

Backstage at Cry Havoc!

Wrapping Up

Content Notes

- Mentions of; war, beheading, extreme poverty, classism
- SFX: Crowds

[Show Theme - Intro]

LOWRI

Hello everybody and welcome to this week's Backstage at Cry Havoc. I am your host, Lowri Ann Davies, she / her. And today I am joined by Amani Zardoe and David K. Barnes for this our final episode. And we are going to be talking about; whatever there is left to talk about!

OTHERS

[laugh]

LOWRI

Also known as wrapping things up. [laughs] But before we get onto that, please could you introduce yourselves just in case there's anyone who doesn't know who you are. Let us start alphabetically; Amani.

AMANI

Hey everyone. I'm Amani. I am the director of Cry Havoc! Ask Questions Later.

DAVID

Hello everyone. I'm David, who you've heard before as the creator and head writer on Cry Havoc! Ask Questions Later.

LOWRI

How are we all feeling? Specifically, how are you feeling right now in this moment, David, and why are you feeling like that?

DAVID

I'm feeling pretty well, thank you for asking. Because at the time of recording last night, I won a British podcast award for best fiction.

OTHERS

Hooray!

DAVID

Not for this show. That's still to come.

LOWRI

No, not for this one.

DAVID

That's in the future, but for Wooden Overcoats. So I got to wear my purple jacket to a nice shindig and meet some BBC journalists, not be interviewed by them, I just stood next to them at the bar and mentioned I like their work and

they looked scared, but I did, is the important thing. And now I have a big trophy that you could hit people with.

AMANI

Yes. [laughing]

LOWRI

Hooray.

DAVID

And isn't that what we really want-

AMANI

Absolutely.

DAVID

- from the arts industry?

LOWRI

If that isn't the goal of podcasting, I don't know what is. And now onto this show; Cry Havoc! Ask Questions Later. We're coming to the end of the series when we're recording this episode 17 has just released. And when this episode that we are recording right now this second releases, all of it will be out. How are we feeling, everybody?

AMANI

Oh gosh. Like such a mix. So sad that it's going to be over soon. I can't believe it. And also just kind of relieved that it's turned out as well as it has.

DAVID

[laugh] Just relieved, said Amani!

LOWRI

[laughing] Overwhelming sense of relief.

AMANI

Yeah, I think it's turned out so so good. I'm really proud

DAVID

Amani gets her life back.

LOWRI

[laughs] Maybe that's what we could title this episode.

DAVID

This episode, yeahs! I mean I can't remember exactly when you were contracted, but it has been I think almost to the day, two years hasn't it for you, Amani?

AMANI

Do you know, next month in October it will be two years. Yeah.

LOWRI

Wow.

AMANI

It's been such a long job. It's been such a great job to have in my life for so long. But yeah, I kind of can't believe, I feel like when I signed onto this, we were just coming out of covid, like that's how long it's been. [laughs]

LOWRI

Oh gosh! David, how has it been for you and hearing your characters come to life? You've been living with these characters for a long time, right?

DAVID

Yeah, this is unlike Wooden Overcoats where I was very involved in the edits and the things as well. And so gave lots of notes and that's lovely and all, but it is actually a bit of a privilege and pleasure to be able to just listen to the show, like another listener does like going, I finished with the scripts in July last year and I only attended the recording that I was in, in the, you know, best guest performance in the series.

AMANI

Absolutely.

DAVID

As the Greek doctor course.

LOWRI

Well, yes.

DAVID

Episode 14, high point of the series. But there's still some good stuff to come.

But apart from that, I've just been listening to it as it comes out. And yeah, genuinely, I'm really quite astonished at the quality of work from not just Ani, but also these of the editors, sound designers, the actual, the creation of it from production standpoint. It sounds, well it sounds really expensive. It sounds expensive.

LOWRI

Oh, it's so shiny!

DAVID

Really lovingly made, incredible work across the board there. Everybody stuck in the trenches trying to make a scripted audio sitcom and done absolutely tremendous work. Yeah, it's an absolute pleasure to listen to. It's incredible, incredible achievement.

LOWRI

Yay! I mean, the temptation to let you just keep singing everyone's praises was strong there.

DAVID

And so you will presumably let me carry on.

LOWRI

[laughing] We've got about, oh, 14 minutes to fill, go for it. Question that has come up is what are your thoughts on the cast? Were they what you expected? Did anyone perform a character in a way that you thought, oh, I hadn't thought of this person in that way?

DAVID

Yes, and I think that's important. It's really the first time in quite a while I've written for a series where I didn't already know the actors who were going to play it in advance. And I very much write to vocal rhythms and vocal tones, whether that's been on *Overcoats* or sometimes *Dr. Who*. So I know how to capture that rhythm. On *Cry Havoc*, I found that though I knew some of the actors who were playing parts like Andy Secombe, Beth Eyre et cetera, but most of them I didn't. So I very much just wrote to the character and waited to see what would come out of it. And I think it is always a pleasure to see what aspects an actor in tandem of their director will bring out. And I think even fact down to things like accents that we spoke of much earlier, I think Gaius and Octavia, I think there's a warmth to what they're doing, especially in the scenes of each other.

