, so he has a crisis of faith in the middle of all this.

Jordan Alexandra (Guinevere)

What can you tell us about Guinevere?

Guinevere is an incredible character. She's cunning and very powerful in her own right, she's lost her land and she's been living with King Gorydd in Powys, raising Ceinwyn and also just being a best friend to her. She's learnt a lot from everything she's lost, that means she has become very independent and smart.

How do the gods play into your character?

For Guinevere herself she's someone that strongly believes in destiny and with that she believes in her own destiny, Arthur's destiny and their own shared destiny.

Could you talk about your costume?

With my costume and hair, it was really important that Guinevere had a strong journey with them as well, so we could see where she is in Powys compared to when she's coming into her own in Caer Cadarn.

She's got the shaved sides, which I loved, I think it was a really modern take on this storyline. I know that Claire (Claire Pritchard-Jones – Hair & Makeup Designer) took a long time making sure we got this wig perfectly made and that it suited the character and looked realistic also. We've made different choices to make Guinevere grow with that look, we see as she's stronger and having to be more physical the hair does change with that to match what she needs to get done.

When she gets to Caer Cadarn everything gets rougher. We see more leather, metal, and rocks. That's a really important element of Guinevere's journey because it really represents the edge that she now has, the edge that she can be herself. She is rough around the edges but she has that grit that she needs and I think that's really expressed in the clothing she has.

Daniel Ings (Owain)

Could you tell us about Owain?

Owain is the champion of Dumnonia. So he's the prize fighter of the land and a kind of surrogate son to Uther, played by Eddie Marsan. When Uther dies there's a power struggle that places Bedwin, the Christian priest, in charge of the politics of the land and Owain is in charge of the military side of things.

Could you tell us about his relationship with Arthur?

Arthur and Owain have been friends since childhood. But as they've got older their paths have sort of taken a fork in the road. Arthur is much more a strategist and understands the needs for politics to bring people together. Owain is much more a blunt instrument who would rather use force and violence.

How would you describe the series to someone that hasn't seen it?

I would describe it as an epic story about how myths are created and the political struggles, the personal struggles that can be the basis for a myth to develop over time. It's the idea of taking someone that we've all heard of, like King Arthur, and saying what conceivably could have been the events that led to the stories that we tell our kids.

How is this take different on the Arthurian legend?

I would say that the USP of this particular iteration of Arthur is that it's quite grounded and brutal and we tend to think of this fantastical tale of wizards and magical powers but actually I think one thing that Otto, our amazing director, has really sort of insisted on bringing to this version of it is the sense that it was brutal. It was bloody. There was death all around. There was disease. There was mud and blood and grit to this show that you may or may not like but probably hasn't been done before, certainly that I can remember with the King Arthur story.

Have you had any favourite scenes to shoot?

My favourite scene to shoot was the raid on the tin mine, just simply because I was working with Stuart, I was working with Keith Dunphy. We formed a bond. There's this group of us that have this little story where Owain becomes a bit of a baddie, it was the height of summer,

we were all sweating our little faces off but it's quite an exciting sequence, it's got an *Apocalypse Now* kind of vibe to it, we've all got black paint on our faces and shields. It was tough, but it was a good day.

Do you enjoy the stunt scenes?

I do enjoy the stunt scenes. Doing this job made me realise that I need to hit the weights before ever doing a job as physically demanding.

Catrin Lewis Defis (Producer)

What are you most excited for audiences to see?

I'm very excited about the cast that we've put together. We've got some fantastic younger actors that I'm very excited for people to see. I'm excited for people to see the beauty of the Welsh coast and the South West and areas around Bristol. The Quantock Hills. Cheddar Gorge. We've found all these wonderfully beautiful locations that haven't been touched because they're quite remote and I'm looking forward to people seeing the beauty of where we've been.

Could you tell us about the extent of the VFX used across the series?

The effects are on two levels in this series. We've got 'cleaning up', as we call it, which is taking out things that wouldn't have appeared in the fifth century world. And then also we're building our castle and our fortress and so we're extending the world that we have. So, although we filmed Caer Cadarn in Morlais quarry in Merthyr, we're extending the quarry to put the fortress on the top. Then we have a set that was supposed to be the castle in Powys and so we're extending that and putting roofs on it. So, although we're not creating a sci-fi world, we're extending the world of the Dark Ages that we've built already.

How much effort have you and the other teams gone through to try and make the fifth century feel authentic to the era?

Our take on the fifth century is that there were no comforts. There was not a lot around and people had to make more use of the landscape and the terrain than we would today and actually we've authentically done that as for the past seven months we've all been in mud up to our knees! I'm wearing three coats a day because it's so cold where we are, and so I think that we've all embraced the authenticity on both sides of the camera.

James North (Production Designer)

How did you get involved with The Winter King?

I remember reading the Bernard Cornwell novels many years back, it's a fantastic story and brilliant characters and we're blessed with this amazing landscape in the South West and Wales, so it was a dream to turn that into a reality in this environment that we love so much here.

When you first read the scripts, what jumped out to you in terms of a design point of view?

When we first looked at the scripts the idea was to try and take us away from that Medieval world. So obviously we're fifth century, so we're a lot earlier than that and people didn't have a lot of stuff. They didn't have a lot of belongings. Everything that they did have was quite valuable to them so it wasn't a world of big oak barrels and piles of hay. It was quite stripped back so our world became quite minimal and sort of modernist I suppose. So that plan of Caer Cadarn becoming a sub-terranean castle which is quite stark and brutal was all born out of that really. It was going back and looking at what the reality was of the physical things people had.

What was the initial brief that you were given from execs?

