

SPARTACUS

BLOOD AND SAND

CAST BIOS

ANDY WHITFIELD – SPARTACUS

Andy Whitfield heads the cast of “Spartacus: Blood and Sand,” a Starz original action-adventure drama series set in the brutal Roman gladiator era. Against all odds, Spartacus’ rebellious instincts, his intense love for his wife and his powerful fighting skills drive him to survive and win near-impossible battles. Whitfield himself describes Spartacus as having a dangerous edge, being “a beast with a heart” and concealing a fire that burns within.

Whitfield won the role after what executive producer Rob Tapert describes as a worldwide search for a talented actor who has so far flown under Hollywood’s radar, but who after Spartacus will be highly sought after.

Although a newcomer to U.S. audiences, Whitfield has performed with acclaim in numerous Australian drama series, including “McLeod’s Daughters,” “Packed to the Rafters,” “The Strip” and “Out of the Blue.”

He starred as Gabriel, the archangel fighting to bring light to purgatory in *Gabriel*, a performance which earned him a best newcomer nomination at the Filmink Awards. *Gabriel*, directed by Shane Abbess, was nominated for the Australian Film Institute Award for best visual effects and was one of Australia’s highest grossing films of 2007. He recently wrapped shooting Australian suspense thriller *The Clinic*, directed by James Rabbitts.

Whitfield was born in the U.K., grew up in Wales and studied at Sheffield University in England. He then spent five years working in the construction industry in London. He moved to Australia 10 years ago, attended drama school in Sydney and gained work as an actor, while also working as a diagnostic engineer, a job that required him to rappel down tall buildings. He has also worked as a freelance photographer.

Whitfield and his wife Vashti welcomed their second child in November 2007.

LUCY LAWLESS – LUCRETIA

Lucy Lawless plays the pivotal role of Lucretia in “Spartacus: Blood and Sand,” a Starz original action-adventure drama series, set in the brutal Roman gladiator era. In a passionate and ambitious partnership with her husband Batiatus (John Hannah), she supports his every move as he maneuvers their way back from near financial ruin.

Lawless parallels their relationship with Shakespeare’s Macbeth’s, “They’re a team; they have a great relationship. He’s the brains and she shores up his confidence; she supports her man.”

Lawless, a New Zealander, rose to international fame through her groundbreaking performance as “Xena: Warrior Princess” in the cult hit series also executive produced by “Spartacus: Blood and Sand’s” Rob Tapert and Sam Raimi. Her other major television role was as D’Anna/Number Three in the critically acclaimed SCI FI Channel series “Battlestar Galactica.”

She has continued to demonstrate her versatility with a wide range of television work, most recently in “Flight of the Conchords.” This followed such notable series as “Curb Your Enthusiasm,” “The L Word,” CSI: Miami,” and “The X-Files.”

In film, she played Aspen in Adam Sandler’s *Bedtime Stories*, Mother Superior in the upcoming *Bitch Slap*, produced by “Xena” producer Eric Gruendemann and directed by “Spartacus: Blood and Sand’s” Rick Jacobson and cameos in Raimi’s *Spider Man*, and Tapert’s *Boogeyman*.

Lawless is a member of the board of the Starship Foundation, the fundraising body for the Starship Children’s Hospital in her hometown Auckland. She was made a member of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2004. She has three children, is married to producer Rob Tapert and lives in Auckland, New Zealand.

JOHN HANNAH – BATIATUS

Acclaimed Scottish actor John Hannah plays Batiatus, the Roman gladiator owner, in “Spartacus: Blood and Sand,” a Starz original action-adventure drama series.

Batiatus buys the warrior Spartacus for his Ludus gladiator training school in the hope that the raw potential he sees in the Thracian will restore his finances and reputation. He shares a passionate marriage with Lucretia (Lucy Lawless) and there is very little he can or will deny her.

Hannah describes Batiatus as a businessman trying to make a living in a world in which slavery exists and there are no moral qualms about killing people for entertainment.

Born in Glasgow, Scotland, Hannah served his apprenticeship as an electrician before entering the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama at 20. He went on to establish a successful career in television and theater, notable for his breakthrough film role as Matthew in the box office hit romantic comedy *Four Weddings and a Funeral*. His other memorable film roles include Gwyneth Paltrow’s love interest James in *Sliding Doors* and the bumbling, drunken thief Jonathan Carnahan in *The Mummy* and its two sequels, *The Mummy Returns* and *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor*. His leading television roles include “McCallum,” “Agatha Christie: Poirot,” “Cold Blood,” “Out of the Blue” and “Rebus,” which he also executive produced. His executive producer credits also include “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,” “Quite Ugly One Morning” and “Afterlife.”

Hannah and his wife, actress Joanna Roth, are parents of young twins Gabriel and Astrid.

PETER MENSAH – DOCTORE

Peter Mensah plays Doctore, the loyal slave who trains the gladiators in “Spartacus: Blood and Sand,” a Starz original action-adventure drama series. Born into slavery in Batiatus’ house, Doctore became a celebrated gladiator with a formidable reputation.

