

band of Viking brothers as he jumpstart of his career. After is so different to everyone else in cover and conquer new worlds across the seas. Ragnar and his army will kill anyone who Athelstan, the monk played by British-born actor gives a gripping performance to be rememof the camera, he mostly trained on the stage in London, where he attended at the prestigious Guildhall Drama School, which ters in VIKINGS, yours is the has seen the likes of alumni from Daniel Craig to Ewan McGrego and Joseph Feinnes. For the past couple of years, the 23 year-old has been through a whirlwind

rises to become the King of his appearing in WRATH OF THE the show and that he managed people. He is determined to dis- TITANS, George got lucky. He to integrate himself within their was able to combine his love for society. The character is so difstands in their path. But out of Award winning Les Miserables. all of the bloodshed, one man After following his serious role that's probably what people will is given the chance to survive: on VIKINGS, I am sure that this is the part that will put him on newcomer George Blagden. The Hollywood's radar for good. George sat down with LATF to discuss his love for history, what bered. Before stepping in front it's like to portray a monk, and where we'll see him next.

> Out of all the savage characmost innocent. What did you first think when you read the show takes place in? role of Athelstan?

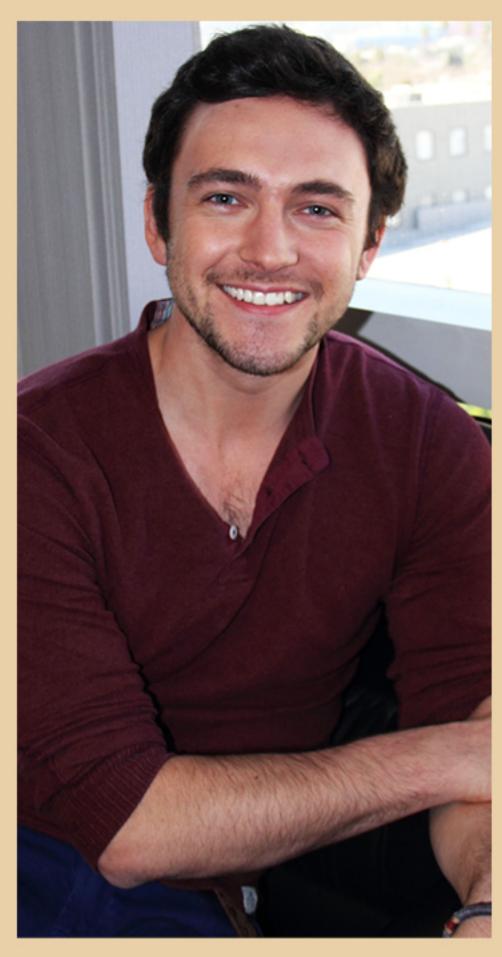
that Athelstan was seemingly the character's background is and of excitement experiencing the outsider, the one character who everything, so I actually asked if I

musicals and film when he was ferent from everyone else on the cast as Grantaire in the Academy show. I'm definitely not the only person who's not savage. I think take away from this show most over the first few weeks, how these people are not savage at all, and what Michael (Hirst, the creator), has tried to do in this series is show the real human aspect of the Vikings.

> I would imagine it wasn't easy for you to relate to being a monk. Did you give yourself a history lesson on the time the

I'm a big one for research and What I found really exciting is learning all about what your





could go to Lindisfarne Island off the coast of Northumberland in pre-production weeks, and I did. It was just amazing being there for a couple of days-to take in that landscape and to see the world in which Athelstan grew up. And, you may say I don't have much of a connection or I might not be able to know really what it was like to be an Anglo-Saxon monk, but when I first got on set Michael asked me, Where did you go to school?' and I said, 'I went to boarding school at age 7,' and he said, 'That's so perfect. Just bring so much of that part of yourself to the role because it's very similar to how Athelstan grew up in this isolated community.

Are you religious? I'm sure not as much as Athelstan.

That's the point, right. Athelstan is so, so devout in his religion. The whole society at Lindisfarne is an all-male society. You are a servant of your faith and I think it's very rare in the multicultural society we have nowadays to find examples of religion as devout as that and as extreme as what these Anglo-Saxon monks were doing, imprisoned, almost, on this island. And so it's very hard to relate to in modern day society.

I'm curious about the dialect. Everyone seems to have a faint English accent. What was the direction for that?

