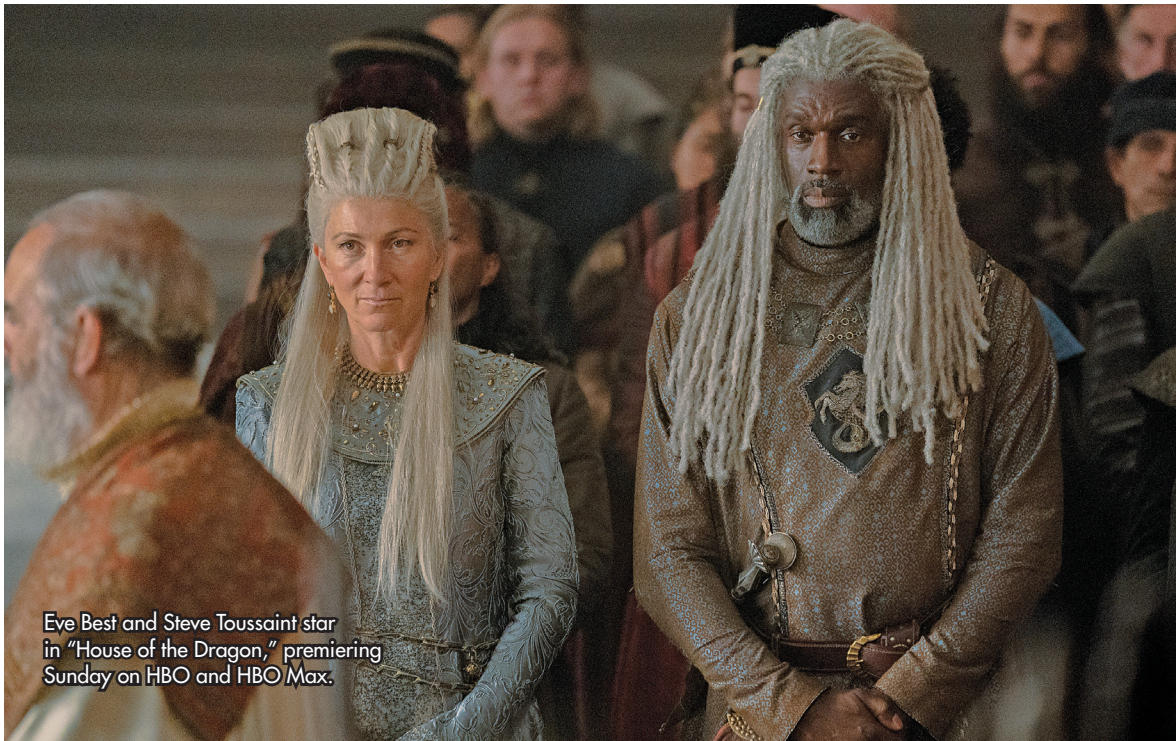


coverstory

BY GEORGE DICKIE

HBO's 'House of the Dragon'

a story about family – with dragons



Eve Best and Steve Toussaint star in "House of the Dragon," premiering Sunday on HBO and HBO Max.

The wait is over. More than three years after the conclusion of "Game of Thrones," its prequel arrives with "House of the Dragon."

Based on George R.R. Martin's 2018 novel "Fire & Blood," the highly anticipated 10-episode fantasy epic premieres Sunday, Aug. 21, on HBO and HBO Max. Set 200 years before the events of GoT, it tells the story of the beginning of House Targaryen's fall, culminating in a civil war that became known as the "Dance of the Dragons."

Sitting on the Iron Throne of Westeros is King Viserys Targaryen (Paddy Considine, "Dead Man's Shoes"), a decent man whose only wish is to continue his grandfather's legacy. First in the line of succession is Prince Daemon (Matt Smith, "Doctor Who"), Viserys' brother and a dragon rider but also a man of dubious character. There is also Princess Rhaenyra (Emma D'Arcy, "Truth Seekers"), the king's first born and a dragon rider who is of pure Valyrian blood – but she was not born a man.

And then there is Lord Corlys Velaryon (Steve Toussaint, "Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time"), the most famed nautical adventurer in the history of Westeros and builder of the largest navy in the world.

Also in the talented cast are Olivia Cooke ("Bates Motel"), Eve Best ("The King's Speech"), Fabien Frankel ("The

Serpent"), Sonoya Mizuno ("Maniac") and Rhys Ifans ("The Amazing Spider-Man").

The series was shot in the U.K., Spain and Portugal from early 2021 to early 2022 and features a fair amount of violence, sex and of course, CGI dragons. For Toussaint, it represented the chance to not only play in what he calls a "very dark and conspiratorial and hopefully sexy piece," but portray a man who despite all his power is at his core just a father.

"Obviously he's a nautical man, an explorer, and he can be in a battle; he's a bit of a warrior," he explains. "But ultimately when he's out, when he's at home, when he's with his family, like all of us I guess that's who he truly is. And so that was the key to try to understand his motivation for a lot of things he does. Some things he doesn't do very well. He's not always the best of fathers but his underlying motivation is now this is for the family, this is for our family name."

Toussaint also gives high marks to his castmates, who he calls an "absolute joy" to work with.

"It's a fantastic thing and it keeps you on your toes ...," he says. "So to basically be sitting at a table and look up and see Paddy Considine and Matt Smith and Olivia Cooke, all these wonderful actors, and of course the great Eve Best, who plays my wife in it, was an absolute joy. It's a great place to go and play."

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