

**STARZ ENTERTAINMENT**

**Moderator: Laila Mahmud**  
**April 2, 2012**  
**1:00 pm CT**

Coordinator: Welcome, and thank you for standing by. At this time all participants are in a listen-only mode. During the question and answer session please press star one on your touch-tone phone. Today's conference is being recorded. If you have any objections you may disconnect at this time. Now I will turn the meeting over to Miss Laila Mahmud. You may begin.

Laila Mahmud: Hello, everyone. My name is Laila Mahmud and on behalf of Starz I'd like to thank you all for participating in today's call. Starz's original series Spartacus: Vengeance just concluded with its second season this - with the season finale this past Friday March 30th.

Joining on the - joining us on the phone today is the creator, writer, and executive producer of Spartacus: Vengeance, as well as Spartacus: Blood and Sand, and Spartacus: Gods of the Arena, Steven S. DeKnight. I will now open up the call to questions for Steven.

Coordinator: Thank you. We will now begin the question and answer session. If you would like to ask a question, please press star one. Once again, to ask a question, please press star one. To withdraw your request, press star two. Our first question comes from Hilton Collins, the Word of the Nerd. Your line is open.

Hilton Collins: Hello, Mr. DeKnight. This is Hilton from Word of the Nerd.

Steven DeKnight: Oh, hello.

Hilton Collins: I just have my quick question. You actually had a lot of the storyline reasons to end a lot of the characters' stories the way you did in the last episode. I'm just curious. I

mean, I know you make the decisions. You probably put a lot of thought into it, and you know, for - and you were satisfied with the way you did it. But are there any - is there a part of you that I guess regrets, you know, killing X character off and not being able to tell their story anymore in the future?

Steven DeKnight: Well, I - there's actually two answers to that question. I never really regret killing a character off, because I feel like when I do kill a character off, it serves a specific purpose, and either that character has run its course, or that character needs to die to propel the hero in a new direction or further his direction. That said, there are plenty of actors that I really miss, and plenty of character traits that I miss.

A good example is John Hannah from season one. His portrayal of Batiatus really brought something fantastic to the show. But for the story to continue, Spartacus needed to kill him for that season to have its closure and to feel like the hero had a major victory in moving forward in his story. So for that reason, a really fantastic character and a fantastic actor had to go.

So I definitely miss John Hannah on the show, as I'm going to miss everyone that was killed off this season. But I don't regret any of those decisions.

Hilton Collins: Okay. And that's my final question for now. Thanks.

Steven DeKnight: Okay, great. Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from Rosa Cordero, [accidentalsexiness.com](http://accidentalsexiness.com).

Rosa Cordero: Hi, Mr. DeKnight. That was quite a season finale. It was a total bloodbath. I loved it even though as you say we're going to miss the characters.

Steven DeKnight: Thank you. Yes.

Rosa Cordero: I'm wondering where do we go next season. Are - you know, based on history, will be seeing Carthage or Pompei? Where do we go next season?

Steven DeKnight: Yes. Next season we finally after three seasons of talking about him will be introduced to Marcus Crassus, and we'll start that section of the war. Next season we're actually going to jump forward about six months, so we're deep into the war. Spartacus's army has grown to what it is in history, where it's on the way of being that big. It's not a few hundred people. It's thousands of runaway slaves that have joined his cause.

So Crassus will be brought in to try to quell the rebellion, and he will enlist Julius Caesar to help them. And this is a young Julius Caesar, right around 27. And I've already had - I've already been pelted by messages on the Internet. You know, you're ruining history. Julius Caesar has nothing to do with the Spartacus war - which is actually true and not true.

This is an odd period in Julius Caesar's history. A man that we know so much about, this time period there's not a lot known about him except that he was a military tribune in Rome. And all accounts that I've read so far, most of them say he may have been or most likely was part of this army sent after Spartacus, especially since he does have a relationship with Crassus.

It's often a bit of a tumultuous relationship, but they do know each other, and of course as everyone knows, according to history, Crassus, Caesar, and Pompey overthrow the republic later on. So that's the basic plan about what's coming up. It is definitely the war years in these - in the third servile war.

Rosa Cordero: Now with Spartacus' history being so, you know, vague at different times, has that been a little bit freeing for you, as - you know, as the creator and the writer on the show to be able to, you know, be creative and do things like saying - like including Julius Caesar where maybe, you know, folks think that he wasn't there or what not?

Steven DeKnight: Right. Yes, the fact that there are large gaps in what is known in this time period especially about Spartacus has been incredibly liberating to actually tell the story. And next season we are taking a lot of these events that are known and putting you know, a dramatic spin on them. And the fact that there aren't a lot of facts (unintelligible) really helps us (unintelligible) to develop a dramatic story.

Just as I always say, Spartacus is not a documentary. You shouldn't write a term paper based on this show. First and foremost, it's entertainment. So to me that's my job #1, is to entertain the audience. My job #2 is not to completely turn my back on history. I do like to stay - we call it historically adjacent. We want to be in the neighborhood of history and not go completely off the rails.

Rosa Cordero: Okay, great. Thank you so much for a fantastic season and I look forward to everything you have coming up.

Steven DeKnight: You're welcome. Thank you very much.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from (Kelly West), cinemablend.com. Your line is open.

(Kelly West): Hi. Thanks so much for doing this with us. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the decision as far as how things played out with Lucretia, and whether or not Lucy Lawless will be around at all, like maybe in a flashback capacity or something in (unintelligible) season, or is she completely gone from the show?

