

**SFX Magazine's 'Serenity' interview** – February 2005

***The crew of the Serenity are back together again. Nathan Fillion, Morena Baccarin and Summer Glau speak to Ian Berriman.***

Summer Glau is holding a gun to Nathan Fillion's face. Don't worry, our interview hasn't descended into a life-threatening argument about who gets the most close-ups. I'm at a convention with three stars of the TV series Firefly. Joss Whedon's ill-fated western-in-space was cancelled in its first season, but has been given a second bite at the cherry, with Serenity (a feature film version) now in the can. As well as Nathan (a.k.a. Mal Reynolds, captain of the ship Serenity), and Summer (River, kooky victim of experimental mind-messing) there's Morena Baccarin (Inara, classy space hooker).

The gun is one of the cheap plastic water pistols which all three gamely pose with. And, to be honest, it's not so much that Summer is holding a gun to Nathan's face as that he's trying to insert the end of the barrel up his left nostril. He can't resist goofing around. Later, when he should be striking his best heroic pose, he holds his gun upside down and gawks at it

like a drooling dimwit instead. These three have been through a lot together, and you can tell. Seated on a sofa after the photo shoot, they naturally point towards each other. Morena's curled up on one side, Summer's perched in the middle, Nathan's turned towards both of them. Nathan is dryly funny. Morena is radiant, with a huge, open-mouthed laugh. Summer's spooky looks are unnerving (until you realise how cute she is!), and the quietest of the three.

They all finish each other's sentences, like some three-sided married couple. There's a powerful sense that they're good friends, and overjoyed to be together again.

**SFX:** You three have been through some big ups and downs.

**Morena:** I got thrown into it so quickly that for me it was just up, up, up all the way...

**SFX:** Oh, that's right, you were a replacement for the person originally cast as Inara....

**Morena:** (faking annoyance) I was not a replacement. I was the better choice.

**Nathan:** She was a late original!

**Morena:** I never even had a second to think 'Oh god, am I gonna get this job or not?' It happened so quick. And then it crashed and burned.....

**SFX:** How did you feel when you heard Firefly was no more?

**Morena:** It was a sad day.

**Nathan:** As a rule, I try not to fall in love with a project. I learned when I first came up to Los Angeles, the moment someone says, 'It's guaranteed!', it's gone. Having had the rug pulled out from under me early in the game I thought, 'Okay, lesson learned, I'm gonna try and stay reality-based about things.' With Firefly it was a fight, because I was in love. I was in love and then...I got dumped!

**Morena:** I didn't mean to hurt you!

**Nathan:** No, I was talking about Summer! Yeah, that was a heartbreaking day. They called off work early, and I went home thinking, 'What are we gonna do?' We had another four or five days left of filming and I thought, 'These are gonna be the saddest days'....

**Morena:** ....but there was actually quite a bit of freedom after that. We had a really good time. The running joke was, 'What are they gonna do? They can't fire us!'

**Nathan:** People came back to work with the idea of having as much fun as they possibly could while we were still there.

**Summer:** We loved each other so much. But then we stayed in touch. We didn't know if it was gonna work out for us to stay friends, and then it did. And Joss promised us, 'This

is not the end. I don't know what I'm gonna do but I'm gonna do something!' And here we are.

**SFX:** It's amazing. How many TV series get a second chance?

**Morena:** Have there been any that have been turned into movies after being cancelled? I can't think of any!

**SFX:** Not until 20 years later, You could have all come back to do Firefly: The Next Generation as pensioners.

**Morena:** Oh God!

**Nathan:** But Firefly's not something that I would define as a franchise. 11 episodes aired, three that never saw the light of day. And now here we are....Universal has been so supportive. They really believe in Joss.

**SFX:** What did it feel like when you were back together, doing a script read-through?

**Nathan:** Like sweet victory!

**Morena:** Like we'd just gone away on a hiatus and then come back – it didn't feel like a year and a half.

**SFX:** So when you got back on set, did it feel the same?

**Morena:** It was seamless. The crew was different, so there was a different dynamic.

**Summer:**.....but we fell in love again. When we first started the series, we thought, 'We'll never get a crew this good, we'll never be this happy again.' Then we came back on the Universal lot and it was better than ever. After three days I was as in love as ever!