Mensah was born in Ghana, Africa. His parents are of the Ashanti tribe. At a young age, he moved to Hertfordshire, England with his father, an engineer, and his mother, a writer.

Through acting with repertory companies, he acquired a love of the theater and a passion for acting. After graduating from college, he traveled extensively in Europe, and then moved to Canada, where he became a working actor.

He has distinguished himself in formidable roles in such films as *300*, for director Zack Snyder; Antoine Fuqua’s *Tears of the Sun* starring Bruce Willis; Touchstone Picture’s *Hidalgo* opposite Viggo Mortensen and Omar Sharif; and more. Current films include the role of Akwey in James Cameron’s *Avatar*.

He has also appeared in numerous television programs including “Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles,” “Witchblade,” “The Pretender” and “Star Trek: Enterprise.”

Now living in Los Angeles, he is an avid basketball player and martial arts Wushu practitioner. He is dedicated to several causes, especially those concerning the environment and Africa.

MANU BENNETT – CRIXUS

Manu Bennett plays Crixus, the Champion of Capua in “Spartacus: Blood and Sand,” a Starz original action-adventure drama series set in Ancient Rome’s brutal gladiator arena.

He says “Crixus’ role is to lead Spartacus to an understanding of the gladiatorial world, but, in reverse, Spartacus is leading Crixus back to an understanding of life.”

Over the past four years Bennett has played action roles involving spectacular fights with the greatest modern-day gladiators from the popular WWE wrestling arena: John Cena in *The Marine* and Stone Cold Steve Austin in *The Condemned*.

He played Steve Veldez in the award-winning 2001 film *Lantana* opposite “Without a Trace’s” Anthony La Paglia.

He was Deputy Billy Kitka in *30 Days of Night*, from “Spartacus: Blood and Sand” executive producers Rob Tapert and Sam Raimi’s Ghost House Pictures; and earlier had starred as Marc Antony opposite his “Spartacus: Blood and Sand” co-star Lucy Lawless in Tapert and Raimi’s hit series “Xena: Warrior Princess”

He was born in Auckland, New Zealand, of Maori descent, and grew up in Newcastle, Australia. His acting career began in Australia in series such as “Paradise Beach,” “Water Rats,” “All Saints,” followed by lead roles in New Zealand series including “Street Legal,” “Shortland Street” and “Mataku.”



CRAIG PARKER– GLABER

Craig Parker plays the Roman Legate Claudius Glaber in “Spartacus: Blood and Sand,” the Starz original action-adventure drama series. Glaber blames Spartacus for his failed military campaign and plots against him. Married to Ilithyia, the spoiled daughter of a wealthy and powerful Senator, Glaber aims for greatness without the ability to achieve it.

A New Zealander born in Fiji, Parker was 17 when he started work in New Zealand television on the hit series “Gloss,” followed by roles in several dramas, including “Gold” and “City Life” and four years as the popular Guy Warner on the soap “Shortland Street.” His international work began with “Spartacus: Blood and Sand” executive producers Rob Tapert and Sam Raimi’s “Xena: Warrior Princess” and “Young Hercules” and includes Disney’s “Power Rangers.” He recently starred as the villain Darken Rahl in Tapert and Raimi’s “The Legend of the Seeker.” Parker is equally at home in comedy, and was seen most recently in “Diplomatic Immunity,” a New Zealand sitcom.

In film, he is well-known to *Lord of the Rings* fans as the elf Haldir of Lorien from *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Two Towers* and also was the voice of Gothmog (Third Age) in *The Return of the King*. He recently appeared in *Underworld: Rise of the Lycans*.

VIVA BIANCA – ILITHYIA

Viva Bianca plays the young Roman noblewoman Ilithyia, in “Spartacus: Blood and Sand,” the Starz original action-adventure drama series, set in the brutal Roman gladiator era. Ilithyia engages in a subtle power struggle with Lucretia (Lucy Lawless), while admiring the attributes of the gladiators, particularly Spartacus.

Bianca says Ilithyia was “born and bred to enjoy incredibly elite taste, and is extremely ambitious in terms of maintaining her status and public image.”

Since graduating from Western Australia Academy of Performing Arts with the best actress award, Bianca has established a career that moves between film, television and theater.

She recently starred in the lead role of Ophelia in the psychological thriller *Bad Bush*, directed by Sam Genocchio which is now in release in Australia and played Becky in *Accidents Happen*, a comedy starring Geena Davis and directed by Andrew Lancaster.

She has had guest leads on Australian television series including “All Saints,” “Blue Heelers,” “Marshall Law” and “The Strip.” Her theater experience includes “Twelfth Night,” “Dancing at Lughnasa,” “Queen C” and “This is A Play.”

Now Sydney-based, she grew up in Melbourne, the daughter of film composer Cezary Skubiszewski, whose scores include director Gillian Armstrong’s upcoming *Death Defying Acts*, starring Catherine Zeta-Jones and Guy Pearce.