Steven DeKnight: I never rule out a good flashback. But the decision to kill Lucretia's character actually starts way back at the end of season one, when I decided to kill her the first time. So it always makes me chuckle when I read that you know, people are saying, you killed Lucy Lawless; I'll never watch this show again, because in my mind Lucretia got a reprieve. She was in a six-episode prequel and then another entire season when she was supposed to be dead at the end of season one.

And going back to season one, I really felt at the time when I was structuring it that Spartacus had to kill Badiatus, and Crixus had to kill Lucretia for what they did. And we actually shot it both ways. We shot it where Lucretia was clearly dead at the end of season one and one where she was still twitching, because there was still some discussion. And I was approached by Starz and my producing partner, Rob Tapert, who is married to Lucy.

And the concern was in the second season should we bring back what is arguably the biggest name in the show. And I was actually adamant, no, she had to die. It wouldn't work any other way. So graciously everyone said okay, you know what you're doing. And then the next morning in the shower before I came to work, I had this idea about Mad Lucretia, a take on Mad Ophelia.

And I thought at the time, wouldn't it be great if Ilithyia is pregnant, and Lucretia, criminally insane at this point, has designs on this child? And everybody thinks - you know, the audience will think she wants to take the child and run away with it, but if you look back over the season, you realize she wants to take the child to her dead husband in the afterlife. And she goes over the cliff. So that's the idea I had that morning. I called Rob up and said Rob, I've got an idea.

So she was brought back based on this idea. We didn't bring her back and then decide what to do with her. I wanted to know clearly where that character ended, and I also thought that Lucretia and Ilithyia both had to die together to really conclude that story line. So that was the entire thrust of bringing her back, is that she is to be intimately tied in with Ilithyia, and their storyline had to end together in a grand operatic fashion. So I - does that answer your question? Did I go completely off the rails?

(Kelly West): No, that's exactly what my question was.

Steven DeKnight: Okay, great.

(Kelly West): I just want to add, though, I love that you used the cliff. I thought that was fantastic because I love the cliff, and now I'm wondering is there any chance that Ilithyia is going to get a reprieve this - for next season, or is she completely gone?

Steven DeKnight: She's completely dead, and one of the reasons that we did that is especially - I mean, so many characters died, but especially with Lucretia and Ilithyia, we really looked at what was coming next in the story with Crassus and Caesar launching a full-scale war against the rebel slaves. Ilithyia and Lucretia just didn't have a place in that world.

There was no scenario where Crassus was going to take those two with him or take Ilithyia with him. They don't know - Crassus doesn't know them. They would be damaged goods no matter how you sliced it. So they really didn't fit into the world, and we felt that jamming - excuse me - jamming a character into the season just to bring the actor or actress back just didn't feel right.

And as much as the audience may love that character, I personally think that if you don't do the character justice in a season, they will start to not like that character, and they'll peak in memory of that character, so best to end on a high note. Could she come back in a flashback? Absolutely possible, but no plans at the moment.

But I absolutely love Viva Bianca and Lucy Lawless, and they were fantastic together. So I won't rule out a flashback, but at this point there's no plans.

(Kelly West): Okay, thank you very much.

Steven DeKnight: You're welcome.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from Libya El-Amin, Whedonopolis. Your line is open.

Libya El-Amin: Whedonopolis.

Steven DeKnight: Oh, my old friend at Whedonopolis! How are you doing?

Libya El-Amin: My question is what was going through Ashur's head when he was going up that mountain to where - because he knows that he was being sent to his death, but I got the feeling that he thought some kind of way he was going to figure out how to get out of there. So I was...

Steven DeKnight: He was hopeful that he could talk his way out of it, and that's why he does the thing at the end about, I'll deliver your message, and tries to get out of there. So yes, I mean, he knew he was fucked, but you know, there was a hope that perhaps he could use the whole offer from Glaber situation to at least get him out of this one.

Libya El-Amin: I'm interested, was that part of why he didn't just kill Naevia initially like with the fight?

Steven DeKnight: Well, yes. I mean, the moment he kills Naevia, he's knows he's going to get it. So it's best not to do it quickly. Also, I don't think it's been - if Ashur has a chance to emotionally torture you, he will. He just cannot help himself. And the emotional torture here is he didn't give a shit about Naevia. His emotional torture was directed towards Crixus in this final fight, you know, to make - to have Crixus watch the woman that he loves get dismantled. He knows how much that pains a man that he hates.

Libya El-Amin: And my last question is as I was watching the season, Lucretia was usually very good with her schemes in season one and in the prequel. All her schemes seemed to work, but this season it was like she was daunted by kryptonite. Like, everything that she tried to do - like nothing - none of her plans worked until the very end, and I couldn't wrap my brain around the fact of why she didn't kill Ashur sooner, I guess.

Steven DeKnight: Well, killing Ashur is very tricky in the situation she's in. If she was still the domina of the house, she may have been able to work something out. But Ashur at this point , he's a made man. He is vital to Glaber. When he starts - when he turns the tables on her, he has become a man that Glaber needs. And for her to make any move on him is ridiculously dangerous and could go horribly awry. So I mean, that's the reason that she has to bide her time to take Ashur out and be very careful that it didn't blow back on her.

Libya El-Amin: Is that part of her insanity, I guess? I mean, I'm sorry. I guess that was my last question. I'm done.

Steven DeKnight: It's not so much insanity. At that point it's self-preservation. There's no easy way for her to kill Ashur and not have it point back to her. If she goes down to his cell, there's guards outside the cell, she's seen in his cell and then he ends up dead, she's - I mean, the finger only points one way. So she has no choice. And you'll see that 99% of their scenes are in Ashur's cell...

Libya El-Amin: Okay, thank you.

Steven DeKnight: ...by design.

Libya El-Amin: Thank you very much.

