



Jaime Murray Dons Her Goddess Garb for the Arena

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“As an actor, you have to be able to play and keep the creativity of a child,” says Jaime Murray, reflecting on her decision to leave the London School of Economics to study acting at the Drama Centre London. “I was studying philosophy and psychology and I think that, academically, these subjects are as close to acting as you can get. The enjoyment that comes from performing and being creative in a childlike way just drew me into acting. I think we’re all really just big children, aren’t we?”

Born in Essex, the sultry British actor became well known in the United Kingdom with her starring role on “Hustle” (2004-2007), the BBC’s popular drama series that followed a team of scheming grifters specializing in long-term cons that result in big payoffs. When “Hustle,” in its third season, was relocated to Los Angeles, Murray decided that “coming from mid-winter freezing

in London to the sun always shining and great craft services” was a situation she could get used to, and filmed the CBS pilot, “Demons” (2007). Though the pilot never took off, it kept her in town long enough to secure a wildly impressive turn on season two of Showtime’s Michael C. Hall-starring “Dexter,” playing Dexter Morgan’s sociopathic Narcotics Anonymous sponsor/girlfriend who’s prone to dark behaviors and fire starting. “I typically over-prepare for an audition and used to very much be a perfectionist. When I read for ‘Dexter,’ I was in a panic because they gave me five pages of dialogue and I only had 20 minutes to prepare. I almost refused to do the audition! What I’ve learned is that striving for perfection is the polar opposite of creativity. The more you strive to be perfect, the less creative you are. It’s usually the mistakes that artists make when they are being creative that end up being the happy accidents that make their work brilliant.”

Miss Murray’s riveting performance on “Dexter” attracted enough highly charged attention to keep her momentum going strong in Hollywood. With stints on the CW’s “Valentine” (2008-2009) and SyFy’s “Warehouse 13” (2010) to her credit, she can now be seen — alongside Lucy Lawless and John Hannah — portraying Gaia, a bold and brazen seductress amid a whirlwind of sex, bloodshed, and monstrous gladiators enmeshed in struggles for glory on “Spartacus: Gods of the Arena,” a Starz original miniseries that serves as a prequel to last year’s “Spartacus: Blood and Sand.” “It’s such a luscious and visually rich show. Just great escapism. My character behaves in a way that can be perceived as morally wrong. She’s openly carnal, sensual, and greedy. She’s certainly not even pretending to be good. But I do have compassion for her. She’s alone in the world in a time when women had no power, and she is a survivor. She uses her charm, vices, and sexuality to her advantage because she has nothing else. And she is unapologetic about all of it, which is part of what makes her powerful.” Elegant and soft-spoken, Jaime Murray is a beautiful artist with a beautiful gift: an exquisite ability to make the damaged characters she inhabits nearly impossible to forget. “I’m very lucky to have these interesting creatures to play. I don’t see any of them as good or bad. I see them as flawed. Beautifully flawed. As an actor, I have to get to the root of what is making them misbehave — their fear,

their insecurity. If I'm going to play extreme characters who do extreme things, I need to find the place in them that is the source of their behavior. I like playing screwed-up adults. It's definitely a buzz. But I have to have love for them and an understanding that there is a child within the character that is making them misbehave, and who can't love a child?" ▼

"Spartacus: Gods of the Arena" premieres January 21 at 10PM on Starz.