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Claire (Caitriona Balfe) and Jamie (Sam Heughan) set out to begin again.



SEASON FOUR

# Brave New World

TOGETHER AT LAST, CLAIRE AND JAMIE BUILD THEIR HOME  
IN THE FRONTIERS OF AMERICA—BUT FRESH TRIALS,  
FOES AND INJUSTICES AWAIT. *By Mandi Bierly*

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**WHEN WE LAST SAW OUTLANDER'S LEADING** lovers, Claire (Caitriona Balfe) and Jamie (Sam Heughan) had just washed up on the shores of Georgia. For any fan who fears that the Frasers' settling in Colonial America will provide less drama than the couple's on-the-run high-seas adventures of seasons past, producers have a message: You really needn't bother.

"If you're a Fraser, you'll be beset by many challenges no matter where you are," executive producer Toni Graphia promises. "What appears to be, on the surface, a quiet life is going to be as turbulent and [full of] as much upheaval and danger and dilemmas as ever."

That's because in season 4, which begins Nov. 4 on Starz, the Frasers are trying to make a home in North Carolina in 1767—a time when the nation is being born as "America the beautiful and not so beautiful," as the show's writers like to say.

"Everything was sort of unsettled, not just the land but the people, the governmental structures, the society itself, the culture—it's all in this ferment, and they just come wash ashore as these unexpected immigrants," says showrunner Ronald D. Moore. "Their coming to America is very much the classic story of people searching for a new start, a new life, and the struggles for that: What price are they willing to pay for it? What price are they not willing to pay for it? What are the realities of settling in this land at this time? What does that home mean to each of them? And how do they grapple with the fallout of all the things that have been trailing them all these years?"



▲ Cherokee healer Adawehi (Tantoo Cardinal) and Claire find common ground as new neighbors.

While Jamie and Claire are technically Brits in a British colony—which means showing loyalty to the royal governor of North Carolina could help secure the land for Jamie to finally be a laird—Claire knows that would place them on the losing side of another impending battle. "I think most Americans don't really know the story of what happened in the Carolinas in the days leading up to the American Revolution. I certainly didn't know too much about it," Moore says, referring to the Regulators, colonists who resisted against corrupt tax collectors. "Most of our pop history is centered on all that's happening much further north. However, down in the Carolinas there was conflict that was brewing, which is why it became all 13 colonies [that] ultimately decided to rebel. So it's

interesting how our characters are swept into a lesser-known part of the story."

Even more interesting is how Claire and Highlander Jamie, both now outlanders in the wilderness of the American frontier, will relate to the Native American tribes they collide with in the backcountry. "Certainly the Native American characters in this book [Diana Gabaldon's *Drums of Autumn*, upon which season 4 is based] are being made to feel like strangers in their own land," executive producer Maril Davis says. "And so there are actually quite a few parallels between the Jamie and Claire story and the Native American story: Jamie was thrown out of Scotland, and his people's land was taken away, all the hardships that he went through. He's come to this new country, and he's seeing a lot of



“Their coming to America is very much the classic story of people searching for a new start, a new life, and the struggles for that”

—RONALD D. MOORE



▲ Lord John Grey (David Berry) makes a surprise return.

◀ Far left: pirate Stephen Bonnet (*Downton Abbey*'s Ed Speleers) begins to earn his title as the season's Big Bad. Left: Jamie and his aunt Jocasta (Maria Doyle Kennedy).

the same things happening to the indigenous people.”

Executive producer Matthew B. Roberts, who took a road trip through the Blue Ridge Mountains to hike the terrain and make sure Scotland could double for North Carolina (with the occasional help of CGI), sat down with the chief of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation and spoke with a museum curator who by then had become one of the show’s consultants. “It was fascinating how even their dress, the way they drape things, looked very much like the kilts and the plates that the Highlanders wore,” Roberts say. “How there are clans within the tribes, how they respect the land.”

In short: Roberts could see why so many Scots landed in North Carolina and made homes there. In *Outlander*’s world, that includes Jamie’s wily aunt Jocasta (*Orphan Black*’s Maria Doyle Kennedy), the youngest MacKenzie sister, who grew up with Jamie’s mother, Ellen, and uncles Colum and Dougal (“and she probably wore the kilt in that family,” he adds). Jocasta is at once a gracious host at her plantation River Run and a master manipulator. “It’s no different with her newfound nephew and his wife,” says Davis. “She wants to manipulate them to do her bidding and what’s best for her.”

What’s really best for Jamie and Claire would be steering clear of another character who will be familiar to *Drums of Autumn* readers: the show’s new villain Stephen Bonnet, a pirate and smuggler played by *Downton Abbey*’s Ed Speleers. Likened to an 18th-century Ted Bundy, he’s a sociopath who’s learned to mimic normal emotions and behavior to gain trust—which makes him a different breed of adversary from Tobias Menzies’s terrifying Black Jack Randall.

“Unlike Black Jack, he has the veneer of someone who’s playful and charming, and yet he’s just as deadly in some ways,” Graphia says. “Whereas we just knew that Black Jack was focused on one thing—his power over people—and he was an equal-opportunity sadist, Bonnet has many different colors to his insanity and his violence.”



▲ Young Ian (John Bell) has a new best friend, Rollo, played by a Northern Inuit pup named Mac Dubh.

After Bonnet and Claire discover they have something in common, he develops a certain fascination with her, Graphia explains: “That will reverberate in many different ways through the season. He will show up in unexpected ways and in unexpected places.”

As for other surprises that await viewers, producers tease the return of at least one fan-favorite character (David Berry’s Lord John Grey, who harbors feelings for Jamie while caring for his son William); remind us that they’ve been known to incorporate real historical figures into the ever-expanding story; and admit that Rollo, the wolf-hybrid dog that Young Ian (John Bell) befriends, had to be made to

sound fierce in postproduction. (“He is the sweetest dog of all time, and it’s very difficult to get him to growl or do anything menacing, so we kinda realized that we had to alter his role a little bit to fit the ‘actor,’” Davis says.)

They also insist that this is the year for Brianna (Sophie Skelton) and Roger (Richard Rankin) to shine. Their long-distance relationship continues to evolve in 1970, although they may find themselves moving at different speeds as Brianna carries the baggage of her mother’s failed marriage to the man who raised her, Menzies’s Frank, and the uncertainty of whether Claire ever reunited with Jamie, her biological father, after returning to the past.



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—EXECUTIVE PRODUCER MARIL DAVIS, ON THE PUP MAC DUBH



“Putting people together and then stirring the pot is what *Outlander* does,” Roberts says of the young couple. “They go through heartwarming moments, and there’s the heartbreaking moments—really gut-wrenching moments—and the trickle-down of that is it affects Jamie and Claire in devastating ways as well.”

Does that mean that Brianna, too, will travel through the stones, as teased in the season 4 trailer? The producers play it coy, but for those who have read *Drums of Autumn*, Roberts offers this: “I think they will be happy with what we give them. I think there will be tears, and I think there will be smiles, and I think that it will be close to their hearts.”



▲ Brianna (Sophie Skelton) and Roger (Richard Rankin) dance at a Scottish festival.

◀ Claire keeps busy at the Frasers’ cozy cabin.