Steven DeKnight: You're welcome.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from Crystal Taylor, suite101.com. Your line is open.

Crystal Taylor: Hi, Steven. Good to talk to you.

Steven DeKnight: Hello.



Crystal Taylor: It sounds like you're going to be doing some major castings. I kind of wanted to ask a couple questions about that, like obviously when you first start a show, the - you as all of the running the show out here right from LA and stuff, you're involved in the casting of the major characters, but I wondered how much of the day-to-day casting you get involved in, of - you know, or is it all done, you know, onsite?

Steven DeKnight: No, we do a lot of casting in New Zealand, but there's a - as they say, there's an app for that. There's a Web site, since production now is a global affair. There's a Web site that links up for casting, so I see all the auditions, and my partners and I talk about all the casting, and it's all the casting. It's - if a guy walks on and has just one line, we all look at the choices and pick somebody.

Crystal Taylor: Oh, interesting. So are you like, linked by camera to when the actual audition is happening, or do you just watch the tape afterwards?

Steven DeKnight: We watch the tape. It's pretty much the same thing that I would do in LA if I'm not in casting. You know, before they had the system on the Internet, you would get tapes of the actors and you'd sort through them, but now you can just log on and go through them all on computer.

Crystal Taylor: Oh, okay, great. All right. Second question was the - now that you've written for these actors for quite a while and stuff, you always hear about how it's a collaboration and you know, you're giving them stuff to do. They come back and they interpret it and sometimes it surprises you, and then the writers, you know, write to that kind of strength if they like it. So I was just wondering if you had some examples of something that's surprised you in such a way that you incorporated it.

Steven DeKnight: That's a good question. It's interesting; on a show like this we usually are so deep into writing the season before we start that any kind of tinkering we do is in the season after. For example, right now we are - at ten episodes, we are finishing up the

break of episode seven, which means we'll be finished breaking episode eight before we start shooting this season.

So we want - I won't actually get dailies or cuts until we're practically done writing the whole thing. But thinking about things that we have seen, there are small things we incorporate, like Nick Tarabay is a perfect example. Early on in season one there was a scene where something terrible was happening, and Nick Tarabay who's playing Ashur was in the background eating almonds, which wasn't scripted that he was munching on a snack while he was watching this horrible thing happen.

So we saw that and immediately we said, all right, listen, Ashur should always be snacking on something when there's trouble brewing. It was a little character trait that Nick brought. And you know, moving forward in a show, once you have episodes cut together and you see what people are doing, I think even at a subconscious level we start writing to people's strengths, but mostly I'll be honest, on the writing side it's especially on this show with the language, it is so difficult to construct a story and write the dialogue. Often that's our only concern, and we just - we let the actors do what the actors do, and we know they'll bring something to it.

Crystal Taylor: Okay, that was very interesting. Thank you.

Steven DeKnight: You're welcome.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from Hunter Boone, Cumulus Media. Your line is open.

Hunter Boone: Hey, Steven. Now that we've left Capua and Spartacus' army will be - they're being forced to go up against Roman legions, what can we expect in terms of the scope of next season's battles and locations?

Steven DeKnight: Well, as you can imagine, it'll be shockingly even bigger. Since we've said goodbye to (Delutius). We've said goodbye to the city of Capua, the arena, you know, we've

finished up our run at the temple in the shadow of Vesuvius. So it will literally be entirely new locations and sets. And the war does take us all over the Republic. You know, it takes us from the Alps, to Campania, down to the boot of Italy right across from Sicilia. So we will be all over the map with some fantastic locations, of course all shot inside. But they should look really, really fantastic.

Hunter Boone: Great, now what can we expect from just the next season, like with the first episode, because in the season two, it was a pretty big bang in my opinion, especially with you know, traveling through a whorehouse and someone gets stabbed in the back of the neck. How are you going to like, try to top that again with season three?

Steven DeKnight: You know, the way I try to top it is not to worry about topping it, much like my answer to the last question. The stories are so difficult to construct. If we got caught up in worrying about topping something that came before, we'd just spin our wheels all the time. I can tell you the major difference starting out on this next season is that in each of the previous seasons, the heroes have really taken it on the chin.

They start off in a bad place and have to work their way out of it. This season it's a little bit different. This season we come in on the rebels and they've been doing very, very well, and Rome is now worried that this tiny little rebellion of slaves is growing into something that could be a major, major threat to the Republic. So the switch-up here is that it's the Romans who are in trouble when we open up the next season, and it's Spartacus who is on a very good run.

Hunter Boone: All right, and a last question here, you mentioned sort of the ambiguity as far as you know, what Caesar was doing, and you know, his sort of role in that sort of allows you to play some with Crassus, but as far as the - how much do you use the historical accounts to influence the personalities of the characters themselves?

Steven DeKnight: Quite a bit, quite a bit. And you know, sometimes of course we have to tweak that. One of the liberating things on the Spartacus side is that there is nothing known about

any of them and their characters. The fragments that are left from the third servile war tell very little about the emotional state or the relationships of Crixus, of Spartacus, of Gannicus, so you know, we were able to construct that.

Nowhere in the accounts was you know, did Crixus fall in love with a body slave, and there was nothing about, you know, Gannicus having an affair with Oenomaus's wife. A lot of the accounts are purely this battle was fought, and these were the strategies, and this is who won. So it really lacks that emotional level. When we get to Crassus and Caesar, it's very different. There's a - quite a bit of material written on them, their relationships, their character.

So with that, it's - there's a little less latitude, although I'm always interested in finding the things in there that may be suggested by history or can be extrapolated or can be created to give an extra dimension to the character that's not written on the page. Caesar was perhaps the most well-documented man in ancient Rome.