**Morena:** I know!

**Summer:** Joss is really good at choosing people who work as a team, and it just makes for a special experience.

**SFX:** Come on, there must have been something bad about it?

**Nathan:** There's Summer – sour grapes Summer Glau! (Summer giggles.) One of the many jokes is that whenever something goes wrong, it's Summer's fault. It's especially funny when she's not there!

**Summer:** I was the new kid during the series. I barely knew how to stand on a mark. At my first read through, when we got extra pages of script, I didn't know how to put those in, so I got lost, and had to read off Morena's script. So I was the natural one to blame if things went wrong!

**Morena:** I think we have a shot of everyone in the cast going, (wearily, shaking her head), 'Summer!'

**SFX:** So did you look for things to blame her for?

**Morena:** Yes....Anything!... 'It's hot in here....Summer!

**Nathan:** 'Who ate the chocolate doughnuts? Summer!

**SFX:** OK, so how is this film different from the TV series?

**Nathan:** I'll say money makes it better. We had a lot more money and a lot of faith - people just trusted Joss and let him do whatever the hell he wanted to do.

**Morena:** He's very hands on. There were several occasions that we'd show him to set right before we started shooting and he wouldn't like something and we'd go back and change it. Everything was a labour of love, very deliberate and very thought out.

**Summer:** Sometimes Joss would place my hair.

**SFX:** You sure that's not a fetish thing?

**Nathan:** He didn't do that with me!

**SFX:** Was he rearranging your trousers?

**Nathan:** That he did.

**SFX:** We need tighter trousers on Mal!

**Nathan:** Yeah, he be there, stitching them up the back!

**SFX:** How are your relationships with Joss?

**Morena:** He has a different dynamic with everyone.

**SFX:** Well obviously he's sexually harassing Nathan....

**Nathan:** I insist on it!

**Morena:** He tends to be very paternal with Summer. Nathan and him are always battling it out with the humour....but we all really love him.

**Nathan:** Joss is one of those guys who is extremely intelligent but doesn't make you feel stupid to be around. I admire him very much. I want to be more like him.

**SFX:** Maybe you should dye your hair red?

**Nathan:** There's that. I also need a purple sweater with a big hole in it.

**Summer:** (laughing) ...and that jacket he wears, that has the hole in the back.

**SFX:** He's a great writer, a great director....is the guy actually bad at anything?

**Summer:** He's not good at self-esteem. He doesn't have an ego.

**Nathan:** He's constantly beating himself up.

**Summer:** He second guesses himself a lot. I told him, 'You second guess yourself because you're the only person smart enough to criticise your work!' He's hard on himself.

**SFX:** You mean, in terms of questioning if the script is right?

**Summer:** Everything. He's a perfectionist. But it does make things special.

**SFX:** So what's gonna impress us about this film when we see it?

**Morena:** We have a lot more freedom. Also, the relationships get deeper and get more fleshed out because it's a shorter amount of time to tell a story.

**Nathan:** The stakes are higher.

**Summer:** After I finished watching the movie, I just got up and said, 'I don't want to say anything right now, I just need to be by myself,' because it was really intense! It just pounds at you for two hours, there's so much happening, there's never a break. Joss just packed it with exciting things. It's funny and it's scary and it's really sad: everything!

**Nathan:** And, the UK: prepare to fall in love with Summer Glau!

**Morena:** Yeah, you're gonna fall bad.

**Summer:** (giggles) That's really nice!

**SFX:** If you've never seen Firefly, can you understand the film?

**Morena:** I think if you watch the DVDs, it's a plus, you'll know the characters more.

**Summer:** The more you care about the characters, the more the movie is gonna touch you, but it's definitely not gonna be hard for people to dive right into it.

