

The Pirate King

Logline: A notorious pirate escapes to 1800s New Orleans after being betrayed and left for dead and finds himself mixed up in a power struggle for control of the city between dark, mysterious forces.

Format

The Pirate King is a serialized, prestige TV one hour historical drama with strong action/adventure elements. Each week will follow the exploits of legendary pirate Jean Lafitte as he fights to reestablish his once vast criminal empire in the seedy underworld of 1800s New Orleans.

Themes

Our world today is filled with deception, conflict, betrayal, and corruption. The lines between right and wrong are blurred, as neighbor turns against neighbor, brother against brother. The sad truth is that the world has always been this way and these problems are not unique to our time.

Few figures in our past have embodied these dark ideals more than the dreaded Pirate. The Pirate King is meant to address those prevailing, dismal themes while injecting a sense of swashbuckling action/adventure escapism that the post-Covid world is so desperately in need of.

Plot

In the early 1800s, New Orleans is one of America's largest and wealthiest cities. The bustling shipping port is home to a wide mix of cultures, with millions of dollars' worth of goods shipping in and out every day. Of course, where that kind of money can be found, so too can all manner of rogues, criminals, and lowlifes.

Most dangerous of all were the pirates.

No pirate at the time was more infamous than Jean Lafitte, the ruthless captain of the The Pride, leader of the feared Baratarians and undisputed Pirate King of the New Orleans underground. Lafitte's fleet was so powerful that he became instrumental in defeating the British in the battle of New Orleans in the war of 1812, and with his victory came praise and pardons from the US Government.

Not content to live a normal life, Jean Lafitte again turned to piracy, burning his goodwill with the government and once again becoming known as a ruthless killer and rogue. In 1823 Lafitte's flagship was in pursuit of two Spanish Merchant vessels, which turned out to be heavily armed privateer ships, and Lafitte was presumed killed in the ensuing fight.

That presumption, we will learn, was wrong.

Our story picks up after Lafitte's disappearance. Betrayed by his crew and left for dead, Lafitte returns to the only real home he ever knew, New Orleans. His absence has created a power struggle for control of the city's criminal operations, and his traitorous first mate, Mauricio Santos, has consolidated the remains of Lafitte's empire, seizing his assets and keeping even Lafitte's most loyal sailors in line through sheer brutality.

Lafitte, wounded and exhausted from his return to New Orleans, takes refuge in his brother Pierre's bar – the former headquarters of Lafitte's smuggling operation – where Pierre attempts to convince Jean that any attempt to reclaim his spot as the pirate king is a fool's errand. Pierre's warning falls on deaf ears. Jean is hellbent on reclaiming his empire, but in the time he's been away the criminal landscape has changed drastically. Jean's powerful friends and allies are long gone, and he is forced to deal with the new, more dangerous, crime bosses in the city.

Throughout our story Lafitte will forge uneasy alliances, and fierce rivalries, with the new New Orleans power players. Many will be based on real life historical figures, like the beloved and mysterious Voodoo Queen, Marie Laveau, and the chilling, possibly vampiric, Jacques Saint Germain. Others, like Lafitte's treacherous first mate and crew, are original characters.

Lafitte is a deadly and capable man, which makes him a valuable weapon in the war for the city's soul. Each faction will seek his services at one point or another as they fight to consolidate their power. He will work as a spy, saboteur, soldier and assassin for the various rival gangs, all while rebuilding his own formidable crew.

Throughout the series, Jean will be torn between his natural sense of honor, and the overwhelming greed that fuels his life of crime.

Characters

Jean Lafitte: Pirate, Patriot, spy - Jean Lafitte has done it all. Lafitte spent his childhood exploring the bayous of Louisiana, eventually learning the geography better than any man alive. Educated at a military academy, Lafitte learned the skills of sailing, soldiering and leadership - all of which would serve him well in his career as a privateer. Jean is savvy and quick witted, with an aristocratic flair rarely seen among his fellow pirates. For all his gifts, Jean suffered the same weaknesses as most pirates, greed, drinking, gambling, women, and an unrelenting draw to adventure. After crawling his way to the top of a million dollar criminal enterprise, he finds himself betrayed, broken and wanted. Now he starts again, hell bent on recapturing his former station and taking revenge on those who stole it from him.