There is a genuine warmth there, which feels like it's on that kind of like a base level with several layers above it of mutual dislike and sibling rivalry. And I think it's genuine, very hard to get that crossing performance. I think it's easy to go into a bit too much, oh well, we're getting on we're brother sister or to just go into the hatred and that's just not fun to listen to. It's very hard to get a multilayer dynamic going. I think to honest even more than individual performances, what's really come out for me are the dynamics. Especially as a comedy writer, what you're really looking for are what dynamics are kind of working, how do they work, what's the rhythm of those dynamics? And I'm

sure we'll speak about them throughout this episode particularly. One for me is of course the dynamic between Gaius and Mark and Lepidus, the actual triumvirs and how that goes along.

I really like the kind of almost slightly sort of laid back attitude that Kazeem brought to Mark who there's still, there's a strength, there's a general, I have been in wars, I have killed people, but at the moment I just want to have a nice day off. I'm quite relaxed, come on, can't we just leave the work some other time. There's a strength to Kazeem's performance, which is there in a sort of relaxed attitude. Whereas I think Harry has found some wonderful ways of trying to get across how irritated, frustrated at times, happy there moments of joy there as well in bits have been really well picked out by Harry and Amani, but the way that they have bounced off each other, and I think as it started off with the sort of young geeky type character and the big strong jock character, it has gone on a big journey as a listener over the 17 episodes I've listened to, I'm sure the final three. What I had feared as a writer is will it get stale? Will it just be like you've got your big strong, slightly stupid character and you are still very brainy but sort of socially, not very adept character. But I think hopefully the writing gave it extra levels, but it's certainly there in the performance and certainly there in the direction and it feels that they've actually been on the journey. They do feel different now listening to it as they did at the beginning, which is what you want from what [laughs] a 20 episode show, you'd hope that they change in some way.

LOWRI

I feel like, yeah, they definitely did start maybe with those, you could describe them in those broad stereotypes than as the series has gone on, there's definitely been more nuance and you get to know them more and more and

more and then yeah, that's definitely a credit to the writing there as well as the performing and directing.

DAVID

And you need at the beginning, an audience, especially on audio, they need to know what is this character, how do I describe them in a line? And you need the basis, you need a basic, this is the character. Oh, those are the jokes we're going to get. That's the dynamic when they're in the scene, Gaius is going to stress out about something. Mark is going to get drunk, Lepidus is going to be silly and fall over. We need to know that. And then you build on that and build on it. And I think particularly in Gaius the moments of, I think there are times when he chuckles at a joke that he makes, which is not necessarily the script that's pure performance. Yeah, absolutely. There are moments you go, yes, you do have fun. It can't just be a stress head all the time. He gets little moments of fun.

LOWRI

And yes, you would laugh at your own jokes Gaius! [laughing]

DAVID

He's exactly the sort of person who'd laugh at his own jokes.

LOWRI

Yes.

DAVID

As I do.

LOWRI

Amani, how's it been for you? I guess because you've known the characters for a long time as well and you cast the actors, but were there any interesting twists for you with the dynamics between them, cause I suppose we didn't do chemistry tests, did we? So everyone was cast and then put together.

AMANI

Hmm, let me remember now. I definitely did chemistry tests between actors going up for Octavia and Charmian.

LOWRI

Ah, great.

AMANI

Now I'm trying to remember if I actually got Sarah Lambie and Sarah Agha together or if they were reading with other people. I actually can't remember now. And I feel like I might've done one also between Sarah Lambie and Harry for Octavia and Gaius. Oh gosh, I honestly can't remember now. Maybe I was just picturing them in my brain how they fit together so much that I invented an audition where they were reading together. So I didn't do a chemistry read between Beth and Kazeem and I thought that the two of them worked really well together as Mark Antony and Fulvia, that kind of meshed together really well. And it's a relationship that it's not like the main relationship that Mark has in the series, as in we don't see him spending tons and tons of time with Fulvia in the series, but we track them throughout the course of the series.

And it was something that, yeah, I just really bought, I felt like, yes, you guys are delivering this. I get the two of you as a couple, I see how it works. And I also can see how maybe one day down the line this is going to somehow stop working. And I thought that that came across really well. I thought also the three triumvirs together, that was a chemistry test we did not do that just turned out to be magical, the three of them together. And I think the thing that for me that was really fun was maybe moments where the actors just felt so much like their characters where it just kind of meshed so well together. Harry Roebuck put so much, you could just tell that he put a lot of prep into his work, came to every recording and I knew that he'd like figured stuff out and was still adaptable to whatever direction I might throw at him, but I could see the preparation. And with Kazeem it was very much like, spontaneous turn up or that was a feeling anyway, I dunno, maybe he would disagree with me and be like, no, it seemed like spontaneity, but I put so much work into that and so forgive me, Kazeem, if that is the case. But yeah, he came with this kind of wonderful sort of spontaneity and feeling of having rolled out of bed, which is actually really hard to convey, while still hitting all the emotional points that you want to hit, that it's not just lazy.

LOWRI

Yeah.

DAVID

Oh yeah, it's been nice with Aaron as Antyllus. It's been again sort of a lovely journey there from the early episodes of being his father's shadow to that. So the genuine delight when it's getting involved in the theatre, particularly the episode where they're trying to do a play and they have to keep rehearsing it

over and over again, but even each time they do it, Antyllus still sounds to be very happy that he's getting to do some acting. It's just a lovely note. Everyone else is getting really tired and he's a little bit, but he's still clearly trying to do a very good job because he's finally getting to do some proper acting on stage. And you think, yeah, it's just these moments there that these characters have gone on, which is delightful to listen to. And the dynamic between Charmian and Octavia is another one.

