



A DAY ON THE SET OF TORCHWOOD: MIRACLE DAY

By Lauren Paige Kennedy

It's 4p.m. on the set of *Torchwood: Miracle Day*, and the smoke machines are working overtime. They issue an eerie pall against the floor-to-ceiling green screens that line the walls of Studio 27A at Warner Brothers in Burbank, California, where the show, recently brought to the States from the U.K. by STARZ®, is now shot.

"Welcome," nods director Billy Gearhart as I navigate thick black cables, moving cameras and minimal sets. Leading man John Barrowman, who's played 51st-century, time-traveling Captain Jack Harkness since 2006 when *Torchwood: Miracle Day* spun off from the BBC's rebooted *Dr. Who*, quickly disappears into his trailer to study his lines. I'm told Hollywood mainstay Bill Pullman, new to the series as its antihero, is in hair and makeup, and is due on set momentarily.

Today the actors are filming the dramatic climax from the final, tell-all episode of the fourth season — which happens to be the first season shot in L.A. with new American characters joining established favorites from the original sci-fi hit.

The premise for this revamped franchise is simple — and terrifying: One day, no one dies. Next day, no one dies again. And so on. The earth is on a fast track toward massive overpopulation. But who's behind the plot? Captain Jack and his longtime cronies from the U.K. — Gwen Cooper (Eve Myles) and Rhys Williams (Kai Owen) — team with America's Central Intelligence Agency to find out. *ER* alum Mehki Phifer and newcomer Alexa Havins round out the burgeoning squad, playing a CIA agent and analyst, respectively.

At 5:10, pretty Lauren Ambrose (of *Six Feet Under* fame) runs dialogue with a surprising guest star. The camera adores Ambrose's fiery red hair as she personifies PR flack Jilly Hitzinger while blocking her scene with film and TV ace Frances Fisher

(*Titanic*, *The Lincoln Lawyer*). Tune into episode nine this season to see Fisher in action.

Sometime after 6p.m., Pullman appears by my side, his face painted with realistic-looking purple bruises. He tells me how dark the character of Oswald Danes is, and why this role is so challenging: "[The show] starts with Danes being given three lethal injections for being a murderer of a young girl — he's a pedophile," muses the man with the gravelly voice who once played the president in the blockbuster



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Independence Day. "He lives through this [and becomes] a pivot into this zone of miracles. First he's vilified, cast out, but then realizes he has a message... and becomes a messiah, of sorts. When I first saw the script I said: 'Ooh, this is good!'"

Pullman also loves the thematic underpinnings of the fourth season. "It's got this core of ache," he philosophizes, aptly summing it up.

Around 7p.m., after a quick lunch, Gearhart summons Barrowman, Pullman, Ambrose, Myles and our Mystery Guest Star, plus four extras to the set. I watch as they rehearse the "big scene" that answers every question from the *Torchwood: Miracle Day* season — then bite my lip because I know I can't reveal spoilers to *Spotlight* readers. Even witnessing a simple walk-through is enough to know the payoff's gonna be good.

It's pushing 8:30 when handsome, effusive Barrowman appears and I query him about how this season is different from the first three. "We have more food now," he jokes, gesturing back to the table where we've all been grazing. "Food, everywhere, all the time! No, the show is getting bigger. The plot lines, bigger. The special effects, bigger. The budgets, bigger. Our characters are bigger and better, characters like Oswald Danes. The scale of it is bigger."

When asked if any shifts have been made to appeal to an American audience, Barrowman says no. "We're actually a bit edgier," he insists. "More risqué. Because we're on STARZ®, and the network is going to the edge and taking programming to another level in ways other networks try to do. But STARZ® is going the extra step." A production assistant taps on her wristwatch and Barrowman is led away, waving as he goes.

Thirty minutes later our hero re-emerges in his red suspenders dressed as Captain Jack Barrowman powwows with his castmates, old and new, to film the nail-biting conclusion scheduled to air later this summer. A hush descends, and then I hear a cameraman's voice boom: "Rolling!"

To know firsthand what they say, and how it all turns out, well, as with all suspenseful stories, for that you'll just have to wait.

Torchwood: Miracle Day premieres Friday, July 8 on STARZ®. Watch at 10pm ET/9pm CT on Channel 340 and 840 in HD.

About the Writer:

Lauren Paige Kennedy is a freelance writer and editor based in Los Angeles, Calif. She regularly pens celebrity features for *WebMD the Magazine*.

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