



“The Anglo-Saxons were just like us, only confronted with very different dangers”: behind the scenes of The Last Kingdom with Dane Ubba actor Rune Temte the page title, on all but the homepage

The second episode of the eagerly anticipated Anglo-Saxon drama series The Last Kingdom airs on BBC Two tonight. Here, Norwegian actor Rune Temte, who plays Viking warlord, Dane Ubba, talks to History Extra about face tattoos, bringing history alive, and acting alongside an enormous horse...

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Rune Temte plays Viking warlord Dane Ubba in *The Last Kingdom*. (BBC/Carnival Films/Joss Barratt)

Q: In *The Last Kingdom* you play Viking warlord, Ubba. What can you tell us about him?

A: Ubba is the most senior ranking Viking warrior. He likes to fight, drink, and enjoys life. He's brought his fleet of ships to invade Saxon lands.

Q: What can we expect to see from Ubba?

A: Ubba is a person of flesh and blood. He's unpredictable, powerful, and a bit bonkers. He is the new villain in town! He's got a dry sense of humour – there are some really funny moments in the series – but at the same time he's very straight-to-the-point: either you live or you die.

Ubba relies on his sorcerer, Storri [played by Henning Valin] to make all his decisions, which makes him really unpredictable. Ubba only takes his orders from the gods.

Q: How did you prepare for the role?

A: I knew this was going to be a physical role, especially with Ubba being such a fearsome warrior, but I am fortunate enough to have two great friends in Norway who are part of a Viking re-enactment

society and who run a training camp in Buskerud (Norway) called The Academy of Viking Martial Arts. They gave me weapons training and taught me to wrestle.

Once on location in Budapest, all the cast received basic stunt training and learnt to horse ride.



(BBC/Carnival Films/Kata Vermes)

Q: Did you have much knowledge of the Anglo-Saxons before taking on this role, and if so, what about them interests you?

A: I had very little knowledge about this time in history, but I have always been interested in history so I was very keen to dig into the facts and myths. I've learnt so much through being involved with the series.

There were always really interesting debates on-set about what they would have all looked like, how they'd have fought, what fabrics they would have worn, what colours would have been available to dye fabrics, etc.

The make-up designer wanted the Vikings to have facial tattoos, which led to lots of discussions about how many tattoos they would have actually had. Apparently, Vikings in Russia had a lot of tattoos and would design them using the rune alphabet. The team designed a tattoo for my character that combined a dragon and a snake to represent strength and fear.

Q: How would you describe *The Last Kingdom*? What can viewers expect?

A: *The Last Kingdom* is a historical drama with a very contemporary look. Even though the story is set so long ago, I think the audience will be able to engage with these characters and understand their journeys. These characters feel like real people, like us, but just confronted with very different dangers and struggles to survive.

I would say that *The Last Kingdom* is engaging on all levels and is full of adventures. There is also a lot of humour when you'll least expect it.



Q: The series is highly anticipated by viewers and historians alike – why do you think *The Last Kingdom* is so exciting?

A: *The Last Kingdom* brings history alive. There isn't much surviving material from that time to lean on, so it's been a case of having this huge puzzle to put together of what we know about the period, but then having the great task of filling in the gaps with some imagination. I hope that we've created something believable; that's the ultimate goal and measure of success for any art experience, I suppose.

Q: What has been your series highlight?

A: I have had so many highlights on this project – working with the incredible crew and cast out in Hungary; working with legends like Rutger Hauer, Jason Flemyng, and of course our producer, Chrissy Skinn,s who oversaw this production literally 24 hours a day. But most of all, getting to know the world's greatest (and biggest) horse, Flossy. She was amazing. She was so tall that I had to use a ladder to get into the saddle –and I'm 6ft 3!