I think I said actually to Amani at the time, and this is the Pirate episodes came out and those subsequent episodes like the romantic angle, it's very easy to just put in the script to go. And there are a couple of romantic and you get onto all the jokes and stuff and then we actually get a performance and the listening to especially on headphones and the intimacy in those scenes and sort of the romance. And even at the end, I think when they first kissed the end of 12 and I thought blind, this is actually, this is quite steamy for one of my works. I wasn't entirely sure... oh, this is far more than I'd anticipated. And that's just what a sheltered life I've led, quite frankly.

LOWRI

Was that Octavia Bray's influence there?

DAVID

Think Octavia and Tom Crowley. Absolutely. Yeah, Tom and Octavia and Amani clearly sort of leaning in and just puffing on a cigar and going, [putting on a low raspy voice] "I want sex, I want sex you see, loves. Alright, give it some sex."

LOWRI

I'm really glad this impression of Amani has made a come back. Excellent.

DAVID

And of course we're going into it, because still I'm just listening to it, going to the time of recording, I just heard 17. So we're really ramping up to the point where everything starts going wrong and there are murders and panic and everything. And even that one's 17, I think. Oh yes, there is a real sense of, yes, look, it's been sort of fun and games and drama and everything, but it is actually getting to quite a dangerous level. And I think the scenes with Kazeem and Lara as Cleopatra, Lara especially who's managed to maintain throughout the series, the sort of, I am really annoyed at what's going on, but I'm just about keeping my cool and it's got the stage to go, I don't care anymore. I'm so angry and annoyed and it's still, but keeping that sense of status, it's not like somebody who is falling apart, it's someone who's so angry that their status is actually rising and rising and so can say to Mark; sort it out, you've got to do something about this, otherwise I'm leaving and that's it. And the dynamic between them is there's a danger, there's mutual respect, but still having to earn trust. The levels in there is something you can put in writing, but unless you've got a cracking cast and director to bring even more to it, then the writing is as good as useless. So it's a really good fusion. And I especially think with something like comedy and dramatic comedy, you need every element of the production firing and all cylinders or it just doesn't work. It doesn't work at all and it really does I think in this show.

AMANI

Totally. I was going to say, I think one of the things that I really love about Lara's performance also is the ability to keep the character very high status, but also find the humour within it.

DAVID

Yes, absolutely.

AMANI

And thinking about, ooh, the scene where it's just a small moment, but in episode 16 where she doesn't know where Charmian is and she thinks that she has maybe succeeded in her assassination of Gaius and then there's a knock at the door and she thinks it's Charmian and then it turns out to be a message from the triumvirs, from Gaius. And yeah, I think that moment of still keeping the high status and the fact that she is a queen and she is the boss, but then also finding the humour, the undertone of comedy I think is not something that's super easy actually.

LOWRI

Yeah, she's very good at being commanding, but also there's an element of a real person in there still, so you still connect with her and...

DAVID

The trial scene in 17 where you really get a sense of Cleopatra going to a room going, right, I'm going to have to style this out. And then really doing lots of very swift mental arithmetic and acrobatics to try and get one over on the triumvirs, which she manages to do, and then it gets... and it feels entirely natural, like the way that she commands the situation, but it's clearly also trying to work it out as she goes. Totally bluffing everyone. It's again a hard situation to do, especially I have to really stress it, on audio alone. Visually you'd have lots and lots of cues that you could work on and you could do

closeups and, you know, a bead of sweat on somebody's brow. Audio you are just purely going on performance and production design and it's a sequence which I'm sure took a lot of thought in the direction and the making of it in post as well. It all comes across tremendously. Well, I think it's the dynamics there between especially Lepidus as being very excitable. It's one thing about, of course, Andy Secombe who I very much know his performance is, that I always know he'll be very funny, but he will always take a line in a direction I didn't quite expect.

Usually giving it a genuine, like a grounded quality in a strange... which is odd for somebody who often plays sort of eccentrics and is going off, but when he cares about something, Lepidus really cares about something, and that's what makes it funny. And the moment where he gets deflated and Cleopatra says like, "nobody really listens to you, do they?" and he goes "n-no, no they don't "

And he sort of goes, "I retract my testimony". And I think there's a way you could play that as slightly, oh yes, I suppose I'm useless and that's it. But there's a genuine amount of pathos as he sort of realises; yes, I am quite useless and I don't want to get in anyone's way. And it backs down. And it's just very funny that the dynamic between him and Lara at that moment is very, very funny but also entirely genuine. It doesn't feel like actors playing it for laughs. It feels like actors trusting to the comedy that's there in the script of then playing it real.

And I think that's for me, the best comedy on the whole. I don't really want people to put on funny voices and just try to go for laughs unless it's me, and then it's fine...

LOWRI

Oh yes, of course.

DAVID

But, generally your actual trained actors who know what they're doing will give a actually committed performance like everyone else in the cast and they trust where the humour is. And they just go, right if I trust what the character is doing and what they want, then that'll come out naturally.

AMANI

Yeah, a hundred percent. I feel like the runup to the finale is just fantastic. It's so good. And we start to get into quite dangerous territory where it's like funny, but it's really dark. And making sure that we're walking that line on every level. I know that David was, and the writers were thinking about that a lot at script level. And then also the actors, I know were doing this whole balancing act and we've also been thinking about that with the editing team, Lowri, you'll know this, where to put the beats to add a little bit more weight on a line and when to pick it up so it's funny. Yeah, that whole kind of juggling act is really fun.