There's been so much written about him, and like I said, thankfully this is a period of time where the - it's a little sketchier, so we can definitely add our own thing to it. But and just a small detail this might throw (unintelligible), Caesar was famous for speaking about himself in the third person, which I'm curious about, you know, investigating. It might be a small character trait that we bring in based on history.

But I also love to just pepper in little bits of history that you know, the average viewer may not pick up on, but I just think it adds to the overall feel of authenticity of the period.

Hunter Boone: And last question, can we ask what is going to be the name of the next season, the subtitle?

Steven DeKnight: We are still discussing that. Doing each season with a subtitle I think was my best worst idea.

Hunter Boone: Yes, I've read that.

Steven DeKnight: Yes, and I'll tell you, it's tough. The only time it was ever easy was season one where we were at a meeting and I just threw out, you know, each season will be something different, like "Blood and Sand ". And everybody was like, "Oh, that sounds good." And it just stuck and there was no discussion. But from that point on, "Gods of the Arena" was a nightmare to pick. "Vengeance", we went around and around. I mean, for months we'd go round and round and round. So we're zeroing in on something that I think we all like, but we're still talking about it.

Hunter Boone: Well, sounds great. Well thanks so much, Steven.

Steven DeKnight: You're welcome. Thank you.

Hunter Boone: Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from Douglas Edlin, Dubbin's Take on Tech. Your line is open.

Douglas Edlin: Hi, Steven. Thanks for taking my questions today. So there's - this is kind of two-folded. Spartacus, to me, one of the greatest things about it has been it is a strong casting and show for women on television. You don't throw a nude body in there of a girl, even though sexuality is a big play in the show. It's realistic.

The women have their own dimensions, and with season three moving over with having Simon and Todd play Julius Caesar and Marcus, how is that going to affect how female characters are going to go? And I wanted - you've talked a lot about how they - how you're having to play - I mean, I love the fact that you brought out the teaser in some ways with the John McCain of his time being (unintelligible).

How are you going to form that, because you have one who wants to become a great general, and you have one a few things which has been kind of agreed upon about Caesar, is he really from a young age wanted to go to the higher power. And (unintelligible) Crassus was also a much richer man than Caesar at that time.

Steven DeKnight: Oh, much, much. Yes, that's a very interesting dynamic, and what I was curious about bringing about, bringing these two together at this time period, is the why of it. Why would Crassus want Caesar? And talking to my historical consultants, it became very clear that Crassus and Caesar are two parts of the puzzle that each of the men need. Crassus has the money, but he doesn't have the name.

He doesn't have that storied family name. He's not descended from a god as Caesar's ancestry traces back to. Caesar, on the other hand, has the Julian name. He has that upper-class desirable family name, but he's - he has no money. He - he's living at this time in you know, what's considered a very lower-class, working-class almost slum area of Rome when he's not abroad, which he is quite a bit.

So basically, these two come together because Crassus has the money but not the name and Caesar has the name but not the money, and together they think they can actually do something great. And historically, Crassus did in fact fund Caesar and help him out quite a bit financially. So they don't always see eye-to-eye, and historically, you know, they had a very rocky relationship. They weren't, you know, like tight brothers, so I definitely want to play with that too.

Douglas Edlin: So do you think this dynamic which could almost be its own story in itself, how is that going to affect the female characters? We see some (unintelligible) you're really keeping in two very powerful and for a lot of the audience at least somewhat main known characters which are male. To keep that strength with the female characters, with a lot of the killing that's just gone on...

Steven DeKnight: Yes, we're also bringing in three new female characters which I can't talk about, but we're bringing them in, and of course we will still be following and developing the Naevia story and we'll be bringing Saxa, the German warrior woman, up to a more prominent part. So I definitely don't want to lose sight of the female characters.

And also, you know, the trickiest thing on this show is when we kill off somebody is resisting bringing back a character that takes that place. We had this discussion moving into Vengeance, about you know, it would really be nice to have a Badiatus type character, a guy who talks like that and acts like that. My ultimate feeling was if you try to bring in a Badiatus substitute, the audience will smell that a mile away.

You know, you can't replace a character that really hits like that, and I feel the same way with the female characters. There was a lot of discussion going into this season about you know, we should really bring in two Roman women who, you know, are constantly maneuvering around each other. My feeling was, well that's Lucretia and Ilithyia. Let's not do that again. You know, that storyline worked out great. If we try to reproduce that, it'll just feel like a pale imitation.

So there are new female characters. They will not be the same type of characters. They will have different stories and different strengths and different weaknesses. But I definitely, definitely want to, you know - do not wipe out all the female characters. And it was a discussion we had that you know, we - having killed a lot of people in the finale, you know, half of them were important female characters, and we definitely want to bring more in, but of a very different type.

Douglas Edlin: I look forward to it, because really thought your portrayal of female characters has been very dynamic where it's very easy in this type of show to make them into very stereotypes off the bat, and in some ways even make the audience happy by doing that, so thank you for taking my question.

Steven DeKnight: You're very welcome. Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from Kenn Weeks, WormholeRiders News Agency. Your line is open.

Kenn Weeks: Hi, Steven, Kenn Weeks. WormholeRiders News Agency, San Francisco. My question was about new female characters, and you've answered that, that there'll be three new ones to be announced. What are you considering for new male characters coming up in season three of Spartacus?

Steven DeKnight: Right. Well, the main ones are of course Crassus and Caesar, and we have several others that are popping up. I can't give details because it would ruin what's going to happen, but some very interesting characters that Spartacus comes across, and also on the Roman side some very interesting characters. I can throw out one Roman side.