Mauricio Santos: Jean's former first mate and most trusted ally, Mauricio is, in many ways the opposite of Jean. While Jean is handsome, intelligent and suave, Mauricio is grizzled and violent with a temper shorter than a canon fuse. After betraying Jean and leaving him for dead, Mauricio returns to New Orleans, where he seizes control of Jean's wealth and operations. He doesn't possess the natural leadership qualities of Jean, and in fighting and defections to other gangs become common in his ranks. Mauricio doubles down on his violent tendencies to consolidate his power, but the newly rising forces of Jacques

Saint Germain and Marie Leveau threaten to undermine his control of the city's smuggling ring. Jean harbors a deep hatred for Mauricio and will stop at nothing to avenge his betrayal.

Pierre Lafitte: As Jean's older, wiser brother, Pierre operates as the brains behind the Lafitte operation. He is extremely sharp, and a master manipulator. Ever a realist, Pierre knew better than to embark on a surely ill-fated revenge tour after learning of his brother's betrayal and supposed death. Instead, he relinquished his share of the criminal empire to Jean's traitorous first mate in exchange for retaining ownership of the Lafitte Blacksmith shop - a former smuggling front turned legitimate bar. Pierre is thrilled when his brother turns up alive, but worried by Jean's insistence on reclaiming his lost crown of the Pirate King of New Orleans. Blood is thicker than water, and Pierre will do whatever it takes to keep his brother safe.

Marie Leveau: The elegant and sophisticated former hairdresser turned powerful voodoo queen, Marie Leveau is one of the most striking and impressive citizens of New Orleans. Her deep knowledge of the mysterious practice of voodoo has earned her a loyal cult following who are willing to die, and kill, if she wills it. Years of acting as a spiritual advisor the city's elite have given her an elevated status even among the snobby New Orleanian upper class. Marie's mastery of voodoo is unparalleled, although it remains to be seen if her "magic" is truly supernatural, or the results of her charm, intelligence and impressive social influence. Marie's rising power threatens the establishment and puts her at odds with the crime lords Jacques Saint Germain and Mauricio Santos.

Jacques Saint Germain: The mysterious and charming Jacques is a recent import from France. He is an extremely wealthy and refined man. A master of 6 languages, the violin, and most curiously, alchemy. Jacques rises quickly in stature, famously hosting extravagant balls, always beginning at night, and always ending before dawn. A learned history buff, he regales his guests with stories from hundreds of years ago, with such detail you'd have sworn he was there himself. He feeds his guests plentiful feasts, but is never seen eating himself, instead preferring to sip red wine throughout the evening. Behind the scenes, Jacques has been garnering political power via blackmail and extortion, meanwhile he recruits an army of thugs and criminals to do his bidding. Jacques is the chief criminal rival to Mauricio Santos' pirate crew, and has become obsessed with the voodoo queen, Marie Leveau. When Jean Lafitte resurfaces and requests a meeting, Jacques realizes the value in bringing such a skilled fighter and leader into his organization.

Basic Pilot

The pilot would open on Lafitte's betrayal and supposed death and follow a weakened Jean as he makes his way through the bayou and back to New Orleans, avoiding deadly wildlife and a gang of swamp dwellers who are out to collect the bounty on his head.

Jean fights his way through the swamps and makes his way into the city, reconnecting with his brother and getting a basic rundown of the current political climate. Jean will reach out to old allies but find that few are in any position to help him.

Soon he catches the attention of the enigmatic Jacques Saint Germain, who offers Jean his aid in exchange for Jean's services. He orders Jean to kidnap the mysterious Marie Leveau, for reasons unknown to Jean. Desperate, the former pirate agrees to Jacques' terms.

Jean attempts to infiltrate Leveau's compound, a task easier said than done in Jean's weakened state. Eventually the former pirate will come face to face with the powerful voodoo queen, an experience which will change his life for good.