

MERELY ROLEPLAYERS

FACTSHEET

Title	Merely Roleplayers
Tagline	Where theatrical people play roleplaying games
Website	www.merelyroleplayers.com
Release schedule	Weekly; Story Acts every other Tuesday @ 5:00am UK Backstage bonus episodes on the Tuesdays in between, @ 5:00am UK
On the air since	October 2017

SHORT SUMMARY

Merely Roleplayers is an improvised ensemble audiodrama – emphasis on the drama. We tell a lot of different stories, with one thing in common: we're always chasing maximum drama.

IN-DEPTH SUMMARY

Merely Roleplayers is a weekly actual-play roleplaying game podcast featuring members and friends of Blackshaw, a London theatre company. The ensemble uses fiction-first roleplaying games to improvise stories with maximum drama.

The compere sets the scene. Each player roleplays one of the main characters, improvising their dialogue and action. And at suitably dramatic moments, the players roll dice to see whether things stay under the players' control – or escalate out of it. That way no one knows where the story's going next: not the audience, not the players, not even the compère.

Each Merely Roleplayers production (or season) tells a complete story. Listeners don't need to have heard previous episodes to jump in with Act One of a new production. A typical production lasts 4-5 Story Acts and 4-5 Backstage episodes.

The podcast carries promotion for other podcasts, arranged via promotion exchange agreements. It currently carries no paid advertising, and is not part of a network.

PRAISE FOR THE BLACKSHAW SAGA

"rarely have I seen something done with such audacity, skill and love."

— Rob Kaiju, head of podcast network Kaiju FM

"one of those long-running campaign ideas so many GMs have but never manage to follow through on. The payoff was incredibly satisfying!" — Adrian Thoen, RPG creator

CAST AND CREW

Creator	Matt Boothman	@MerelyMJ
Producer		
Editor		
Compère		
Game master		
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Ensemble	Ellie Pitkin	@elliepitkin
	Vikki Weston	@SpaghettiWeston
	Richard 'Strat' Stratton	@RichardStrat
	Alexander Pankhurst	@APankhurst
	Natalie Winter	@WinterNatters
	Marta Da Silva	@nanaluvren
	Josh Yard	@joshyard
	and various guest players	
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In association with	Blackshaw Theatre Company	@BlackshawUpdate

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Merely Roleplayers updates on Tuesdays at 5:00am UK time.

Episodes alternate between Story Acts (which advance the story of the current production) and Backstage episodes (bonus content looking at character creation and other mechanical aspects of the roleplaying games that power the story).

Productions alternate between the Main House (an ongoing serial spanning multiple individual productions) and the Studio (one-off stories where the ensemble experiments with different roleplaying games and formats).

CONTACT INFORMATION

Homepage: www.merelyroleplayers.com

Email: merelyroleplayers@gmail.com

Instagram: [@merelyroleplayers](https://www.instagram.com/merelyroleplayers)

Tumblr: merelyroleplayers.tumblr.com

PRODUCTION DETAILS

Main House productions

Production	Genre	Acts	Content warnings
Vigil: Playtime	Supernatural mystery	5	Gory violence Offstage: death, dismemberment, child endangerment
Vigil: Cold Snap	Supernatural mystery	6	Fantasy violence, strong language Offstage: bereavement
Vigil: Tourist Trap	Supernatural mystery	5	Mild body horror, fantasy violence (including gun violence), abusive relationship dynamics
Vigil: Bad Dog	Supernatural mystery	5	Fantasy violence with some injury detail, drug use
Vigil: Quarry	Supernatural mystery	5	Blood, gore Offstage: childhood trauma
Vigil: All Aboard	Supernatural mystery	5	Persistent peril, exploitative relationships (including manipulation and coercion), sibling tragedy, mind control, loss of memory and self, violence (including blood and gun violence)
Vigil: The Great Fire	Supernatural mystery	5	Violence (including gun violence), possession, death by fire
Vigil: Chief/Exec	Supernatural mystery	5	Fantasy violence, drug use, sex references, authoritarian coercion
Vigil: Fear Itself (Jan 2024)	Supernatural mystery	tbc	Violence (including gun violence), family trauma, kidnapping
Vigil: Tailor Made (mid-2024)	Supernatural mystery	tbc	To be confirmed

Vigil is the first Merely Roleplayers Main House production. Inspired by John Wyndham's weird fiction and Edgar Wright's Cornetto Trilogy of movies, Vigil zooms in on a neglected market town after the government cuts a programme protecting rural England against dangerous fae. A group of local misfits steps into the breach, standing vigil over their community with far fewer resources, and far more to lose.

