

exclusive

Outlander Prequel *Blood of My Blood* Unveils Two More Epic Love Stories

As the original series nears its final season, Starz reveals a new show about the parents of Caitriona Balfe and Sam Heughan's characters. Here, the actors who play her mother and his father talk for the first time about their roles—and filming steamy, *Outlander*-esque sex scenes.



By

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Jamie Roy and Harriet Slater in *Outlander: Blood of My Blood*. Courtesy of STARZ/Victoria Will

It was just another day in the [Outlander](#) casting office when a young Scot named **Jamie Roy** walked through the door. He was auditioning for the rather unremarkable role of Militia Man Number Two on the hit Starz series' seventh season. The part got cut prior to final casting. So Roy tried out for another character a few months later, but didn't book the gig. "I was really gutted because I thought this was going to be my break," Roy tells *Vanity Fair*.

But the *Outlander* producers had far bigger plans for Roy. They were quietly developing *Outlander: Blood of My Blood*, a prequel about the parents of [Caitriona Balfe](#)'s Claire Beauchamp—a World War II nurse transported back to mid-18th-century Scotland—and [Sam Heughan](#)'s Jamie Fraser, the Highlander she falls for after [traveling through time](#). As soon as they met Roy, the resemblance was clear: "We were like, 'God, that guy looks a lot like Sam Heughan. That's so crazy. Oh, do we save him [for the prequel]? But why are we saving him for something that we don't even know is going to go?'" says executive producer **Maril Davis**, who has been on *Outlander* since its 2014 debut. "I would've felt bad if the prequel hadn't come. But we did decide to save him."

So, in what he calls "a wee bit" of an upgrade, Roy graduated from unnamed soldier to leading man. He stars on *Blood of My Blood* as Brian Fraser, Jamie's future father—who, like his son, has no interest in

courting until he meets the right woman: Ellen Mackenzie (*Pennyworth*'s **Harriet Slater**), the headstrong eldest daughter of a rival clan. Although pursued by many a suitor, Ellen is too busy grieving her father (**Peter Mullan**) and navigating a *Succession*-esque battle between her brothers Colum (**Seamus McLean Ross**) and Dougal (**Sam Retford**) to contemplate marriage. But Ellen's familial loyalty is tested by her immediate attraction to Brian.



Sadhbh Malin, Sam Retford, Harriet Slater, and Séamus McLean Ross in *Outlander: Blood of My Blood*.

Courtesy of STARZ/Victoria Will

Centuries later, Claire Beauchamp's parents, Henry (**Jeremy Irvine**, who played a young **Pierce Brosnan** in *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*) and Julia Moriston (*Star Wars* and *Mission: Impossible* alum **Hermione Corfield**) are facing their own set of odds. While fighting on the frontlines during World War I, Henry sends a letter from the battlefield that finds its way to Julia, who covertly responds to the

correspondence while working at a postal censorship office. Though separated by thousands of miles, their love blooms.



Jeremy Irvine in *Outlander: Blood of My Blood*. Courtesy of STARZ/Victoria Will



Hermione Corfield in *Outlander: Blood of My Blood*. Courtesy of STARZ/Victoria Will

Premiering August 8 on Starz, *Outlander: Blood of My Blood* retains much of the original show's creative team, including executive producers Davis and **Ronald D. Moore**, and showrunner **Matthew B. Roberts**. **Diana Gabaldon**, author of the books that spawned the initial show, is also involved as a writer.

But the new series isn't inspired by any novels—which Davis sees as an opportunity. “With prequels, the challenge is you know exactly where you're ending. But we have a lot of freedom in figuring out how to get there,” she says. “We don't have a book series on this one, so we're definitely not going to have that debate necessarily of, ‘Oh, this was in the book this way, but the show's doing it a different way.’ But sometimes it's nice to have the blueprint.”

Another hurdle: The original *Outlander* isn't over yet. The sweeping period romance has run for seven seasons, with an eighth and final chapter still to come. Viewers don't need to be totally caught up with its parent series to appreciate *Blood of My Blood*, but Easter eggs abound for those who are in the loop.