DAVID

I think the element of darkness is something which is not, despite having prior mainly been known for a show about funerals, therefore sort of dark humour, but there's still a huge element of essential warmth to something like Wooden Overcoats, whereas Cry Havoc, there is greater of warmth in there, but I think there is a more dangerous quality to it, there is a more cynical quality to it. Some of the characters genuinely don't like each other and trying to hide it. And there isn't as much of the sort of, oh, we are just a family trying to get on. It's a bunch of people who are kind of out for themselves and going into the darker area is the sort of material I've not done, hadn't done prior. And so I'm sort of very interested to see how it's pulled off by in production. But every

production I've heard so far has been impeccable. And Amani I know has been incredibly excited about me hearing the last few episodes.

AMANI

Yeah, it's so good.

LOWRI

I'm sorry that we couldn't do this after you've heard them all. I just, I wouldn't be able to edit it in time!

DAVID

Absolutely. No, that's absolutely fine. No, I'm just generally looking forward to, because I know there's so much to come. I know that Charmian and Octavia sort of essentially sort of breaking up, but I know there's obviously a lot more to do there. I'm looking forward to the bit where the triumvirs are sort of arguing and Fulvia comes in as somebody's head has been dropped on the desk...

AMANI

Oh God, it's so funny. It's so funny!

LOWRI

Oh, I can't wait to hear that sound effect!

DAVID

Then there's I suppose, the subplots which are I suppose more in the warmer side of the Palatine Players coming together and trying to rescue Charmian,

that is one of the places where there is probably the most genuine family dynamic, which is something I often do, where the best family dynamics come from people who aren't actually related. And people who are related to each other tend to not get on terribly well at all. But I'm looking forward to Quintus. I know Ben Garrison I think was, I'm fairly sure this was his first time ever doing audio and audio drama and I certainly wouldn't know it to listen to it because a very confident performance, very, very funny. He's certainly gone back and watched Up Pompeii and Carry on Cleo because he's got some excellent bit's of Frankie Howard and Kenneth Williams in his voice. They're mixed up into something which is uniquely his own. And I'm looking forward to, especially in these last few episodes where we go from a jangly collection of theatre to troop doing silly things together, to a close-knit group of people who are trying their best to do something actually quite dangerous.

AMANI

Yes.

DAVID

There is a huge amount I'm looking forward to that builds on the 17 episodes of Production Excellence I've heard so far. So as a writer, as I say, who's done bugger all for the last year, but when it comes to the show, whilst Amani has been working on it every day, it's been very nice to sit back here doing nothing and just listening to a wonderfully made show coming out.

LOWRI

I mean, quite a nice foundation you handed over.

AMANI

Yeah, I felt like we kind of tag teamed, right? You frontloaded a whole lot of work and I was kind of enjoying, mostly enjoying that and then I kind of stepped in I feel like for the second half. But yeah, I was going to say I haven't talked about Ben enough. I actually wouldn't have known that either as the director that this was his first audio job. He is so, so good. And yeah, I love what you mentioned there, David, about obviously the rescue attempt that they do to get Charmian out of prison. One the things that Ben and I talked about was how Quintus is, it's so easy for Quintus to be, you know, like a just a pretty straight comedy character. But he manages to find this depth and heart in him, in the character. And I remember feeling also and talking about how, actually I think that Quintus is one of the bravest characters actually in the series. He's the one that along with Charmian, that has so much to lose and to risk that his life, their lives are worth so much less than everyone else's in the series. And I feel like he does get to be a hero in small moments maybe, but actually very high impact figuring out the plan and to save Charmian and going in with Antyllus being the one there if something goes wrong. And also later when Mark storms into the final show and he realises that everything is going tits up, getting Charmian and Octavia and immediately realising that Gaius has spotted Charmian and that this means that both Chamian and Octavia are now in trouble.

I think he's repeatedly putting himself on the line, which is contrary to what we maybe see back all the way back in episode nine, pre-pirates or during the pirate kidnap of Octavia. I think it's so fun to see him on the one hand being like; "yes, I can't do anything here. Go ahead and take her" to then later being like, oh no, actually I have an idea, have a plan. We can do something about this. And I'm really bored with you just feeling sorry for yourself and moping

rather than getting off your arse and trying to save your lady love. I think he's so cool.

DAVID

I remember listening to, I think it's one of Sarah Shachat's episodes, er episode 14 where Charmian and Octavia are going on a date together. And there's the scene in the middle where they and Quintus come across somebody, a child essentially being auctioned in the poorer area. And again, I think it's a mark of an excellent team when you have a scene like that, which is very much drama.

It's a very much dramatic scene, but it doesn't feel like an abrupt shifting of gears or it doesn't feel, oh, this is a scene that's coming from a different show. All the performances feel just as natural as when they're doing the comedy and when they do the drama and that's when anything, that's when you really can play off the material when you feel confident in jumping genres and going back and forth because those scenes there I thought were very, very powerful. And particularly for me, class dynamics are a very important theme. I know cultural dynamics are really important. Those are things me and Amani talked about a lot before even scripts are written. And I think it comes across that those elements of characters like Charmian and Quintus who are very much on the poor level as Amani said, have the most to lose and when those sort of characters but heads numerous arguments between Charmian and Octavia, which again, lesser hands could just turn into two people speechifying at each other or just spitting bile at each other. But I think both Sarahs know how to pitch it so that they remain conscious of what their status of the character is, but where the character is trying to push into something else and then retreating from it. Yeah, it's a terrific dynamic. I do think, I remember listening to it that it felt to me that after eight episodes of, because all the characters are

still quite disparate from each other in the first eight and then they all coalesce in the pirates episode, suddenly it feels like there is a situation to really bed down in and all the characters can sit there and really just interact to work out things.

