

Summer Glau on Working with Joss Whedon, "Firefly," and "Serenity"

How was working on "Serenity" the movie different from working on "Firefly" the series?

That's a very good question but, really, most of the only work I've done has been with Joss so I don't know how different he is. He hired me for my first role. He cast me in my first television series and he cast me in my first leading role in a feature. He's my guru and I wouldn't have it any other way.

I think he's amazing to work with because he knows exactly what he wants; he's so good at inspiring us and communicating just what he wants. I would say we were concerned about how different it was going to be, working with him on a television series to working with him on a film, but he's so specific, and this film was so close to his heart, that it flowed. I mean, he knew exactly what he wanted to see. He conveyed it to us and we had a blast.

It went so smoothly. We were never behind schedule. I know it was incredibly hard for Joss because the entire production was just hanging on his every word, so I'm sure it was incredibly stressful for him. But for us, it was just an amazing ride.

Will moviegoers have to know "Firefly" to get "Serenity?"

The way Joss did it was brilliant because we picked up the story where we left off so fans of the show won't be bored with the storyline. They'll be ready to go. But also, he introduces the characters fresh for anybody who doesn't know them. You're immediately invested in each character. He did an amazing job of making sure that everyone's storyline continued and had depth. I think every character is so different and everybody is going to have something.

This is a pretty big ensemble cast. How did Joss balance it out?

He's a magician. He does it. I would love to play any character in this movie. It's so meaty. Everyone has their moment. Everybody has their 'hero' moment. There's not a moment to breathe. I just saw a screening and you are riveted from start to finish.

Being on the set and working on the film and then seeing the screening, was there a moment where you went, "Oh, that's what he had in mind?"

Oh, there were so many moments like that. I couldn't be there every moment and see what he was doing with everybody. But I teared up five minutes in. I was so proud of all my friends, all my fellow cast mates. I couldn't believe how fantastic everybody looked and how ready everyone was to get in there and just knock it out.

You're a ballerina, right?

I was. I started out as dancer.

Does that help you with an action movie like "Serenity?"

It helps so much but I'll tell you, I was not prepared for how hard they were going to train me for this. I mean, when they first met me they thought, "Oh, you know, she's kind of scrawny and she's kind of leggy and I don't know what we can do with her." And then they started training me and they said, "You know, we're going to train you for real because you can really do this." So they had me come in, I worked so hard. I cried every day.

Was it wire work or what type of training did you do?

They watched me move and they sort of formulated a style that was suited to my body. Being a ballet dancer and the way I move and what's going to look good on me, and what's going to look realistic because I do a lot of fighting with these big guys. What was going to make me look like I really had some power and I could really do some damage? So they did sort of a wushu kung-fu kick boxing hybrid on me. I worked so hard and I did pretty much everything myself.

You did most of your own stunts?

[A stunt person] did the falling. They wouldn't let me fall. She did two of the big somersault/jumping down stairs things that they wouldn't let me do. And she was amazing. I trained with her. She trained by me every day and we worked out hours and hours every day together. I did 95% of it myself.

Do you think you've been spoiled being able to work so much with Joss Whedon?

Oh, absolutely! People kept coming up to me during the movie and saying, "You know, I've been worrying about you Summer because who is ever going to write a story for you like this again?" I'm so lucky. He just knows how to talk to me. He knows how to inspire me, and it's so rare.

Would you say Joss Whedon's style of directing changes based on which actor he's working with at the time?

I think so. I think he chooses his people – first of all, we got along like family – and he understands us, each as individuals. He knows how to talk to us. He knows I'm really shy and insecure. He knows how to motivate me and bring out my best, keep me from being afraid. I'm the type of person where I panic and think, "I can't do it! I don't know what I'm doing here. Let me leave!" And he'll talk me down and he's my hero.

Will there be a "Serenity" sequel?

Oh, we're hoping for it. We have a deal worked out, depending on how the first one does. Hopefully we'll end up doing two or three.

Is there any chance that now that the movie's coming out and people are excited about it, you'll go back to doing the "Firefly" series?

We dream about that.

In our dreams we'd love to be doing it every day again. I know there's a lot of fans that are excited about the feature, but it's not the same as having somebody in your house every week, you know? So that's going to be something that remains to be seen. We can only hope.

They really didn't give the series much of a chance to find its way.

They didn't.

Was the cast aware the series was going to be cancelled that quickly?

Well, they cancelled us right before Christmas. We weren't ready. They gave us a certain amount of episodes to do at the beginning. Then they renewed us for, I think, three more episodes, which was such a short time to prove ourselves. Then out of nowhere, we just got cancelled. We all went off for Christmas knowing that we wouldn't get to come back.

We were heartbroken. We cried and cried. We put our hearts and souls into it, and it was such a good series. And we all knew that things like this don't come along every day. Stories like this don't.

They ran it out of order and they pre-empted us for baseball so many times. We just didn't get a chance. But our fans have stuck with us. They are amazing. I write to some of them. I have their email addresses. They're just so close to our hearts. I don't think we could have made it through if we hadn't had so much support from them when the show got cancelled. They said, "No, we're going to stand behind you." They wrote in. They did fundraisers, and it made it so much easier.

Taken from **About.com**'s website:

<http://movies.about.com/od/serenity/a/serentysg120604.htm>