We will see Crassus' son Publius. He will be part of the story line. Historically, Publius was actually Crassus' stepson, since Crassus' brother, also named Publius, was - died, and Crassus married his brother's wife, which was very common at the time, not a love thing. It was to keep the money in the family and the holdings in the family.

For our story it became incredibly convoluted and difficult to explain the backstory without a, you know, two-page exposition piece. So we have simplified it, that it is Crassus' son Publius. And he will play a major role in this next season.

Kenn Weeks: As a follow-on to that, regarding both the female characters, the new ones, and the new male characters, have all the casting decisions been made or are you still looking for additional actors for Spartacus in season three?

Steven DeKnight: All of the major characters have been cast at this point. We had to, especially on the male side, we had to get everybody down to boot camp, which started this past week.



There's still a couple of minor characters and characters who don't show up until mid-season that we haven't cast yet, but all the major players we have locked in.

Kenn Weeks: Very good. Thank you very much for answering my questions. You're doing a great job. Keep it up.

Steven DeKnight: Well, thank you, and you're welcome.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from Kevin Skinner, Daily Blam. Your line is open.

Kevin Skinner: Hey, Steven, how's it going? First of all congratulations on making the craziest show on TV even crazier after Friday. It was fantastic.

Steven DeKnight: Thank you. Thank you very much.

Kevin Skinner: I'll jump right into this. Much of the series so far has been about Spartacus being driven by loss and revenge, and now that he's essentially lost two women in his life, on the other hand we have Crixus, who seems to be driven by love. Do you foresee those two characters clashing heads once again in the upcoming season?

Steven DeKnight: Well, historically, the rebels were constantly clashing and breaking apart. And one of the things that we really wanted to explore is why this happened. In the history it just says they fell apart. It doesn't tell you why they fell apart, so that's definitely a big part of this next season.

And you're absolutely right. Crixus is very much driven by love, and Spartacus with his loss and Spartacus at the end of Vengeance actually gained some bit of closure. He's now killed Badiatus and he's now killed Glaber, the two men that he really thinks are most responsible for his wife's death. Moving into the next season the question is, what drives him now? Yes, there's the sense that, you know, I don't want this to ever happen to another innocent person.

But the question does rise, is - does rise, how do you define victory? When is it enough? And this is something that will really haunt Spartacus through most of this season, is you know, what is the end point? Is it to overthrow Rome, and then what happens? Which goes into a deeper sense of war, and you know, when is a war over? And is it ever over for people like Spartacus?

Kevin Skinner: And then just as a follow-up to that, my last question, now that he has had his vengeance, and you've mentioned before that this is going to leave him a bit empty going forward, do you think that the fans' perception of the character will change to the point where they no longer view him as that much of a heroic figure when the lines become blurred?

Steven DeKnight: That's another very interesting question that we've discussed about this upcoming season, is again, historically people have a very romanticized vision of Spartacus and his rebels escaping and fighting for freedom, where in reality, if you read the history, and now of course the history was written by the Romans - but if you read the history, what they did is they escaped and they raped and pillaged and robbed their way through Italy, through the Republic, very brutally exacting their revenge.

And it's something we didn't want to shy away from, is this brutality and this idea of war crimes and how do you not become the enemy you're fighting. So it does get dirty; it does get very grey next season. And Spartacus of course is our moral center trying to hold things together, but he also completely understands why you would want to do this to the Romans, why you would want to make them suffer even more than you suffered. So it is a very, very dirty season. Everyone morally and ethically gets a little muddled in the next season.

Kevin Skinner: Awesome. Well thank you very much for your time, Steven. Take care.

Steven DeKnight: You're welcome. Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from Steve Aramo, the Morton Report. Your line is open.

Steve Aramo: Hi, Steven. It's a pleasure to speak with you today.

Steven DeKnight: Thank you.

Steve Aramo: I wanted to find out if you could perhaps tell us, what were some of the biggest writing as well as production challenges would you say originally getting Spartacus off the ground?

Steven DeKnight: Jesus. So every single one. You know, it's a story I've told before that you know, people ask me, were you always interested in Roman history; was it your passion project? And you know, I was just a gun for hire. The concept of doing Spartacus, like 300, all shot inside with green screen CGI backgrounds and kind of a heightened graphic novel aesthetic was sold to Starz by Rob Tapert, Sam Rami, and (Josh Donnin), before I was approached about the project, and then I came on to, you know, figure out what the actual story was.

But the challenges were just monumental. It really was one big experiment of can you do something like that, can you take the visual concepts and aesthetic that (Zach Snyder) so brilliantly pioneered in 300, and apply that to a television show where the time restrictions and the money restrictions are just massive? So it was really a learn-as-you-go compounded by - the problem compounded by the fact that we went straight to 13 episodes.

There was no pilot, so we didn't have time to go back and retool the pilot, rewrite the pilot, reshoot a lot of the pilot, the way you normally would. We had to, you know, a week later start shooting episode two. So that's also one of the reasons, if you go back to the beginning of the series and I've gone on record not being the greatest fan of the first episode. I think the writing is suspect.

You know, everything is just a little off, as we figured it out, and it took us a couple of episodes to really dial in the whole feel of the show. So yes, I mean, every single thing was a challenge, you know, from the costuming where everything had to be built for the show, to the sets, to the visual effects, especially on this show where literally every single thing you see on the screen was built specially for the show, the weapons, the furniture, everything.

There's nothing - you know, you can't go into a store and buy something off the rack for Spartacus. It's all hand-made and hand-crafted, and yes, the whole thing is a challenge.

