

# A fascinating look at Rome that never gels

By Jordon Morgan  
Staff writer

“Roman Empire: Reign of Blood” is a lavishly produced, detailed exploration of one of Rome’s most infamous emperors, but one that also doesn’t quite seem to mesh between the two styles it presents.

Chronicling the reign of Commodus, who was emperor of Rome from 180-192 AD, “Reign of Blood” follows the last days of the previous emperor, Marcus Aurelius, the subsequent ascension by Commodus, and the major turning points of his 12-year reign.

Although the pacing is a bit rushed with only six episodes, the show overall does an excellent job showing the transformation of Commodus from a reluctant young man with no interest in governing, to a narcissistic dictator bent on earning the respect of the Roman people.

The show presents itself in a unique format, as it goes back and forth between interviews with professors and Roman historians, to dramatic scenes depicting Commodus and the people around him. All of this is interspersed with narration by Sean Bean (Ned Stark of “Game of Thrones”) who adds a significant feeling of importance to whatever he is talking about with his deep, commanding voice that accurately makes it appear as though every step in the emperor’s reign is one that could shake the foundation of Rome itself.

Interviews by the various professors and historians, such as authors Tom Holland and Anthony Everitt, give great context to the circumstances under which the dramatic scenes play out. They also give the viewer insight into the minds of the various players at the time, such as Commodus himself, Marcus Aurelius, Commodus’ sister Lucilla, and even Aurelius’ wife Faustina, which makes the proceeding events easier to follow as well as give these characters who otherwise may not have had their important roles shown, a chance to be shown why they were so significant.

The dramatic scenes are also fantastic, as every actor (mostly ones who had never been seen before by mainstream audiences) plays their part perfectly, and the atmosphere of Rome is captured effectively, with realistic recreations of senate halls, imperial palaces, and the Colosseum, with seemingly very little computer images to enhance them other than a few large-scale backgrounds.

And that is one of the best aspects about this show, as it manages to tell a story about one of the most important figures in the ancient world, though one that might not be quite as known as many others, without changing history to such an erroneous degree that you often see in big budget Hollywood movies.

History is already fascinating by its very nature and there is frankly no real justification for essentially rewriting history just for narrative convenience (i.e. what Ridley Scott’s “Gladiator” does with Commodus as it makes him an evil tyrant out of the gate and paints him as the murderer of his father, when he actually died at the age of 53 of disease).

The only issue “Reign of Blood” really has is that sometimes the shift between the professor/historian interviews and the dramatic scenes is a bit jarring. While you get sucked into the drama, it shifts to the interviews almost at the turn of a dime, going back and forth throughout each episode.

If you’re interested in ancient history, especially that of ancient Rome, then this mini-series is an absolute must watch. Even if ancient history isn’t your top choice, it’s still worth your time. The respect it pays to being accurate to the history of its subject combined with the well-acted, elaborately and historically accurate set designs, and insights from various historical experts make “Roman Empire: Reign of Blood” an excellent outing from Netflix, and one that hopefully spawns more like it in the future.

## Senior Profile

### Anita Maryskova

By Florian Peyssonneaux  
Staff Writer

Brevard College senior Anita Maryskova will graduate in December with a Business major in December. Maryskova has been very involved during her career at BC, as she is part of the women’s soccer and tennis team. As a Czech Republic native she is also the president of the Internationals Club.

Anita Maryskova first came to the U.S to accomplish her dream of playing soccer at a collegiate level. She originally went to a Division I college in California, but decided to transfer from CSUB to Brevard for the rest of her collegiate career.

Maryskova started playing soccer at a young age, because when she was in Czech Republic she had to find the motivation to keep playing as she was practicing with most of the players who are now in the current Men’s Czech Under 21s National Soccer team.

“It was very tough playing soccer with boys, because I had to face a lot of prejudice, swearing, and misjudgment from opposing teams and parents. Those comments never stopped me from playing the game I love” said Maryskova.

Concerning her athletics accomplishments, Maryskova has won many titles and recognitions with BC. As soccer player, she became team’s offensive player of the year and led the team with most points, goals, and shots during her junior year. Meanwhile “as a tennis player, I became MVP of the team the same year” said Maryskova.

Brevard College is a place where Maryskova met “some very inspirational people,” whom she considers mentors. “Cameron Austin, Alessandra Tavoloni and Capri Savage are some people who guided me throughout my career” said Maryskova.

When Maryskova talks about the individuals who inspired, guided, and motivated her she immediately said, “all of these people have a special place in my heart and have helped me to become who I am today”.

After she graduates from Brevard College Maryskova wants to pursue her ideal professional life, and go to a preparatory school to prepare a Masters degree in Business, while playing soccer as she has one more year of eligibility.

“I would like to become a professional soccer player or start a company helping athletes to come to the USA and play at a collegiate level. Ultimately, I would like to stay permanently in U.S, and settle down in California” said Maryskova.