**SFX:** With a TV series every character can have a meaty story line. Is it possible to do that in a two hour movie, with such a big ensemble cast?

**Nathan:** Joss promised me a big storyline in the second movie, should we do one.... But this one's all about Summer!

**Morena:** With all of his characters you can make a 12-hour movie about any of them and still want more. So it's just a matter of what story is gonna be told and when.

**SFX:** Nathan, in the TV series we saw your naked butt, and we saw you in drag...

**Morena:** Who's the whore?

**SFX:** ...so how is Joss gonna beat that for the film? Are we gonna see you in ladies underwear? I presume you have something in your contract that says...

**Nathan:** That I must be naked....

**SFX:** ...or maybe in some kind of disgraceful situation,

**Nathan:** I get dressed up a little in the movie, not terribly...

**Morena:** Yeah, if you want to call it that!

**Nathan:** But no, no naked ass. I did shirtless, which I just LOVE doing, especially when fricking Sean Maher takes off his shirt. He didn't want me to tell you this - we call him The Bod. Sean The Bod Maher. The guy has 0% body fat. I don't mind saying it: he is an Adonis.

**SFX:** Final question. What was the strangest thing that happened during the making of this movie?

**Nathan:** The strange thing for me was the fact that it actually came true.

**Morena:** It felt like we were dreaming the whole time, not like reality...

**Nathan:** Once in a while we'd just be looking around at each other, and just go (grins madly). Just be giddy, at 5.00 in the morning in some desert spot, just thinking, 'I can't believe we're here. I can't believe it's actually happening!'

*What are they like?*

**SFX:** ...who is the worst fluffer of lines?

**All:** Alan Tudyk

**Nathan:** Especially if he has to speak Chinese. But he has problems enough with English. There's so much acting going on in his mind, there's so much process.

**Morena:** (giggling uncontrollably) What about that day, when we were talking about the Reavers (the cannibalistic bad guys) and he was meant to say 'the raiding party', but then it was 'the rating party', and then it was.....

**Nathan:** They keep sending out raver parties.' Sounds like fun!

**SFX:** That wouldn't be quite as scary would it? Just a hundred guys with glow sticks.

**Morena:** Then it was like, 'reading parties!' It's such an intense moment: the camera's on all of us, it was just him off camera, going 'they're sending out raving parties', and we're like trying to keep it together.

**SFX:**....who tells the worst jokes?

**Nathan:** Summer.

**Summer:** Because I'm not funny. I can't tell any jokes! I don't even attempt it with him (nods at Nathan.) He just says "Summer, leave the funny to me."

**SFX:** The theme seems to be they laugh AT you, not with you.

**Summer:** Yes, and I really LOVE that. It never gets old.....

**Nathan:** We just say 'Summer, when you want to be funny, just stamp your foot, then we'll know when to laugh!'

**SFX:** How has the most annoying habits?

**Morena:** Well, Adam and Alan love to talk politics on set, and they just go at each other all day long.

**Nathan:** Adam's right wing, and he'll say something inflammatory to get Alan started.

**Morena:**...and Alan falls for it. It's unbelievable!

**Nathan:** It's brilliant to watch.

**Morena:** We just all walk away. By the end it was like, 'Okay, here they go again.'

**SFX:** Who can't handle their drink?

**Nathan:** I'll say Sean. One day he's at my house - it was after we'd been cancelled. Sean was perfectly fine, he's clear and coherent, and he went to sit on this little wall and nearly fell over backwards! And all of a sudden he's slurring his speech and can't stand on his feet!

**Morena:** 'Oh my God, Sean is drunk!'

**Nathan:** It was as if he had been shot in the neck with a dart!

**Morena:** I ended up driving him home that night, because we lived right across the street from each other.

**Nathan:** Drunken Sean, going, 'I don't. I don't understand what's going on!'

**Morena:** He's so in control!

**Nathan:** He's always very calm, very together, and all of a sudden.....

**Morena:** ....it hits him like a ton of bricks!

**Nathan:** He's going, "Maybe I should sit down." "You are sitting down!"