

## THE 'SERENITY' INTERVIEWS - PART 2 (Summer Glau and Sean Maher)

Interview by Johanna Juntunen - LA, September 2005

### **Q: Are you surprised to be back; from a cancelled TV show to the big screen?**

Summer Glau: It just surprised me, the scale of it. Joss told us from the moment the show was cancelled that he was going to find a way to keep telling the story but we didn't exactly know what that meant. So here we are.

Sean Maher: The actual day we got cancelled we all went to Nathan's house and he (Joss) said that he would not rest until he found a home for us. So we believed, we never got the official "it's dead" so the result is this lingering sense of hope. But like Summer said (laughs) we never envisioned it to be this big movie, and now to have finished it and out there...the response has really been wonderful, so it's continually surprising.

### **Q: How did you take the bad news about the show's cancellation?**

SG: It was a shock.

SM: A blow, it was devastating.

SG: It took us a while. When we got cancelled it was right before our holiday, so we didn't even get a chance to let it settle. We went to Nathan's house and we were together for the one last time and then we all went home for Christmas, so it was just a shock.

SM: We weren't sure what was going on with the network, we were struggling, so we were on pins and needles for a while. But that takes you by surprise, it was so abrupt.

### **Q: What is so unique about this material that it deserves to be on the big screen?**

SM: I think it's the characters. Just this world that Joss created, people seem to be captivated by it. From the very beginning people who saw the show loved it, this sort of bubbling small group was always there from the very beginning, they were the driving force that inspired us and kept us going, because we knew that there were people out there that really liked it. Then the show is cancelled and the DVD sales went through the roof, so it's apparent that still people were catching on to it and loved it, so there should have been another venue to tell the story again. And Joss, I think, was sort of a miracle worker in a sense that he kept it alive and fought so hard for this. It's really his baby.

### **Q: Is it different for you actors when it was a TV show than when it was a film?**

SG: Not as much as we were preparing for. Everyone was saying that this was going to be so different, but our dynamic was already set up from when we worked together and when we worked for Joss. So when we went to set to do the film, the things that were different were not us. It's was more like the sets were bigger, we had more money, and more time.

### **Q: What time frame did you have to shoot each episode?**

SM: Eight days, and then we had three months to do the movie (laughs). It was a little bit different.

### **Q: Was it more physical?**

SG: Absolutely for me. And I think for everyone, for Sean, he ended up getting in there and fighting the battles too. But I trained for three months before we even started shooting anything.

### **Q: Was there anything they told you to do and you thought 'no way'?**

SG: (laughs) The split on the ceiling, but we got up there and we did it. When I was up there it didn't hurt. There was a guy who was helping me, and they had to rebuild the hallway three times because they had to measure my legs. If it's off an inch I can't hold my leg up. So I would get in a split and get situated and I stood up there between takes. It was easier than I thought.

**Q: Did your co-stars attempt to do it?**

SM: (laughs) I had to show her how to do it. She had to learn it from somebody.

**Q: What kind of training did you go through?**

SG: I met my stunt coordinator, Chad Stahelski, months before we started and he watched me move, he taught me some different steps and stuff, and he saw that I was a ballet dancer. He created a kind of hybrid technique for me that was a more "balletic" way of doing martial arts. He said that it was a combination of wuchu, kung-fu and kick boxing. And it was very different from dancing (laughs). I worked hard, we all worked hard.

**Q: Did you keep the workout going after the movie?**

SG: You know, they offered to let me keep coming to the class and I said no (laughs).

**Q: Did you get injuries other than bruises?**

SG: Oh, yeah. I have a big scar on knee from one stunt going wrong, and I pulled every muscle in my body - dancers are very strong but it's a completely different kind of muscle memory. Martial arts is kind of like a snake: it snaps and then it comes back in. Dancing is always up, always lifting and it's very fluid. I can hold my leg out for a long time as a dancer, but in martial arts you have to get your leg up that high but you have to get it down in one second. So I kept pulling hamstrings, I was limping home, I'd do ice baths where I just had to carry ice bags home and lie in a bathtub because I pulled everything. My body really changed a lot. And I was a vegetarian and I ate meat by the end of the movie. I was eating steaks (laughs).

**Q: What was the most difficult sequence to shoot?**

SG: The storage locker was hard for me to do.

SM: Yeah, the storage locker was hard. The end of the movie was definitely most grueling schedule-wise, we shot that for days and days. But emotionally, probably the storage locker.

SG: And also the mule chase because we were actually in the mule and then it was green screen. They made this incredible rig and we all sat up there in the desert for days and days and shot that mule chase. The boys loved it and the girls wanted to get out of the sun.

**Q: Was it easier to shoot the TV show or the film?**

SM: I liked the film. They're so different, obviously our schedule, it was eight days versus three months. Sometimes for the episodes we didn't get scripts until the night before so it was difficult to get a chunk of dialogue that we were shooting the next day, but it's just TV versus film. But the film was fun for me, because I felt that all the ground work was done, we had this incredible foundation because we had been working together as actors and we had been with these characters for so long. That, I think, is the hardest part to find. You find who your character is, how he walks and talks, and how he is with the other actors. So all that was done and we just stepped back into those shoes. There was a great sense of ease to it.

**Q: Was there any improvising or was Joss not allowing it?**

SM: No, we pretty much...maybe we finish his words and if it's rolling and if he likes what goes on afterwards we'd do it.

SG: I'm not that brave. I always do just what Joss says.

**Q: Do you have siblings?**

SG: I have two sisters.

