

Kristen Bell pours self into cause of rescuing child soldiers; Things get heady for 'The Tudors' James Frain

by Marilyn Beck & Stacy Jenel Smi

If all has gone according to plan, Kristen Bell was wrapping up a whirlwind trip to Washington, D.C. last Friday, having met with White House and Senate staffers to press the case of children who are being abducted and forced to become soldiers in Uganda. The "Forgetting Sarah Marshall" star has taken their plight to heart in a big way.

She'll also be present at Saturday's child soldier rescue rally in Santa Monica, Calif. Organized by the Invisible Children organization, it's one of more than 100 such rallies planned in cities around the world to draw attention to the urgent problem.

"I was first exposed to Invisible Children when I was doing 'Veronica Mars' through Ryan Hansen. He said, 'Hey, my best friend Jason Russell has done this documentary, and you should see it. I did, and I was so moved I immediately said, 'Whatever you need me to do, I will be available for,'" she explains. Extremely important to her is "letting young people know, 'You can change the world.'"

As that remarkable film (which can be viewed at www.invisiblechildren.com) shows, USC Film School grad Russell and fellow twentysomething filmmakers Laren Poole and Bobby Bailey wound up immersed in the bloody 23-year Ugandan conflict, relentlessly working toward rescuing the child soldiers who begged for their help. He tells us, "Over the course of the war, there have been 30,000 children abducted. The reason it's so urgent now is that the rebel leader, Joseph Kony, has stepped up his activities, and since Christmas has murdered about 1,200 Congolese and abducted over 700 children." With enough pressure from the international community, he declares, "We want to stop this war."

Bell is due to begin work on Disney's "You Again" comedy in which she'll play a girl who finds out her brother is marrying the ex-classmate who made her life miserable in high school in July, and has "When in Rome" due out in August. Then will come her recently completed "Couples Retreat" with Vince Vaughn and Jason Bateman. However, she's thinking only of Invisible Children now. "Shooting a movie seems so pointless in comparison, but I recognize what gifts I've been given," she says. "Because of work, I have the platform to be able to speak and make a difference."

IT'S ALL IN THE EXECUTION: "The Tudors" James Frain, who portrays the infamous Thomas Cromwell, tells us that in the season currently unspooling, "I've got a lot more storytelling to do. Cromwell starts out as this really powerful guy and then ends up being humiliated." In real life, Cromwell lost face, then his head. Observes Frain: "It's kind of similar to the story that Anne Boleyn had last season but without the sex."

He notes, "As a whole, they've achieved what they were going for in terms of the show definitely being darker. There's more at stake for the characters. There's also more power intrigue going on. It just gets better as the season goes on."

Frain feels the same way about Jonathan Rhys Meyers. "With each season he seems to become more powerful and more confident in his role as king. He's done a really good job of creating that aura of fear and respect," says Frain of the actor in the role of Henry VIII. "These people thought that the king was close to God. He was supposed to be ordained by God," he points out. "Part of the reforms that Cromwell was pushing through were making Henry legally the head of the church, and answerable to no one. You've seen the human costs of that as far as what it does to someone to think of himself that way, and what it does to the people around him. We know in our own time that he's just a human being, but they didn't really have that understanding. I think Jonathan's performance gives a sense of the all inspiring, terrifying power that he had, but also what that did to him, and how it made him more and more isolated."

TRAVELING LIGHT: Rocker Rick Springfield says that far from looking at his forthcoming summer concert date schedule as grueling, he sees it as invigorating. "I get a lot of energy from playing live. It's like a workout. I have the best band, too, and it's really fun to go out on the road," he says. "I know a lot of people who don't like it. We certainly get people looking at the way we tour — we go out for a couple of days and go home, a couple of days, go home."

He can do that, he notes, because "We have a great show that doesn't rely on anything but the music. A lot of time, especially in the '80s, it was all about how big a show was and the effects, how many trucks it took to bring it all in. There are people who spend everything on the road now. But the way we go out works a lot better for us. There are people who've started to copy our approach to touring now."

INDUSTRY BITS: The Jerry Lewis MDA Telethon people are already casting about for just about everything — singers, comics, bands, novelty acts — for this year's Labor Day extravaganza. Summer goes so fast, doesn't it?

With reports by Emily Feimster.

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