Vigil's story is told using Monster of the Week, a roleplaying game by Michael Sands, published by Evil Hat.

Studio productions

Production	Genre	Acts	Content warnings
Dr Magnethands	Superhero	2	Mild fantasy violence, alcohol, gross bodily humour
Codename Mosaic: Ghost Recall	Spy-fi satire	2	Reported violence
The First Nova	Space opera	3	Brainwashing
The Lost Andromeda Ward Christmas Special	Paranormal melodrama	2	Comic body horror
Monumental Exit	Caper	3	Lewd imagery, drug use, fire, death
Falling Cadence	Noir	3	Violence, intimidation by police, offscreen murder
The Queen's Dead	Apocalyptic political drama	3	Political infighting, blood & guts, death & doom
The Office Party	Heroic fantasy	5	Fantasy violence, themes of colonialist exploitation

Dr Magnethands was the first Merely Roleplayers Studio production, airing in January 2021. It uses indie game designer Grant Howitt's roleplaying game of the same name "for 3 or more drunk people".

Codename Mosaic: Ghost Recall aired in mid-2021. It uses Mission: Accomplished!, the roleplaying game of super-spies and office meetings by Jeff Stormer.

The First Nova aired from August to September 2021 and featured special guest player Fiona Howat. It uses galactic 2nd edition, a Belonging Outside Belonging game inspired by Star Wars, designed by riley rethai.

The Lost Andromeda Ward Christmas Special aired from December 2021 to January 2022. It uses The Andromeda Ward, a Garth Marengi's Darkplace-inspired roleplaying game by Chloe Mashiter.

Monumental Exit aired from October to November 2022. It uses Fiasco Classic, a roleplaying game about powerful ambition and poor impulse control, by Bully Pulpit Games and Jason Morningstar.

Falling Cadence aired from February to March 2023. It uses Fate Core, a flexible system that can support whatever worlds you dream up, published by Evil Hat.

The Queen's Dead aired from June to July 2023 and featured special guest players Fiona Howat and Naomi Clarke. It uses the beta rules for Court of the Lich Queen by Ursidice.

The Office Party aired from October to December 2023. It is the longest Studio production to date and the first with a game master other than Matt; Josh Yard takes the role of Guide. The production uses Quest, a heroic fantasy roleplaying game by The Adventure Guild.

The Blackshaw Saga

The first ten Merely Roleplayers productions, plus the interstitial Dropped Stitches episodes, collectively form the Blackshaw Saga. Each production in the Blackshaw Saga tells a complete story, but recurring characters and motifs weave them all together into a single reality-bending epic.

In the Blackshaw Saga productions, unlike in most actual-play podcasts, the ensemble do not play original characters. Instead they play versions of their real selves, dropped Quantum Leap-style into a range of genres and settings. This lets the ensemble explore 'bleed', where events and emotions can potentially cross the boundary between player and character. The blurred boundary between performances, constructions, simulations, and reality is a subtle but consistent theme throughout the Blackshaw Saga.

The Blackshaw Saga began in October 2017 with Ariadne, and concluded in August 2020 with Déjà Vu. Merely Roleplayers then soft-relaunched in October 2020, introducing the Main House/ Studio distinction, moving from exploring bleed to creating original characters, and continuing a trend towards longer serials that started with the Parallax trilogy.

Production	Genre	Acts	Content warnings
The Dropped Stitches	Portal fantasy	6	Mild fantasy violence
Ariadne	Ghost story	4	Infrequent mild violence
Five Stage a Rescue	Cosy seaside mystery	5	Child endangerment
A Town Called Amnesty	Western	5	Graphic violence, including gun violence
Let's Get Gideon	Heist	3	Blood, needles
Codename: Mosaic	Spy-fi	5	Graphic violence, including gun violence
Parallax Core	Space opera	4	Mild fantasy violence
Parallax Converging	Space opera	5	Mild fantasy violence, recalled trauma
Parallax Inverted	Space opera	5	Mild fantasy violence
Upstaged!	Talent contest	4	Borderline gaslighting
The Cloudskipper's Captain	Sky pirates	5	Bloody violence, threat of torture, exploitation of a character with impaired mental functioning
Prospero & Viola	Shipwreck survival	10	Hunting, swarming insects, danger of drowning
Déjà Vu	Franchise crossover	12	Mild fantasy violence