And of course as a writer you think, oh, should that have happened earlier? Should I have brought the characters together and much earlier to get to that point? Or does it work better that we have a bit of a buildup of all the characters doing their own thing and slowly coming together and then that situation that brings them together. Because as a writer you usually assume you've done it wrong, and so you're always looking for the things you should do better next time. I really, I must, it was a particular high point for me. It was those pirate episodes. I mean I loved every episode, but the pirate ones were a farce. And of course Ryan was delicious, delicious accent, fantastic work as Sextus.

AMANI

Just a fantastic, so delicious accent. [laughs]

LOWRI

Yeah, I was totally fine editing that. Totally fine.

DAVID

It's a hard job when the character is meant to be like, your job is to come and be effortlessly cool. And it's hard to do that and not come across as either arrogant or fake, really. It's a hard part to do. Not many people can play the part of Johnny Bravo.

OTHERS

[laugh]

DAVID

But, Ryan plays it, came up with a natural swagger, charisma, but also sensitivity and a joy. Again, I think it's the moments of joy. He seems to be genuinely delighted that Charmian and an Octavia possibly might be an item and he can push it along. It makes no difference to him, whether they do or not, he just wants to. And there's a joy in the fun of being with people, which I think is very important. And the best moments I think for me of the show generally throughout are when characters enjoy being with other people. Whether it's enjoyment because they like them or enjoyment that they want to set them up, but when the characters at there, even at the heights of government or in a gladiatorial arena can also have a bit of fun taking the piss out of somebody or spending time, sort of having a quick kiss in a wardrobe. I think those bits are really fun. I mean, these are ancient Romans, these are people we know from history books. It's hard to make people from 2000 years ago feel like real people. And the way I think you do it is by giving them moments of joy and sadness and tenderness, which feel very current, which you hope to do in the writing. And then when you get it very much from the cast and you want actors that are going to give you what you thought you were going to get and at least 30% extra you never would've imagined. And I think as the head writer on this, I feel like we got that consistently from cast and production throughout.

AMANI

Yeah, I was going to say about Ryan, it was so fun. I mean, all the actors had to do this for their characters across the board. Quite a lot of shifting, as you said, between drama and comedy. And I feel like maybe with Ryan it was the most extreme because Sextus is meant to be genuinely so terrifying. And he kind of panther creeps into the room the first time we meet him and just that gorgeous voice and accent. And then later on the shift, it was funny, we found when I was spotting those episodes with Sam that we actually, Sam had to go away and write kind of a new bit for Ryan. We'd written, oh, "we!" He had written a sort of general pirate's theme that had a softer version and a more action-based version and then kind of a cool version. But we needed something like extra to match Sextus's real, real danger vibe and to give us kind of chills.

And Sam kind of overnight went off and wrote this, just that chilling piece that's so, so good. And yeah, I feel like the music in the pirate section is one of my favourite bits across the series. Oh, there's so much range and scope that bit at the end of episode 12, the pretend sword fight between analysts and Sextus.

DAVID

Yes!

AMANI

That's so cute. I just think it's like,...

DAVID

Absolutely.

AMANI

...it's so sweet. And also it's one of the bits in the series that I just feel like we really nailed the cinematic aspects so well. Like shifting from Mark and Gaius and the rest of the gang on the docks to like, and kind of flying over the sea up onto the deck and being there for the fight between Sextus and Antyllus, which then we realise is a pretend fight and the way that they're having to shift between their little convo and the scripted lines that Octavia has written, that's for the benefit of their audience down on the docks and how the music just kind of lifts that. And the sound design, I thought we were doing something quite complicated there. I'd asked the editing team to kind of give us that sense of travelling across, like a kind of camera pan from on the docks up to on the deck and wasn't really sure would be possible. It's not a big distance, it's not a totally different audio world, you know? You're still hearing the sea, you're still hearing wind and waves and sails and people nearby, but they just managed to give us that sense of shifting back and forth. And then Sam's score comes in to just kind of lift that. And I was just like; [excitedly] "oh my God, this is Pirates of the Caribbean!" [laughs]

DAVID

Yes! The action sequences and those set pieces like episode three, which has a similar thing of people on a dock watching stuff going on a ship when I think Lepidus sets himself on fire and has to jump overboard. That's a fantastic sequence. Or even when you're going sort a set piece, which isn't so much of action-based, but is more about mood and atmosphere. So the cultist I think in seven, which is very funny, and I think Pip Gladwin doing a superb role there -

AMANI

Yeah, brilliant!

DAVID

- as the cult leader with a very deep forbidding voice and then being, oh, actually I'm just quite fine. I'm here to just get drunk.

AMANI

Just a posh boy. [laughs]

DAVID

Yeah. And the bit where you think, oh, somebody might get sacrificed, I might get killed here. And again, it's the switch from comedy to drama and back again without it feeling like, oh, we've just changed channel. And I think that's again, music, pacing. I think pacing is very absolutely crucial. And speaking of these other performers, I also think there is particularly a great performance that does need talking about, which I believe the performer pops up a few times throughout the series, but I think reaches a real pinnacle in their ability in the Orgy episode playing a particularly sultry voiced lady who wants to bite Gaius's bottom.