See, for instance, the character of Murtagh Fitzgibbons Fraser, played on the original series by **Duncan LaCroix**. Here, he's Brian's best friend, who once harbored an unrequited crush on Ellen. On *Blood of My Blood*, he's jolly and upbeat—a big change for those who know that he'll

descend into darkness by the time *Outlander* unfolds. “Murtagh became the way he was because something happened to make him closed down, very cynical,” says Davis. “That was why it was so exciting when we cast **Rory [Alexander]**, because he has such a twinkle in his eye. Like, ‘Oh, it’s fresh-faced Murtagh.’ It’s not-had-his-heart-broken, full-of-optimism Murtagh. And we get the ‘fun,’ in quotes, of seeing how he got that way.”



Rory Alexander and Jamie Roy in *Outlander: Blood of My Blood*. Courtesy of STARZ/Victoria Will



Jamie Roy and Rory Alexander in *Outlander: Blood of My Blood*. Courtesy of STARZ/Victoria Will

There is no official release date for the final season of *Outlander*, nor do we know yet how its 10-episode prequel might be merged into the first show's time-traveling plot. "I don't have a lot of say in when these things air. I'm sure some fans wish the mothership would finish before [the new series]," says Davis. "But the last season of *Outlander*

wouldn't have been ready to launch this early. There will be a lot of sadness with it ending. To have something else that will be completely different, but still scratch an *Outlander* itch, is helpful. Also, selfishly, I want to celebrate the end of *Outlander* on its own—and the longer we go without airing, the more it stays alive for me.”

At first, Davis assumed a potential prequel series would center solely on Jamie's parents. But showrunner Matthew B. Roberts wanted to integrate Claire's parents—who, as *Outlander* viewers and readers know, will get in a fateful car accident while on holiday in the Scottish Highlands when their daughter is only a young girl. Following parallel love stories made perfect sense to Davis. “*Outlander* isn't just about Jamie—it's about Jamie *and* Claire.”

Dividing the narrative between two couples has proved equal parts liberating and challenging. “You're not killing your actors as much as we probably killed Caitriona and Sam in the first seasons,” Davis tells *VF*. “But on the other hand, it's more difficult because you want to make sure both stories are unique. I feel like we've succeeded in doing that. They're both very, very passionate love stories, but in a completely different way.”



Jeremy Irvine and Hermione Corfield in *Outlander: Blood of My Blood*. Courtesy of STARZ/Victoria Will

Like her costar, Hermione Corfield auditioned for a role on *Outlander* years before she was tapped to play Claire’s mother, Julia. “We’ve used a lot of crew members on both *Outlander* and *BOB*, and a lot of people did double takes whenever Hermione or Jamie would step on set because they did look so much like their predecessors,” says Davis. The typically blonde Corfield had never noticed a likeness to Balfe until she dyed her hair dark. “That’s when people started to go, ‘Oh wow, that is actually quite similar,’” Corfield says. “I’ve had a few people say we have the same mannerisms. I’m deeply flattered.”

Little is known about Julia and Henry in the *Outlander* universe, which was freeing for Corfield. “She has similarities to Claire, but her own personality and desires and dreams,” says the British actor. “London’s

being bombed every day, and you don't know what's going to happen. She's lost her parents in a similar way to Claire. So she's a fiercely independent woman. There is a resilience and a need for survival that I found really interesting. She has to become harder in that harsh reality....I came to understand what she was capable of.”

There is a top-secret twist to Claire and Henry's love story, but it's safe to say that much of their courtship is a long-distance one—which makes any scene with Corfield and Jeremy Irvine in the same room feel utterly electric. “When they are separated, the audience hopefully remembers that palpable attraction and that fun and joy,” she says—“why they long for each other to this degree.”

