

Serenity Now: Summer Glau Coming To Supanova

November 13, 2013 by Lachlan Aird

When Joss Whedon's space cowboy sci-fi series, Firefly, met an untimely end, protests from outraged fans saw justice through the film Serenity, which acted as a reboot, wrap up and sequel of sorts. As the 10 year anniversary since Serenity's release looms, with Firefly's having just passed, one of its stars Summer Glau returns to Australia for the Supanova pop culture convention.

Speaking with Rip It Up while folding laundry in LA and taking a break from shooting episodes of superhero TV series Arrow, Glau is still shocked that Firefly and Serenity continue to have such an impact on audiences, with its cult status only burgeoning since Firefly was cancelled in 2002.

"I didn't even realise that fanbases like this existed when I started out," Glau says in disbelief.

"Joss [Whedon] explained to me before we started doing press for the movie [*Serenity*] that there are going to be these waves of love from the fans and that there are places you can go to meet them and sign autographs and do question and answer sessions. He tried to describe these things to me and I couldn't imagine it. Obviously, looking on 10 years later I am presently amazed that we are still meeting and talking about it. I have people coming up to me at conventions saying, 'My brother just gave me the box set and now I'm addicted to it'. People are still coming to it and becoming new fans, which is amazing."

It was serendipitous that Glau ended up scoring the role of River Tam — the mysterious teenage genius who takes shelter on the spaceship Serenity — after she met Whedon whilst working on an episode of Whedon's other series, Angel. Glau played a prima ballerina, and Glau herself had just moved to LA to pursue acting after an injury ended her own ballet career. As much as it sounds like fate, Glau wasn't necessarily a shoe-in for the role.

"When I first moved to LA, my managers encouraged me not to be very forthcoming with the fact that I was a ballerina; they wanted me to be known as an actress. When this role came up they had a dance audition first to make sure this girl could dance, but I missed it and snuck into the call back and met Joss. He cast me before knowing if I could dance. The choreographer afterwards told me that she was so scared that I wouldn't have been able to dance, but I mean, I was a real ballerina, so I could do it. Joss just took this leap of faith because he saw something in me which he trusted, and just went for it. And yeah, it changed my life."

The greatest challenge for Glau, on top of moving to LA, was to try and "find a new identity" as an actress, after always being regarded as "Summer the ballerina — the girl that dances" since she was five.

"It was hard for me to think that people would even recognise me without being a dancer, but I started acting and something happened to me where I felt so connected and it felt so right. It's been really good to me. I've been very lucky." her pushing more and more into that relationship. She'll assert her dominance. I love all my scenes with Emily. They're a lot of fun, and it's great comedy.

One stroke of luck in particular was landing the role of River in Firefly. in with a cast as established as this tryptic of "Arrow" leads and play off of them?

"It just worked out perfectly in my favour. I had never tested for a series before [Firefly]. I was very new, I had barely done anything. Thankfully my lucky stars were aligned and I was added to this stellar cast of seasoned actors who really taught me how to be an actress."

The gratitude Glau has for Whedon is palpable. Regarded by many as one of the most innovative and influential TV and film identities of our time, Whedon has been responsible for television's Buffy The Vampire Slayer, Angel and Dollhouse, feature films Much Ado About Nothing and The Avengers, which is also the third highest grossing film of all time, and wrote Cabin In The Woods and Toy Story. Renowned for writing strong, female roles, Glau is honoured to be a part of this tradition.

"It is such an honour," Glau says of being a part of Whedon's legacy of female characters as River.

"I just can't say how much of an impact he [Whedon] made on my life. I was 19 when I met him and didn't really know anything about acting. I just had these instincts and an imagination. He gave me a safe place to express it. Lucky for me he's a genius. He's insanely smart, sensitive and caring."

Another hero of hers that she worked with is Lena Headey (yes, Cersei from Game Of Thrones) who Glau worked with on the series Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles. "Talk about a strong female actress. [Lena is] a really cool girl. She's amazing," Glau gushes.

"She absolutely is [a role model to me]. The gravity she can bring to a scene before she even speaks is something that I found fascinating. She always gave me really good advice. Even life advice — from one girl to another. I've always admired her. She's an amazing talent and I always cherished my time working with her on Sarah Connor. It went way too fast for me. I miss her!"

In an all-too convenient turn of events, Headey has been announced as one of the replacements for fellow Game Of Thrones cast member Peter Dinklage, who had to withdraw from the convention due to filming commitments. Unfortunately for Adelaide, Headey is only appearing at the Brisbane Supanova convention, although Michelle Fairley (Catelyn Stark) will be attending Adelaide. Hearing of Headey's addition to the line-up was a surprise for Glau, whose reaction down the phone line was ecstatic.

"Really!? I didn't know that! I haven't seen her in forever! Yay!"

What We're Known For

While Summer Glau has been to Australian conventions before, confessing its one of her favourite places to visit, she has never been to Adelaide.

"My friend Diechen Lachman [best known in Australia for her role as Katya on Neighbours] is one of yours," Glau laughs.

"She's from Adelaide and I worked with her on Dollhouse. She always told me how beautiful it is and I've heard that you have amazing wine tours. I will be definitely checking them out."

Taken from Rip it up's website:

<http://www.ripitup.com.au/lifestyle/article/serenity-now-summer-glau-interview-supanova-adelaide-2013>