Steve Aramo: And then as a follow-up question, just actually a very general one for you, and I hope I phrase it correctly, I wanted to find out, Steven, what would you say makes a career in this industry rewarding for you so far?

Steven DeKnight: That's an interesting question. You know, honestly, it's doing something that excites you, and doing something that when you see the finished product on the screen, you're just as enthralled and excited as if you had nothing to do with it, and you know, I've been very lucky in my career to work with some great people, Joss Whedon number one among them in my time on Buffy and Angel, which is thrilling in its own right, to work on something you're so excited about.

But once you get to the level of creating a show and working on a show, in that kind of excruciating detail, you really, really hope that it's a show you're excited to work on, and not a show you have to drag yourself, you know, to your computer every day to write, you know, for the paycheck. And that's the great thing about this job, is you know, it's - a lot of people will say it's not about the money, but it really isn't on this show.

It's just such a fantastic opportunity that I never, never in my life dreamed that I would be able to not only work on a show like Spartacus, but create it and executive produce it along with my partners, and just be involved in a show that just excites me every day.

And the other part of that equation is working on this show with Starz, where they give us absolute creative freedom, as evidenced by the season finale this year, where they - you know, if I was on network television, I guarantee you they wouldn't let me kill off all those main characters, and they certainly wouldn't have let me take a baby over a cliff.

So I feel like I'm just in this dreamlike position of being on a show that I love and having a network that is incredibly supportive and allows full creative control, which is so rare these days. Usually you're just micromanaged to death. But Starz just really gives us a lot of latitude.

Steve Aramo: Well, Steven, once again, thank you for your time and thanks for all your hard work on Spartacus. I'm looking forward to next season.

Steven DeKnight: Well thank you very much.

Steve Aramo: Take care.

Steven DeKnight: Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from (Amy Hipernowski), Gamer Live TV. Your line is open.

(Amy Hipernowski): Hi, Steven.

Steven DeKnight: Hello.

(Amy Hipernowski): I was just wondering as part of my Web site if you guys were interested in expanding Spartacus games to other consoles. I know personally I'd love to sling a sword around on the Wii and train to be a gladiator.

Steven DeKnight: You know, so would I. We're always talking about that, so hopefully one day it will happen. I would love to play a Spartacus game.

(Amy Hipernowski): Wonderful. And I know we had talked about it in the past, but are you ever interested in taking Spartacus, you know, onto the big screen, or for you is half the appeal of the show keeping it that it's only on television as you're creating this full-screen effect but on the small screen.

Steven DeKnight: Yes, you know, every now and then we'll have a discussion about a possible Spartacus movie. The tricky thing is I think it would have to be a spin-off movie, because the central concept of Spartacus and following the history, I wouldn't want to go off and tell a chunk of the show on the big screen and take that away from people who have been watching it as a series.

Now does that mean there couldn't be a spin-off within this world? Absolutely possible. You know, could you see a Gannicus movie about what happened to him when he was free? You never know. There's no plans at the moment, but I'd certainly entertain that, you know, time and schedule permitting.

(Amy Hipernowski): All right. Spectacular. Well, most of my other questions have been answered, so that's all for me right now. Thanks.

Steven DeKnight: All right, great. Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from Rosa Cordero, [accidentalsexiness.com](http://accidentalsexiness.com). Your line is open.

Rosa Cordero: Hi, again, Steven.

Steven DeKnight: Hello.

Rosa Cordero: One of my favorite things about the show is the relationship between Spartacus and Crixus, and now of course adding to the dynamic is Gannicus, so while they are on the same page right now, is there going to be, you know - is there going to be maybe like more tension between them, or - I can't imagine that such three strong guys are going to be able to just you know, flow perfectly through the - you know, through the next season.

Steven DeKnight: Yes, there is definitely going to be tension. Historically there was a lot of tension between these groups, particularly between Spartacus and Crixus, so that's something we've been discussing quite a bit into this season, is what happens between them, and also how do you have tension but not lose that concept of I love you as a brother.

I don't agree with you, but I love you as a brother - which I think is very important, because what I don't want to do is to regress back to season one where they just hated each other. I think that they've come too far for that and respect each other too much for that. But I - you know, there will be kind of an overall ideology of fallouts about what they're doing and why they're doing it and what they should do next.

Rosa Cordero: Okay, and lastly, what can you tell me - I know that Gannicus is meant to have a love interest in Saxa possibly next season. Could you tell me anything about that?

Steven DeKnight: It's possible. We're talking about it. I don't want to give too much away. You know, they seem like a good match, but you never know with Gannicus. Gannicus will often, you know, not go in the direction that you expect him to. So it's something we might explore. We're still in the early stages of really locking that one down, but yes, it might be interesting.

Rosa Cordero: Yes, so based on like the finale, like the camera angles, how it was kind of showing her and then showing him, and I just kind of felt like that was maybe like some kind of confirmation that that may be where we're going, so...

Steven DeKnight: I think she's definitely interested.

Rosa Cordero: Okay, that's great. Thank you again.

Steven DeKnight: You're welcome.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from Sheldon Wiebe, [eclipsemagazine.com](http://eclipsemagazine.com). Your line is open.

Sheldon Wiebe: Hey, Steven. Congratulations on a genuinely mind-boggling season.

Steven DeKnight: Thank you very much.

Sheldon Wiebe: Now season two began with some jaw-dropping moments and got more and more off the track with every episode, culminating in Friday's craziness. So I was wondering, when you were breaking season two, how did you decide which new characters you were bringing in, history not necessarily being foremost in the development I'm thinking, but you know, how did you decide who you were bringing in and what their arcs would be?