It all began with some rock castles in Slovenia, which we looked at and that's how this whole thing started on this big train of maybe our world is part sub-terranean, maybe it's on top of a mountain. We sort of moved away from a traditional castle or a motte-and-bailey timber fort which is probably what historically would have been Caer Cadarn.

How much research did you do? How accurate did you try to make it? How much artistic licence has been used?

The fifth century is a funny period because there was an awful lot of transition between different empires, there was a lot of movement, and although we call it the Dark Ages because we don't know a lot about it, what we do know is that it was actually quite diverse in that there were quite a lot of groups and ethnicities that had travelled around through Britain. The Romans had just left but what they'd left was an awful lot of skills and an awful lot of artefacts and buildings and although the Britons didn't choose to live in the now derelict villas, they continued to live in their round houses because that was their culture. We know that they continued to practice a lot of their skills and their way of life. We could still blow glass and we could still do pottery, although we regressed a little bit in our use of technology. We have tried to draw upon that in places within our world and so we have drawn upon some of those Roman influences so that has become a key part in our historical analysis.

Is it relying on what you do know because there's not a lot known?

There's not a huge number of illustrations, and there's not a lot written down from that period, a lot of it is artistic interpretation, but we know a lot about the Romans and they only left a hundred years ago or so, so we do enough in order for us to make a pretty good guess at what is historically accurate. We have historical advisors that are brilliant, but sometimes it's about what makes good television as well as what is historically accurate, but I think knowledge is power and we have to understand those things in order to ignore them.

How does the scale of this compare to other projects you've done?

We've done a lot of large-scale period shows at Bad Wolf over the years. This has been exciting and it's certainly got a scale and ambition which is not seen that often in UK television but it's been a lot of building. We've built large sets but we've also been to a lot of incredible locations. Huge landscapes.

Can you talk us through some of your favourite sets?

When we first built Caer Dolforwyn which is sort of a Roman-esque fort on the top of a mountain in Powys that was a really interesting build to do, so we got to take a more traditional large Saxon fort timber construction but put Roman influences within it, so it's built around a courtyard. We built the whole thing out of timber, it doesn't have a huge steel structure in the middle of it so it's very much a real castle built as it really would have been done, so that was a lot of fun to do. We put a nice cobbled floor through it rather than cheating which we often do with set construction where we print concrete and things, but we did it for real this time which was a real joy to do.

What has been your favourite set to do? What's the one you're most proud of?

I think the Caer Cadarn build, which is the sub-terranean castle that Arthur lives in was probably the favourite set to build. It's such a labyrinth. It's really long and goes all the way from outside. We start off in the car park, going in all the way in through the studio, that sort of camera language which Otto and Aske, our director of photography, use is all about movement. So being able to move seamlessly outside in the courtyard and the way we've built part of the exterior location in a car park in Bristol, being able to get from there all the way through corridors and through all the various rooms as a sort of composite set is really fun. Normally we don't do that. Normally we build a room with a door on it and a corridor outside. It's rare that we get the opportunity and the amount of space which we've been blessed with here in order to build everything as one.

Sarah Arthur (Costume Designer)

Was there a lot of artistic licence used with the costumes in the show?

Lots of shows are being made around this period, so I tried not to watch anything associated with this period because I didn't want to be swayed by other people's work, so I read a great deal and yes, it is a bit of artistic licence, I think. We differentiated between the different areas by using colour. Gorfydd was the purple theme, because he aspired to be royal, and purple was quite a difficult and expensive colour to create at that time.

We've made the majority of costumes in-house, because we needed multiples and they had to look the same. It's not just the making of the costume, it's getting the fabric. Hundreds of metres of fabric has to be sourced, all the same or very similar. Natural fibres and fabrics as well, wools and linens. It's not just the making up of, it's the distressing of them. These Saxons were very hardy and barbaric. They lived on the land. They needed to look like they'd lived in these clothes for years. That's a big process when you're multiplying one person by one hundred it's quite a lengthy process.

Is the authenticity of the materials used important?

There was a lot of wool at that time, that was their main clothing, linens, cottons, a lot of leather and fur for warmth. We used some fake furs but all of our furs were ethically sourced from a supplier we use. A lot of iron for buckles on belts, and the armour. This sort of armour was supposed to look like metal but some of them are plastic for stunts, so it's just replicating

things to look real.

What have been some of the most challenging aspects?

Duplicating costumes for characters, Derfel has seven repeats because he goes down a well, he gets thrown into the Isle of the Dead, he eats rats, he fights, he's got a stunt double and a horse double. The duplication of all these costumes is quite time consuming and most of the characters that I design for projects like this need doubling because there's a lot of action. It's nothing unusual in my role as a costume designer. I love a challenge and I like doing different things, it's certainly kept me on my toes. It's a dirty period, there's lots of mud and lots of dirt, we've constantly got black hands and dirty fingernails because we're constantly dirtying people down all the time. There's a lot of servicing of the costumes also. That's hard work because the elements are upon us. We're shooting in January so we've got snow and mud and rain. We've got to try to keep people warm at this time of year, and in the summer when they're laden with robes we have to keep them cool. It's been a very exciting project to be a part of.

How closely did you work with the actors when designing the costumes?

It's always been an incredibly important aspect of design. Giving them time to talk though a costume, the design, the fabric, the colour, what's comfortable, what works and what doesn't - it's imperative. It's very much a collaboration. I go with a drawing of a design which I suggest would be suitable for a scene, with fabric swatches and colour swatches. It's absolutely essential to involve the actors. I bring them in for fittings, for discussions to talk about things though, because I'm not the one who's going to wear the costume and act the part.