Well, for me, it was 'please use your own voice.' I guess I was lucky in that respect in that I didn't have to do the hours of dialect training that everyone else did, because it's a very specific dialogue that the Vikings are do-

ing. It's not quite modern Norwegian or Swedish or Scandinavian, it's kind of what professors of ancient language that evolved into this sort of accent that Poll (Moussoulides), our dialogue coach, was training them on. I think the idea of it is just to make it sound non-Western. You'll hear lots of characters speaking Old Norse, and I myself speak ancient Anglo-Saxon a couple of times in the show and so that was great. I mean, what kind of job do you get to do where you learn a new language?

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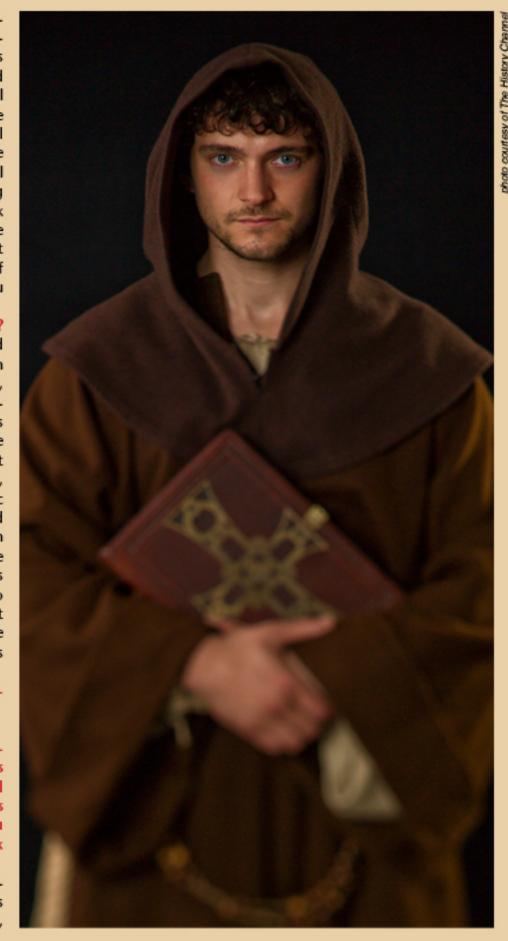
Where do you shoot the show? We shot in Ireland in brand new studios in Ashford, which is about 40 km south of Dublin, and then the surrounding landscape around Ashford, which is the Wicklow Mountains. If you've not been, or don't know about them, you have to look them up, because they're just so dramatic and gorgeous. When I was told we were going to be filming in Ireland, I kind of thought, Where are all of the Scandinavian fjords in Ireland? Why are we going to Ireland to film a TV show about Vikings?' And then we got to the Wicklow Mountains, and I was quite wrong.

You don't need any special effects for that.

Yeah. It was amazing.

When your character's captured, his entire world is turned upside down. With all of the temptations, he remains devoted to his faith. Do you think or know if he will break out of his religious barrier?

I will say that, like I said, Athelstan is the outsider in this community, this very daunting,



strange, alien, pagan community, and he's the only person in that society who sticks out like a sore thumb. In having to try and integrate in this society, he will have to change for survival, so yes, carry on watching is all I can

The Viking characters are so savage. The series really shows how they had barely any regard for women.

But the other interesting aspect of the show is that, really, women were very equal in society and hopefully you'll get to see that through the character of Lagertha, which Katheryn (Winnick) had so much fun playing. You see her relationship with Ragnar (Lothbrok) and how they are life companions. It's not about this Viking warrior with his wife who looks after the kids at home. She's a shieldmaiden; she's a 'warrioress.'

She's a heroine.

Yeah. She's just as hardened in battle as he is, so yeah, again, something else that I think people will learn is that they weren't raping and pillaging psychopaths.

There is dearly a demand for these types of shows about moments in history. What do you hope for the future of VI-KINGS?

I hope to turn 30 and be on the set of Vikings in seven years from now. (laughs) No, I really hope that the show does well and that we get to go back to Ireland year after year, because it was like a five month summer camp filming that. It was just magical, with a fantastic group of people to work with, like the crew, which is so incredible. I think people, hopefully, will watch the show and the demand will be there, because like you said, historical fiction is something that I think people love because we don't get a chance to run around with axes and shields in modern society nowadays. We can't walk up Wilshire in Viking getup.

Some people do on Hollywood Boulevard.

(laughs) I'm sure some people probably do.

But it's a fantasy.

Yeah, and I think that's why people are drawn to historical fiction, because they get to experience other parts of history that they may not have otherwise thought of or learned about it.

You started out on the stage and in musicals and are fairly new to the silver screen. How was your experience mixing both song and screen in Les Misérables?