NICK E. TARABAY – ASHUR

Nick E Tarabay plays former gladiator Ashur in “Spartacus: Blood and Sand,” the Starz original action adventure drama series. Ashur, wounded in battle, has become a bookmaker, taking odds on the fights and serving as right hand to the gladiator school’s scheming owner Batiatus (John Hannah).

Tarabay says of Ashur: “He’s definitely a survivor - very calculating, very smart. He found different strength and instead of being a physical fighter, now he fights with his brain.”

Tarabay was born and raised in Beirut, Lebanon, where his mother enrolled him in art classes and he also became a successful college athlete, playing semi-pro soccer for both Lebanon and Kuwait leagues. He moved to New York, where he soon joined the Terry Schreiber Actors Studio and was cast in several off-Broadway plays. He made his television debut in “Sex and the City” and soon after that he landed his recurring role as the sexy drug dealer Matush in “The Sopranos,” after which he moved to Los Angeles.

After working in episodes of shows such as “CSI: Miami,” “The Unit” and “Moonlight,” he was cast as hot-blooded police lieutenant Axel Finet in the Starz original series “Crash.” He was originally slated for just three episodes of that series but he became a series regular once the network saw his work – the producers loved Axel too much to kill him.

ANTONIO TE MAIOHA – BARCA

Antonio Te Maioha plays the gladiator Barca in “Spartacus: Blood and Sand,” the Starz original action adventure drama series. Barca, 'the Beast of Carthage' serves Batiatus (John Hannah) as his bodyguard and hit man.

Te Maioha was born in Auckland and grew up in Hastings, New Zealand. His Maori heritage comes from his father’s side of the family, with both Ngapuhi and Waikato tribal affiliations. Years of busking and countless street performances piqued his interest in performing arts which led to him attending Toi Whakaari New Zealand Drama School in 1992. After graduation he joined acclaimed Maori theatre project, Te Rakau Hua O Te Wao Tapu, run by well known New Zealand actor Jim Moriarty. From there he worked steadily in theatre and was one of the ensemble cast of “Waiora,” which successfully toured New Zealand, Hawaii and the UK over a two year period.

His television credits include roles in “Hercules, The Legendary Journeys,” produced by “Spartacus: Blood and Sand” executive producers Rob Tapert and Sam Raimi. He then went on to play numerous roles in their “Xena: Warrior Princess” and recently resumed his work for Tapert playing 'Denfir', a guest role in two episodes of “The Legend of The Seeker.” Other series he’s appeared in include “Shortland Street,” “Mataku,” “Orange Roughies” and “The Lost World,” all produced in New Zealand.

His film work includes a role in *Te Tangata Whai Rawa O Weneti (The Maori Merchant of Venice)*, and he played the lead in award-winning short film *Taua*.



He lives with his family in the surfing town of Raglan, on the west coast of New Zealand's North Island.

ERIN CUMMINGS – SURA

Erin Cummings plays Sura, a Thracian princess and the wife of the title character in "Spartacus: Blood and Sand," the Starz original action-adventure drama series.

Cummings says Spartacus' love for Sura is what keeps him alive: "Whether that means that she is there in person to do that or whether she comes to him in a vision or in a dream, she's always behind every decision he makes and every beat of his heart."

A graduate of the University of North Texas, Cummings began her professional acting career when she was spotted by an L.A. talent scout while performing in Community Theater near Dallas.

Most recently seen as the guest lead in the hit CBS drama, "Cold Case," she has a recurring role on Joss Whedon's Fox series, "Dollhouse." She stars in the upcoming feature *Bitch Slap*, directed by "Spartacus: Blood and Sand" director Rick Jacobson and was seen alongside Martin Lawrence in Universal Studios' *Welcome Home Roscoe Jenkins*. On TV, Cummings was a series regular on the second season of "Dante's Cove," on the Here! Network. Her other television work includes "Star Trek: Enterprise," "The Bold and The Beautiful," "Threshold," and "Charmed."

She trained in martial arts and weaponry for her role in *Bitch Slap*. She loves languages and also dedicates her time to charities, volunteering at the L.A. Mission and leading the Here! Network team for AIDS Walk.

JAI COURTNEY – VARRO

Australian actor Jai Courtney plays Varro in "Spartacus: Blood and Sand," a Starz original action-adventure drama series set in the brutal Roman gladiator era.

In an unusual move, Varro puts himself into the gladiator training Ludus, seeing it as a way out of his gambling debts. Courtney says Varro "probably thinks of himself as being handy enough with the blade to manage that. His best option in life is to fight for what he needs for him and his family."

Varro becomes Spartacus' only friend, Courtney says, "they realized that they've got a common goal, the need for survival, so there's an understanding between them that forms their bond."

In 2008, Courtney had a lead role in the hit Australian series "Packed to the Rafters" and a guest lead in the popular "All Saints." He was in the comedy feature *To Hell & Bourke* and several short films.

He graduated from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.