Corfield and Irvine met on a 2016 film, remaining friends until they were cast as love interests nearly a decade later. “We make each other laugh a lot. I would describe it as a sibling-y relationship where we're quite rude to each other,” she says. “So there's already that chemistry. Knowing each other made all of the intimate stuff so easy and straightforward and comfortable, which is all you can really ask for.”



Jeremy Irvine and Hermione Corfield in *Outlander: Blood of My Blood*. Courtesy of STARZ/Victoria Will



Jeremy Irvine and Hermione Corfield in *Outlander: Blood of My Blood*. Courtesy of STARZ/Victoria Will

Joining the world of *Outlander*, a franchise famous for its steamy, kilt-ripping love scenes, requires leads to get both emotionally and

literally naked. Jamie Roy credits both his leading lady and the show's [intimacy coordinator](#), **Vanessa Coffey**, with fostering a safe space around the show's sex scenes. "I trust Harriet with everything. And when you have that trust, you can let your guard down and be vulnerable," he says. "It was definitely an experience, wearing all the intimacy stuff, like [the pouches](#) and everything. But once you've done a few takes, it does feel normal."

Roy still remembers his meet-cute with Slater. "We had a chemistry read in the most awkward of situations. It was on a bank holiday in Scotland. Everybody was off"—even series director **Jamie Payne**, who Zoomed in to watch the actors read lines in a largely vacant studio. "Beforehand, I'd met with some actors that were fantastic, but I couldn't find that spark for any of them. I thought I was doing something wrong," says Roy. Then Slater entered the picture. "When I met her, something shifted. I was like, 'Oh, *this* is what I've been missing.' It was the only time that I'd ever read that scene the way that I did, and it was really special. I remember getting to the taxi after, and I text casting: 'That's the one, right?'"



Jamie Roy and Harriet Slater in *Outlander: Blood of My Blood*. Courtesy of STARZ/Victoria Will

When Roy got his third shot at booking an *Outlander* show, he tried to keep Sam Heughan's voice out of his head. "My gut was to stay away from it and just do my own thing. Because when I got the audition, there was something about it that just spoke to me," he says. "I remember thinking to myself, This is you in a nutshell. Then after the fact, Jamie Payne, the director of the first few episodes, said that Sam and I had so many similarities in the way that we were as people. So when people watch it, they'll think, 'Oh yeah, he's picked that up from Sam,' or whatever. But that's just a happy coincidence." Here are a few more coincidences: Roy's actual middle name is Brian. And, strangely enough, "Jamie Roy" is a pseudonym that Jamie Fraser uses on *Outlander*.

At a certain point, even Roy got wary of all the comparisons. That changed when he and Heughan met for coffee midway through filming *Outlander: Blood of My Blood*. “We just clicked—talked about work for, I don’t know, five, ten minutes, and then started chatting about random stuff just as two bros would do,” says Roy. “And he’s still being so supportive to this day. Any time anything’s released, artwork or posters or trailers, he’s always one of the first people to text me: ‘Dude, it looks so cool. Congrats. Can’t wait to see it.’ And that means a lot.” Caitriona Balfe and Hermione Corfield also met for drinks while shooting their respective shows in Glasgow.



Jamie Roy in *Outlander: Blood of My Blood*. Courtesy of STARZ/Victoria Will



Harriet Slater in *Outlander: Blood of My Blood*. Courtesy of STARZ/Victoria Will

As Roy prepares for his life to change, he's happy to share the pressures of leading a beloved franchise. "We all have four very distinct personalities. I like to think of it as a little circle: Each of us is a quadrant, and we fit together perfectly," he says. "So there's no butting heads. I always say the best things in life are the best until they're shared, and then they're even better."

How much better could things be, really? "I was born and raised in Scotland, and I moved to America to make it. Then you move back for your big break—and you're living five minutes away from where you went to school," Roy says with a shake of his head. "There was something so poetic about that. It was like a full-circle moment of the child going away to become a man, and coming back with all the lessons he's learned. Whether I'm a man, or still a little boy, I don't know." It

seems *Outlander* has taught him something about the elasticity of time, an idea central to the franchise's characters—past, present, and future.