Overwhelmingly amazing, really. It was new to everyone. I'm just starting out, like you say, and I've been extremely lucky to have done the things that I've done in the last 18 months. On the set of Les Mis, it was that moment where you realize that you're on set with Mr. Hugh Jackman, Mr. Russell Crowe, and Anne Hathaway. And actually with all the people that you're working with in a scene, everyone's attempting something new, which kind of weirdly bonds you all in a really creative way. In the recording of live vocals, you really get to create energies in scenes that you otherwise would just not have been able to do. If you want to take a moment halfway through





a singing line to connect in some going to pan out. No one really come such a long way, and I'm way with the person that you're knew whether this whole live sure that a lot of the animasinging opposite, you can, and singing thing was going to be tion features that happen now the fifty-piece orchestra that is in a success. You just don't know have motion capture face recthe studio will follow you, and so the result is very affecting. It hits make that leap of faith, and let where all the facial expressions you when you watch it because people see it. It was quite nerve- are done with these 750 camyou're seeing raw emotions right racking to start with, but I like it. eras, or whatever around the acthere in front of you.

Did you think it was going to are original and haven't been through the face, but it would be as big as it turned out to be? done before. I mean, I was a Les Mis diehard fan since I was a child, but I had no idea about the worldwide you haven't done yet? support it had and the ecstatic. I've always said that I'd really knows, maybe I could read the fandom that it has created with love to be a Pixar animation Vikings' audio book. all of its love and support. I think character. I find animation re- The Viking cartoon? Tell me when you do something new, like how History is attempting films. Whenever I go to watch watched the trailer, and it has very original and new with Vikings, it's very exciting because such an interesting challenge for Yeah, it was my first job out of you don't know the format and an actor to just act through their drama school, and it's a very,

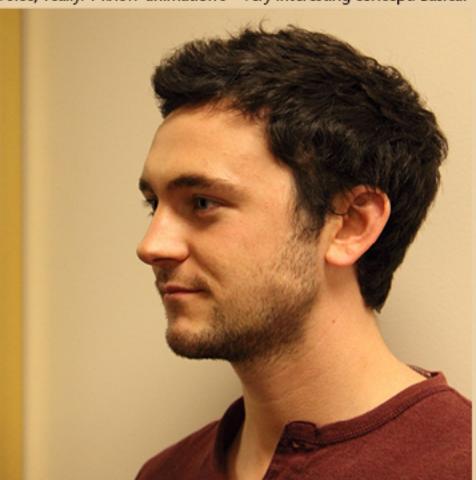
What kind of project would Have you done voice over you like to be a part of that work?

ally fascinating and I love Pixar about The Philosophers. I them, I always think it must be a really interesting premise.

until you take that risk and you ognition, I see things like Tintin I like being a part of things that tor's face, so I know it's not all be really interesting.

No, never. I'd love to. Who

you don't know how things are voice, really. I know animation's very interesting concept. Basical-



tions debating big philosophical that we engage in in the film is an a bunker where 10 of the 20 of in the event of a nuclear fallout, and we have to decide which 10 of us, based on skill sets that we're given, would be allowed to go and live in the bunker. It kind of starts out as something maybe like The History Boys or Dead Poet's Society, but it goes into psychological thriller.

When is it coming out?

I know it's just been to the Berlin Film Festival, and it had some great reviews there and did really well, apparently. Fingers crossed for theatrical release this year, it's a great film.

Just for fun, can you tell us something that nobody knows about you, or something that your fans don't know that you would like to reveal?

Unfortunately for me, I've shot myself in the foot, really, because whenever anyone asks anything about me on Twitter, I respond and tell them.

Do you plan to make L.A. home one day?

I can definitely see myself living here at some point in my life with this kind of weather. Someone said, 'It only rains three days a year' or something bizarre.

Where's your favorite place to hang out in Los Angeles?

engage with these thought ex- days ago. There are places in the for a hike together. periments in which they imag- world where people say, 'You It's our selling point! ine themselves in certain situa- gotta go! Everyone goes, you Yeah! And the views are amazgotta go up Runyon Canyon!' ing. issues. The thought experiment and you think, 'Okay, well everyone said I've gotta go to Runyon Watch the video interview HERE apocalyptic world where there is Canyon.' Then you get there and don't miss George on Sunand you completely understand. day nights at 10/9C on HISTORY.

ly the whole action of the film is Believe it or not, I've been here 'Why haven't I come here bea one hour philosophy class, 20 three times now, and I've never fore?' It's just a great thing to philosophy students and their been up Runyon Canyon and do, and it's got this environment teacher, and he asks them to I went for the first time a few of bonding with people going

us get to survive in the bunker You're like, 'Okay, wow' and www.history.com/shows/vikings

