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Gareth is revelling as baddie

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Gareth Hunt Found Himself Squashed Between Two Horses When A Stunt Sequence Didn'T Go Quite As Planned In The Quirky Us Tv Series The New Adventures Of Robin Hood. It'S Filmed In Latvia, But Now The Former New Avengers Star Is Staying Nearer The Source Of The Robin Hood Legend - Because He'S Starring In Pantomime In Mansfield. He Talks To Showbiz Editor John Brunton About The Role - And Why He'S Not On Television So Much These Days

HIS most recent television outing, in the colourful American series The New Adventures of Robin Hood, saw **Gareth Hunt** cast as the villainous Lord Rupert.

Viewers who've seen the show early Saturday mornings on C5 will know its view of the early Middle Ages and the historical one, are, at best, at variance.

But **Gareth**, 54, seems to have enjoyed filming out in the Baltic States, though he admits to being briefly squashed between two horses, when a stunt didn't quite go as planned.

For the US mini-series about the life of explorer and adventurer Marco Polo, filmed recently in the Ukraine, and starring Hollywood veteran Jack Palance, greater demands were put on actors.

"Now there I had to wear real chain-mail," says **Gareth**.

"Clambering over rocks in all that, and with a big double-handed sword was hard work."

Like his Lord Rupert role, he's a villain again at the moment, though this time a classic one.

He's playing Captain Hook in the Mansfield Palace Theatre production of The Adventures of Peter Pan, a role the former New Avengers and Upstairs, Downstairs star has tackled twice before.

He clearly enjoys pantomime - though in the strictest sense Peter Pan isn't a pantomime in the same way as Cinderella or Jack and the Beanstalk - not least because of the reaction of the children in the audience.

Twice-married **Gareth**, who has three children himself, aged between ten and 29, says: "It's this whole world of illusion, the way in which children themselves become so involved and the way they react to you."

For the most part, these days, it's on the stage where most of his work is done, as for the former Mike Gambit in The New Avengers - and the star of a string of instant coffee adverts - British television has all but dried up, apart from the occasional gameshow guest appearance here and there. "I seem to have lost the plot with television," says London-born **Gareth**.

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"The whole structure of television has changed."

It might also come as a surprise to telly fans that **Gareth** isn't his real name. It's actually Alan **Hunt**, but since there was already an Alan **Hunt** registered as a member of the actors' union Equity at the time, he changed his name to **Gareth** because, as he says: "I like rugby, and perhaps it had something to do with **Gareth** Edwards.

"My son **Gareth**, who's a concert pianist, really is a **Gareth**, and since he's in a totally different profession, there's no danger of confusion. The only person who calls me Alan is my mum."

- The Adventures of Peter Pan runs until January 16. Tickets GBP 8.50, or GBP 7.50 for concessions. Matinee price is GBP 6.

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