SM: I have a sister and a brother.

**Q: Does that feeling just instinctually kick in when you have to play close siblings on screen?**

SM: It does, you obviously draw from your own life. You find similarities between yourself and the character, and they bleed into the way you portray the character.

**Q: You have tremendous patience for your sister?**

SM: (laughs) Yeah.

SG: Poor guy.

**Q: Did you always know that you wanted to get into acting or did it just happen?**

SM: I picked it up in high school where we had a great theatre program. Towards the end of my senior year we were putting up like six shows a year, and then I went to college to study drama. Right out of college I started pursuing it and I've been blessed that I've been lucky enough that things worked out.

SG: I was going to be a ballet dancer all my life. I started dancing full time when I was fourteen, and I had some really bad injuries, one in particular when I was nineteen. It would not heal. I was really stubborn, I would not give my roles to anybody so I kept dancing. Finally I just couldn't take class anymore, and I had to admit that I had to stop dancing classical ballet. So I came to L.A. for a summer, basically following a crush that I had out here and he ended up moving to New York the minute I got here (laughs). So I started auditioning for anything, and found that, I guess, I could act and maybe I could get work doing that. And I had this secret feeling when I was a little girl that I was going to end up acting. So it felt right.

**Q: What kind of message do you want the fans to pick up from Serenity?**

SG: One thing that we keep talking about is believing - whatever you believe, you have to believe it with your whole heart. That's one theme that keeps running through. And love. Taking care of the people around you, taking care of the people you love, it's simple. There are many layers and everybody that comes to see it feels something different when they walk away.

SM: What I love about the world of Firefly, the world of Serenity, is it's five-hundred years in the future but there's this big 'what if?', like, what if we used up the resources of Earth and here we are, people are trying to survive, trying to get by, trying to just eat and get a job. There are these dynamics between these wonderful characters and I think the movie...yes, it's this huge spectacular, great ride and when you really think about it, for me it instilled this faith in humanity that like yes, 500 years in the future we have this Alliance trying to do this horrible thing to this girl and trying to just change people, and at the end of the day it's like "OK, let's just have faith." There is innate goodness and people will prevail as human beings and there's just wonderful sense of humanity to it. No matter how far in the future you go, hopefully people are people in how they work and function together. We are trying to rebuild and figure things out, and make adjustments.

**Q: Does being a ballet dancer benefit you in acting?**

SG: The thing about River that I like, is that she doesn't have a lot of lines. Especially in the series she had to show what she was thinking just by the way she moved or by how her face was moving. I think that has helped me a lot as an actor. I still have hard time sometimes, expressing my anger with words, I'm better at moving and being in a room and showing how I feel that way. It's a thing that I had to work on because I was very shy as a kid. I think that's why I love dancing, because I felt that people were watching me but I didn't have to connect with them. They were out there and I could feel that they were watching me but I didn't have to look at them. Now with acting it's very therapeutic for me, having to actually say and communicate.

**Q: Can you talk about what makes Joss Whedon so special?**

SM: He's just this incredible man, he's really a wonderful guy, a friend and a mentor. The instant I met him, because there was no script with the pilot, there were like a few pages of sides, like one scene, and I really liked the scene and sat down with Joss. And instantly I was so intrigued. I really wanted to work with him. And it just continually grew, like every time on set, watching him work, everything he said was so smart. I felt that I was being steered into the right direction. He's this incredible ring leader.

SG: If you stand by him on set for ten minutes you realize every detail that runs by him, you realize how special, creative and patient he is. He is kind, and he speaks well to everybody. He gave me what I have now in my career, he cast me in my very first TV show, he believed in me when nobody believed in me. He saw something that other people were not seeing. He's my hero in a way. I'll never forget what he's done for me.

**Q: When the DVD sales of Firefly went through the roof did it give you hope or was it just a consolation prize?**

SM: For us it was a reassurance that everybody was out, it was inspiring to us. To executives and people in suits it was like "oh, look at that. There are people, this could be successful". I think it was a great tool for people who hadn't had the chance to see the show. There were fans of the box set and they passed it around, and it spread sort of word of mouth in that regard.

**Q: What's happening next with you, are you hoping for a sequel?**

SM: Sort of.

SG: We have to see who comes to see it.

**Q: What are your expectations of the movie?**

SM: I read somewhere, in Entertainment Weekly or Us Weekly, that Universal said that they are entertaining the idea of part two if we make \$80 million worldwide. I think we're all hoping but nobody wants to talk about it the possibly there will be...because there's nine of us and there are so many which ways the story could go. But you never know, I don't even know if Joss has an idea for part two, he hasn't shared it with me. But we know the fans love it and I know that people who are not familiar with the series and check out the movie are really...it's a wonderful response. I'm just hoping that people see it.

**Q: Was there an alternative ending with you dying?**

SM: No. I think he says he thought about it.

SG: God!

**Q: But you were needed for the sex scene?**

SM: Yeah, part two will be all sex.

**Q: Do you collect DVDs and what are your favourite ones?**

SM: I have a very small collection. A Streetcar Named Desire was my first DVD gift which I like.

SG: I don't collect them, no. Most of my favourite movies haven't come out on DVD yet, I like all the old stuff. My favourite is Camelot, the musical (laughs) with Richard Harris and Vanessa Redgrave. I have the old box set.

Taken from **Zeta Minor's** website:

[http://www.zetaminor.com/news\\_archive/articles/serenity\\_interviews\\_02.htm](http://www.zetaminor.com/news_archive/articles/serenity_interviews_02.htm)