Steven DeKnight: Yes, you know, a lot of that is determined by the first two weeks of any season, we spend just talking about the overview of the story and where we want to go, and what we want to do with the season, and then we figure out, okay, what do we need. For instance, with the brother sister of Seppius and Seppia, I knew I needed conflict for Glaber.



I needed someone that wouldn't just roll over and say okay, since as a trader of Rome, he pretty much has the power to tell anybody what to do. That's why we had Seppius was being protected and supported by Berinias, the other trader, so Glaber couldn't just roll right over him, for political reasons. And I wanted that thorn in his side.

And with his sister, Seppia, I wanted you know, a love interest for Glaber that would help drive a further wedge between Glaber and Ilithyia. So that really - those two developed out of that need. And other minor characters that did pop up, like Lucius, who was at the temple in the shadow of Vesuvius when the rebels showed up.

This was based on - he is not an exact historical character, but there are accounts that free Romans did help Spartacus because they felt as disenfranchised by the patricians in Rome running the government as the slaves did, and we also got to bring in the cleansing that Sulla did to seize lands when he seized the Republic and made it a dictatorship.

So that character came out of wanting to tip the hat at history and also a necessity of having that person that had knowledge that could help the rebels. So really it's kind of a combination of what do we need story-wise, what do we need emotionally, and how can we link in actual history?

Sheldon Wiebe: Sounds like a delicate balance.

Steven DeKnight: It always is.

Sheldon Wiebe: Terrific. All my other questions have been answered already, so thank you very much.

Steven DeKnight: You're very welcome. Thank you.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from Han Nguyen, [tvguide.com](http://tvguide.com). Your line is open.

Han Nguyen: Hi, Steven.

Steven DeKnight: Hello.

Han Nguyen: I wanted to say that I really love the relationship between Agron and Nasir this season...

Steven DeKnight: Great.

Han Nguyen: ...and wanted to see what were the discussions about that, and what more will we possibly see of them in the new season?

Steven DeKnight: So you'll definitely see them in the new season. You know, I want to further the relationship, explore the relationship. This season, because there was so much going on this season, you really only got, you know, what I like to say is just a hint of their relationship, which ultimately I think may have worked out to my favor, because just the little bit they had together, they had such great, charming onscreen chemistry, and it just - you know, I don't think you can use the word adorable - they were just adorable together.

I mean, Agron, who's just a big "I want to kill everyone in my path" suddenly becomes a bit of a puppy dog around Nasir. And it gave us a chance to do something we hadn't had an opportunity to do with our same-sex couples in the past and actually show the relationship from the beginning and develop it slowly. So that would - that I thought was just a fantastic opportunity.

Now we did have many discussions early on about a same-sex couple. And there was a discussion about, you know, should it - should we do something different and make it two women? And Rob Tapert and I, in a stunning male turnaround, both of our

feelings was, that just feels like it's kind of easy and pandering, that it's - doing that would be very easily accepted by the men watching the show.

And you know, it had a certain - just a quality to it that I'm absolutely not opposed to showing a same-sex relationship between two women, and that is something we may explore in the next season. But it seemed like for this time in our society, it was an easy way out.

Han Nguyen: Yes.

Steven DeKnight: And we didn't want to take the easy way out.

Han Nguyen: Yes, how soon did you guys decide that they would also switch clothes? Is that...?

Steven DeKnight: You know, I wish I could take credit for that brilliant, brilliant idea. That was something actually thrown out by the wardrobe department...

Han Nguyen: Great.

Steven DeKnight: ...for that episode, and I thought it was a great, great addition. And it just really goes to show that, you know, on a show like this, it's - everybody has such great input and there are all these little details that - you know, like the switching of the clothes, the thing I loved about that is we never call attention to it since it's not actually in the script. So there's never - we never show it; we never explain it; it just happens.

Han Nguyen: Yes.

Steven DeKnight: And the audience picks up on it, which is great.

Han Nguyen: And also, I must applaud you on Sedullus' death, the face-off where he looks like...

Steven DeKnight: The face-off, yes.

Han Nguyen: He looks like a reverse Teletubby in a way, and I think that's why - that's where some of the confusion comes in, because you're - the show has been very graphic about certain deaths and blood, and so that's why some people are confused about whether Lucretia and Ilithyia are really dead. Is there a reason why you decided those deaths wouldn't be as on-screen bloody? There's a lot of off-screen going on, or glassy eyes, but no like, here's her womb, and whatever.

Steven DeKnight: Yes. You know, it was all a matter of degrees, of - you know, with Ilithyia and Lucretia, we felt like going - like seeing the knife slice into Ilithyia was a bit too much of a horror show for what we wanted to convey between the two. We thought leaving that to the audience imagination was better. And her going over the cliff, we had a brief discussion. Do we show her splatting? Like (unintelligible)?

We all just felt, no, that's - you know, that's just not the moment. The moment with her going over the cliff is much more of a - we wanted a beautiful, operatic send-off, not a - not something that was gory, and with Ilithyia, you know, Ilithyia's the one that, we all knew she was dead, and we thought she looked dead.

Han Nguyen: Right.

Steven DeKnight: And then when reviewers - I started doing early interviews and people were asking me, well, she's not dead, right? She's just passed out. I was like, but, she's got her eyes open! She looks dead! So she was dead, but that's the one death that you know, I wish I could have foreseen the confusion. And I would have gone back and made that final moment with her a little bit bloodier.

Han Nguyen: Right.

Steven DeKnight: But yes, I mean, with those deaths - sometimes with deaths we just wanted it to be more beautiful and dreamlike, and with those two it just felt like that moment should be that kind of thing. But with Sedullus, which is another great addition, I believe in the script he just gets his head cut off.

Han Nguyen: Right.