AMANI

Yes, thank you!

DAVID

It's a terrific vocal performance that raises the hairs in one's neck in a very good way. And it's just, I wonder who that was. I just don't know who that was.

LOWRI

We'll never know, we'll never know.

DAVID

Terrific job. We'll never know who did that, but absolutely tremendous.

LOWRI

Do you know what? That's a lovely example of Amani's wonderful directing and knowing of the characters and things. I turned up and in my head she was a Julie Walters kind of person, like Julie Walters in Mamma Mia.

DAVID

[laughing] Yes!

LOWRI

And Amani was like; "Mmm, no." [laughs] Much nicer than that! She was like, maybe try this. And I was like, oh, I see!

DAVID

You know actually, I have to admit, that's one of those, actually talking of performances are different to how you might imagine. Again, I think I also, I can see how this might be played to someone who's almost like Barbara Windsor in a Carry On film, sort of stepped out and is sort of much more dirty chuckle, but listening to it before, oh no, this sounds like somebody who is very high up in status is certainly enjoying an Orgy and wandering around to seeing all these sort of rich people and with a sort of sultry quality thing. Yes, this audibly puts Mark on the back foot again, which is a lot of fun. Kazeem as Mark suddenly seems much like he's terrified of Cleopatra and her sexuality in the earlier

episodes. For as soon as Valeria starts saying what she wants to do with Gaius, I want to bite him on the bottom and enunciating that, he sounds terrified and I think that's very funny. Again, Mark just doesn't know what to do about this. He goes, right, sure, please get on with it. I don't want to know. And again, you go, you are a guy who's led armies into battle, but a woman's sexuality is enough to utterly terrify him and make him want to walk away. Again, that's a dynamic which it's really fun and it's an interpretation you have in the script. It's the interpretation you went with and I think it's the right one. I think it's really funny.

LOWRI

[laughing] Yeah, thanks Amani!

DAVID

It's a great laugh.

AMANI

It was funny that actually, because Lowri has played several parts in the series.

LOWRI

Again, thank you!

AMANI

And I think all fantastically, I mean I thought your Lavilla, the paparazzi was just so funny, so funny. And that was a part where you literally just turned up and did it. And I was like, yeah, perfect. [laughs]

LOWRI

Yay!

AMANI

We'll have that, thank you. And same with Basilla's, it felt like a character you were really comfortable with. It was funny with Valeria, I remember, I think when I asked for a Marlena Dietrich impression and you were like, oh God, I don't know who that is. And I was like, oh God, how am I going to get this across? And anyway, all that to say that it was kind of a challenging in the moment you having to figure out what I was asking for. And I know you walked away from that, not fully convinced about it, but literally it's so good and I've heard so many good things about it. How does it feel for you now, having heard it? Have you heard it? The finished one?

LOWRI

I haven't heard the final episode yet, but when I edited it as you know Amani, I listened to it and I was like, let me rerecord this. I'm not happy with it. And normally I quash that feeling when I listened to myself, but with this, please, I don't know. And then I came back to it a few weeks later and I was like, oh, it can't have been a few weeks, but however much later, I was like, oh no. Okay. Actually, I think Amani's, right. It's fun. [laughs]

DAVID

It's terrific.

AMANI

It was funny when you said that you sent me a message, you were like, I hate this. I don't want to be like a diva, but

LOWRI

[laugh]

AMANI

Please can I send a different option? And I was like, oh gosh, I wonder how it turned out. I remember feeling like it was quite good, but let me listen to it. And I was totally open to you sending alternative versions. And then I listened to it and I was like, literally don't know what she's talking about. It's so bloody good. [laughs]

DAVID

It's great. It's one of those sort of guest performances that helps carry the tone of a whole episode because we're doing a kind of sex comedy type episode. And of course it's a British sex comedy, so everyone's terrified. So you do need some characters in there who sound like they belong the best, who sound like they ought to be in a Roman orgy having a genuinely good time and who is going to terrify Mark. And again, you've got Andy Secombe wandering around just going, I'm having such a lovely time. It's a great sort of contrast of tones and styles, which builds up a very good picture, especially on audio. It's a very funny episode, especially if you've got Charmian and Octavia having big sort of emotional important conversations here. We need the fast to be happening, but again, it can't be too much of a gear change. And I think if we'd gone from drama here to, as you say, like a Julie Walters sort of type, we'd accentuate comedy, but the way it currently is, I think it's very funny while still being real.

And I think that's incredibly important. I'm sure that's probably one of the episodes that everyone thought, how are we going to do this?

LOWRI

Oh for sure.

DAVID

How are we going to do The Orgy one and make it tasteful and funny and not seedy? And also stuff people can actually put out to a potential family audience.

LOWRI

So my mum can listen to it. I don't know if she's listened to it yet.

DAVID

Absolutely.

LOWRI

I mean that has made me think of two things. One that is such a great advert for how fantastic a director Amani is in keeping the whole vision in mind. So that, you know cause coming in and being like; "I think this character should be Julie Walters". And then someone to be like, that might work in isolation, but not in the context of all of this. And that's lovely evidence of that.

AMANI

Oh, thank you.

LOWRI

And that also makes me want to pivot just a little to talk more about the editing team maybe, and I'm just going to name check them. I don't know if we've done that.

AMANI

No, not properly.

LOWRI

In entirety in these episodes.

AMANI

Let's do it.