Steven DeKnight: And then as we were talking about the show, the visual effects department and the stunt department came up with, you know, cutting his face off, which turned out to be, you know, just brilliant. And it's one of those moments that people will, you know, talk about all season. Like, "Yes, I just can't believe they cut that guy's face off!"

But it also really worked for the moment, because in that episode is the moment where Spartacus stops trying to make everybody happy and lays down the law and says, "You will do it my way or I will murder you." And nothing says that better than, you know, cutting off the face of a 7-foot-tall giant.

Han Nguyen: And one more. What's the most outraged reaction have you had to a character's death?

Steven DeKnight: Well, so far, Varro.

Han Nguyen: Really. Oh, yes.

Steven DeKnight: I mean, everybody's just bananas over Varro. People still - I still get angry...

Han Nguyen: It was rough. It was rough.

Steven DeKnight: ...angry messages about Varro. You know, that of course - but to me, I mean, Varro's death still stands as I think one of the best ends to a character on the show, because it

had such an emotional impact, and such a twist, and it was so heart-breaking. I thought it may come as no surprise that I've gotten some angry messages about Lucy, about killing off Lucretia.

Han Nguyen: Right.

Steven DeKnight: I've gotten more than a few, "You're an idiot. I'll never watch this show again." And there was also a lot of discussion about Lucretia, and you know, my plan was to take her over the cliff with the baby, but there was discussion as we got closer to that, you know, some worry since we were killing off so many characters and half of them were female, is that should she just take the baby and you know, am-scray and pop up next season.

But my feeling was very strongly that if we brought her back next season it would be a huge disappointment because she has nothing to do with the story, and just to pop in on her with a baby, I think does the character a great, great disservice, as opposed to you know, a grand send-off where Mad Lucretia takes the baby over a cliff, because she thinks she's taking it to her husband, you know, that's the way for a character to go out.

And I always say on this show, you know, more than likely, 99% of the time, if you've got to be killed off on a show, Spartacus is the way to go, because you will get a spectacular finale.

Han Nguyen: Okay, awesome. Thank you so much. I really enjoyed it.

Steven DeKnight: Thank you very much.

Coordinator: Our next question comes from (Steve Sinu) calling from Resources and Spinoff Online. Your line is open.

(Steve Sinu): Hey, Steven, congratulations on a very successful season, and the renewal for season three. That's great.

Steven DeKnight: Thank you very much. Thank you.

(Steve Sinu): No problem. You know, you mentioned the writers are almost done with episode seven of the new season, and you know, as a creator of the show, how do you feel the series has evolved from your original conception with Blood and Sand.

Steven DeKnight: Well, so far so good. You know, it's been moving along, you know, as I had hoped. Obviously minus the unfortunate passing of Andy Whitfield, which you know, still shadows our hearts, but the show, you know, had always been intended to spend that first year in the Ludus, and then actually tackle the third servile war, so this past season really was our transition period into the big war years.

So, so far it's been going very well. And I think the thing I'm happiest about is that, you know, originally the show was sold as an action show, and there's plenty of action, but what I really wanted to explore is the dramatic side, and you know, and really bring to it something that I think is very important, and every season is really about love. It's - love is so engrained to the story. You know, Spartacus' love for his wife, and Crixus' and Naevia's love for each other - it's - this past season, Lucretia's love for her husband.

It's all about love, at the end of the day, and that's what really drives everyone. And going into the next season, it'll be the same thing. It's very, very deeply about love, with Spartacus being the odd man out at this point, Spartacus feeling like he can't love anyone, because if he does it's the kiss of death. He is cursed that anyone that he cares about will more than likely be horribly murdered.

(Steve Sinu): And that's obviously a tough thing for him to deal with, for anybody to deal with.

Steven DeKnight: Yes.

(Steve Sinu): One of the other things I wanted to ask you about was, you mentioned way back in the beginning of the call that it was a lot of fun to play with John Hannah's character when you did Gods of the Arena, to be able to bring him back, and you mentioned that maybe a movie was in the works for a prequel sort of a thing. But the six-episode spin-off - is this something that you think is in the cards for the future to maybe bring some of these actors back and play with their characters a little bit more?

Steven DeKnight: You never know. You know, I'll never say never. I'm sure it all - you know, once - the further we move forward, the harder it is to do just with everybody's schedules, but you know, it's a world that I would definitely revisit. You know, there are still time periods with Badiatus and Lucretia.

There's obviously the most obvious time period to revisit would be those years that Gannicus was a free man and what he did, not to mention the fact that, you know, we just love working with Dustin Clair. We think he does such a fantastic job. So there's always opportunity to revisit the world, to spin-off the world. There's also - there's a ton of other things going on in the Republic at the time, so yes.

You never know. You never know, and we always joke that, you know, from Gods of the Arena, we have young Vedius that we sent off into the world that was Tullius' apprentice, that Badiatus and Sullonius screwed over and forced out of Capua. So we're always joking, you know, about - or Vedius popping up again or seeing him in another storyline. So yes, the possibility is always there.

(Steve Sinu): Well, awesome. Congratulations again on a successful season, and I look forward to season three.

Steven DeKnight: Great, thank you.



Coordinator: At this time we are out of time for questions. Back to you, Laila.

Laila Mahmud: Hello. I would like to thank you all for joining us for today's call with Steven. Thank you so much, Steven, as well. Just a reminder to all the participants that you will be emailed a transcript as well as a listen-in replay number of this call.

Steven DeKnight: Great. Thank you.

Laila Mahmud: Thank you all. Have a good day.

Coordinator: This concludes today's conference call. Thank you for participating. You may disconnect at this time.

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