LOWRI

So for the vocal cuts you have me, me and Nico did timing cuts between us and then Nico and Annie did cleaning of vocal cuts between them. I don't think I cleaned any of them. I might have cleaned a very early one, I can't remember. And then Katie started with the soundscaping and the sound effects cuts and then Meg joined. So we've had Katie and Meg on soundscaping throughout and then Cathy on mastering. And Sam of course we have mentioned quite a few times doing music and I just wanted to name check them all because...

AMANI

They are fantastic.

LOWRI

...I'm aware that I'm in there, but everyone's done a really, really great job. It's been a joy to hear things.

DAVID

Yeah, it's so important for a series, which is incredibly ambitious in its size and outlook and what it's trying to do. Yeah, I think the production team on the editing and the music and all of that's been tremendous. It just sounds absolutely the business. You say it sounds like a very, very expensive, very visual but done on audio show, which is really hard to do.

LOWRI

Yeah.

DAVID

And I echo your point on Amani holding the vision of a series. I know how difficult, even just say by previous work, I'd make maximum maybe eight episodes and I'd try to keep an island of characters in my head is really, really hard. And that's just in scripting. To hold 20 episodes worth of characters and stories and moods. And also that's not just some scripting that's actually, I also have to get a bunch of actors to do this. And I mean most of them will have brought something to it, but to work with them to develop it exactly into what we need is a very, very difficult job I would imagine having not done it myself. So again, hats off to Amani on doing that for 20 episodes and over two years from very early scripting to final mastering and that kind of thing.

AMANI

Yeah, I think having not done audio before, it's been just so interesting working through the whole process. Obviously there are some aspects that are quite similar to filmmaking and others that are very different. I think I was so impressed with the way you and Nico did the vocal cuts. I think maybe the first episode we worked on together, Lowri, because you started off with vocal cuts and then Nico came in a little bit later. I feel like you, and I don't know how much this is to do with your experience or if it was also influenced by the fact that you played multiple characters in the show and you were also producing, so you were sitting in on recording, so you heard a lot of the performances and if that gave you a natural instinct for the timing. But I thought that I remember the very first episode that you cut and sent to me and I was like, s**t, oh, sorry, I have to swear there. [laughs] I have barely any notes. This is so good. And similarly with Nico, when he came in and then the two of you were kind of alternating vocal cuts, I was like, wow, just hit the ground running. Finding the rhythms that lift the comedy and the moments that weigh us down where it's more dramatic. I was just like, yeah, just really impressed because I was expecting it to sound quite different between your edits and Nico's edits. And I think that, I don't know if he listened to your edits and so I was like, okay, let me do that. Or if you just both kind of had a similar instinct.

LOWRI

I mean, you had also chosen the takes, right?

AMANI

Yes.

LOWRI

And I think, I suppose Nico and I have worked together for years now, so maybe a big sense that we have a similar style, I guess. I don't know. I did not anticipate that this episode would involve me wanting to hide my face behind my pop filter so much [laughs]

AMANI

Well, we haven't had a chance to talk about you much and you have been very involved in the series, so.

LOWRI

I have been, I'm going to be like, what happens now?

AMANI

[laughing] I know, right?

LOWRI

Sorry. It's done?

AMANI

And similarly for Meg joining the team. Cause Katie started out editing and just this fantastic amount of world building, creating all of these details and levels. I think people don't realise unless you make podcasts and audio dramas, how much work goes into them. I think literally for episode 20, Katie said that there were over 200 tracks that she was juggling. I mean, just trying to imagine how she's looking at that on her computer screen makes me want to go, oh

LOWRI

Yeah, that makes me want to cry!

DAVID

Good lord.

AMANI

And for Meg coming in and kind of jumping straight into that and delivering on the same level was yeah, just incredible. And yeah, I think she did a fantastic job on that.

LOWRI

Yeah, I haven't worked with Meg very long, but something I find with both Katie and Cathy, so I've done quite a few episodes from various shows over the years talking about editing and I just find every time I talk to them about editing and what they do, I learn about something new that I hadn't even thought about that they think about, if that makes sense? It's just the depth of knowledge there, and skill is astonishing.

AMANI

It is so interesting. I mean Cathy has taught me a lot because I end up going to Cathy and being like, why doesn't this sound the way I'm expecting it to sound? And she'll be like, oh, okay, we need to ask them to do this. And I'm like, okay, yes. I didn't have the language or the knowledge to know how to actually ask for this thing. I think we've been so lucky with this editing team. They've just done an incredible job pulling lots of magic tricks out of the hat to make this series sound just so detailed and nuanced and gorgeous and alive. Yeah. And

3D I think just amazing. Gosh, I feel like this has become kind of an awards
thank you speech.

LOWRI

I mean we started with an award.

AMANI

Well yes, and we can finish up there. Thank you to... and who am I forgetting?

LOWRI

Thank you to my mum for listening.

AMANI

Yeah, literally. I mean I feel like we're still leaving out so many people. There are
other actors playing small parts that I always am like must shout out. They were
so, so good. All these sounds like one-liner parts, like Rufus and Drusus, god
have to be my favourite double act. [laugh]

Just love them. But yeah, anyway, I guess we are coming to time.

LOWRI

We are coming to time and so a very, very quick; a pitch for a spinoff for some
of the specific characters and it can be a Rufus and Drufus buddy cop movie if
you want. Mine is the Paladine Players meshed with Sextus's pirate crew and
they're a touring company.

DAVID

Very good.

AMANI

I love that. I love that.

DAVID

Very good.

LOWRI

Yeah, I just want Bassilla to meet Sextus basically.

AMANI

Oh yes, very understandable.

DAVID

Of course. I think the Palatine Players, I think there was a point very early on, really early on in sort of conception of the series where when we're sort of wondering is the politics thing going to work is having a series based in the upper echelons going to work where I just say we could pivot and make it entirely about the theatre company and have an entire series about a Roman theatre company and I still think you could very much easily have a second about a Roman theatre company specifically this one and seeing what they've been up to. I want to see Quintus desperately trying to keep a company together, Bassilla, Mascis, and Antyllus and everyone, I mean that could be a great little series.

LOWRI

Mascis finally getting a lead role.

DAVID

Finally getting, and I'd also, even though it's not really I'd like, I think cooking with Lepidus, I don't don't know what a cooking show starring Lepidus would be like, but I think it should exist.

LOWRI

Yeah. Do you know what I would've promise to myself, because through all of this backstage series, I have just been raving about Andy constantly and I promised myself I wouldn't in this episode, but he's so good.
[laughing] I could see you biting your tongue, right? Literally.

DAVID

And I want to kind of like Antiques Roads show starring Ellie Dickens's Atia -

OTHERS

[enthusiastic agreement]

DAVID

- just trying to find erotic pottery.

AMANI

Yes, a hundred percent. I feel like a spinoff with Atia would just be brilliant.

LOWRI

I'm so glad you mentioned her. Yes, she's fantastic.

AMANI

Ellie Dickens just walks in and just makes the part. Love it.

DAVID

It's funny, again, I've not heard the very, very ending, but it is a series that it sort of like, ties off a lot of plot lines and then sort of reaches a point where it's clear this is a jumping off point to other stories that could go on for quite some time, because it's history, which is handy. But I did sort of jot down the sort of, in the world which there was the series continue to have season. I do have the ideas of what that would include if you wanted the very quick 30 second pitch?

OTHERS

Yeah, go on.

DAVID

I think that's the one where we'd have Mark Antony going out to the east and spending time with Cleopatra and then getting involved in lots of capers there, realising he's got in way over his head. Octavia has also managed to smuggle herself ball the ship so she can get over there, maybe see Charmian and do things there. That leaves, of course Quintus tearing his hair out back in Rome, wondering what to do with the Palatine Players, and following history Gaius and Lepidus, who are now basically sort of running Rome together while Mark is larking about in the East, have to deal with more pirate incursions from Sextus again, again, that happened. And which leads into my favourite bit of the history of this, which is that when Gaius left to try and deal with the Pirates, Fulvia launches a coup.

AMANI

Yes!

DAVID

To try and take Rome, which is absolutely there in history, fantastic bit of history.

AMANI

Amazing bit of history.

DAVID

Those are all the sort of things that were there to be more of the show, those are the ideas in the old notepad following history with a bit of extra stuff thrown in there cause it's fun.

LOWRI

Love it. Beautiful!

AMANI

Love it. Love it.

LOWRI

Right. Amani, we didn't actually get your spinoff idea. Do you have one?

AMANI

Yeah, do you know? I love the idea of Rufus and Drusus, the double act. Going around ancient Rome and just creating lots of trouble banging heads together.

DAVID

A buddy cop show with Rufus and Drusus.

AMANI

An ancient Roman buddy cop show.

DAVID

Causing more problems than they solve.

LOWRI

Yes, it's beautiful. Right. I'm going to wrap it there. I'm going to get real. Doing this series has been absolutely wonderful. This backstage one. It's been so nice to get to talk to everyone and you two, especially, I have such high opinions of both of you, I think you're very excellent people and excellent at what you do.

So there.

AMANI

[laughing] Thank you so much.

LOWRI

Yeah, David is basking. [laughs]

AMANI

[laughing] David is basking.

DAVID

It's true! It's true. We are wonderful.

LOWRI

You are!

DAVID

Yes!

LOWRI

Yes. I hope that that isn't too unbearably gushing, but it is time to say goodbye. Listeners, thank you so much for joining us for all of this. I hope you've enjoyed this series. I hope you've enjoyed Cry Havoc itself. If you have, tell other people about it. Tell them to listen because it's great and we're really proud of it and lots of lovely people have worked on it. Any closing thoughts?

AMANI

I just wanted to say thank you, Lowri , for all your work on this series. It's just been amazing having you produce and host it. You've been a just lovely host coming up with -

LOWRI

Thank you.

AMANI

- wonderful questions and keeping an eye on guiding the chats, I think, and also then editing them and making a sound actually like smart and coherent, which is an incredible skill and I'm very grateful for it.

LOWRI

Thank you very much. Because I have such experience at editing myself and making myself sound like I make sense.

AMANI

I'm like, gosh, we sound stupid when you don't edit us.

LOWRI

That is not true.

DAVID

I'm looking forward to after a good full two years Amani Zardoe seeing the sunshine again.

LOWRI

I kind of want to sing a hair to exit. [sings] "Let the sunshine..." Okay. I think this is going to be our final goodbye. So let us all together say; goodbye.

AMANI

Goodbye.

DAVID

Farewell!

LOWRI

Goodbye!

AMANI

Thank you.

[Show Theme - Outro]

Hosted and Produced by Lowri Ann Davies

Directed by Amani Zardoe

Executive Producers: Alexander J. Newall & April Sumner

Editing by Lowri Ann Davies and Catherine Rinella

Music by Samuel D.F. Jones

Art by Gorilla