

**JEWEL STAITE, ADAM BALDWIN, SEAN MAHER & SUMMER GLAU**  
**Contributed by Michael J. Lee, Executive Editor for Radio Free Entertainment**

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Based on the acclaimed, cult television series *Firefly*, *Serenity* is the cinematic continuation of the exploits of a crew of space-faring adventurers making a living on the fringes of the law. Like the TV show before it, *Serenity* is a blend of genres, styles, and cultures. It deftly mixes science fiction with the classic western, and is as equally loaded with comedy as it is with blockbuster action adventure. Above all, the writing is sharp, and the cast delivers a strong ensemble of endearing, interesting, and multi-faceted characters.

The crew of *Serenity* includes intrepid ship captain and leader of the pack Malcolm Reynolds (Nathan Fillion); the captain's loyal, gunslinging, right-hand woman Zoe (Gina Torres); resident businesswoman and representative of the world's oldest profession Inara (Morena Baccarin); hilariously crass gun for hire Jayne (Adam Baldwin); sweet but not-as-naive-as-she-seems mechanic Kaylee (Jewel Staite); the ship's brilliant onboard medic Simon (Sean Maher); and the enigmatic, ticking time bomb of an experiment in superhuman abilities, River (Summer Glau).

Written and directed by Joss Whedon (creator of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*), *Serenity* is both remarkably accessible to audiences completely unfamiliar with its *Firefly* predecessor and ideally satisfying for fans of the sci-fi phenomenon.

In this interview, Jewel Staite, Adam Baldwin, Sean Maher, and Summer Glau talk about the making of *Serenity*, the dedicated fan support, and the transition from the small screen to the big screen.

[NOTE: So as to disarm any ill-informed preconceptions of him or his work based on a name, please note that Adam Baldwin has no relation to those 50 brothers all related to Alec Baldwin. *Adam* Baldwin rules.]

**MEDIA: Summer, did your background as a ballerina help the physical aspects of your role?**

SUMMER: It did help me because I was used to training every day--going to the gym and working out all day, and doing lots of different types of training. But really, it's completely different muscle memory. I had to completely retrain my body. It took three months. All day. [lowers voice] Every day.

ADAM: And it worked. *And it worked!*

SUMMER: [laughs]

**Adam, what does your t-shirt say?**

ADAM: Oh, this is one that the fans gave me down at Dragon\*Con in Atlanta. "Let's Be Bad Guys."

**What was the biggest difference between working on the TV show and working on the film?**

JEWEL: I think it was the time factor. We had so much more time on the movie than we did on the series. We could do a three page scene all day long if we wanted to, which was nice. And when you're doing series work, you have 12 hours and then that's it. And in those 12 hours, you have about eight or nine pages to shoot. And on the movie, I just felt like we had all this rehearsal time. We could stop, we could talk about the characters, we could talk about the vibe of the scene, what we were going for.

ADAM: We had two weeks of rehearsal before we started filming, and I think we focused a lot on the main dialogue scenes early on. But we also focused on that mule chase scene. Because we had two weeks of exterior work on location that we had to get *in* those two weeks to stay on budget and on time. And the weather cooperated, and we were able to get all that stuff in. And I feel that once we got to the studio, the controlled atmosphere on the soundstages, we were home free. It just felt like we were right back workshoping our little TV show on these gigantic Universal soundstages.

JEWEL: It was very strange.

ADAM: It was just great.

SEAN: Yeah, I agree. I think time was a big thing. We had, obviously, a lot more time to tell a story than we did when we were shooting the series. But to me, it just felt so similar to the show, Everything just felt a little more spectacular, just felt a little grander. And there was a wonderful feeling of redemption to sort of come back with these people. It was this great reunion, and so it was a wonderful energy on the set.

JEWEL: And a sense of closure, too.

SEAN: Yeah.

SUMMER: Yes.

JEWEL: Because when we got cancelled, it all happened very quickly. And I'm from Canada, I'm from Vancouver, so I packed up and went home. And I felt like there was no closure whatsoever.

SEAN: It was very abrupt.

JEWEL: So when we were greenlit to do the movie and we saw each other again and we were able to play these characters one more time, it just felt nice. It felt gratifying.

ADAM: I think an important aspect of that, though, is that we felt, and I think the fanbase felt, that we were kind of under the gun from the get-go. Our ratings were low, everyone kind of knew our ratings were low. And we needed to figure out some way to push them up, and never did. And we got canceled. But the cancellation all happens really quick. [snaps fingers] It's like, "Okay, you're done, go home." But Joss immediately asked for the rights to *Firefly* to make it somewhere else. And he tried to sell it to other TV networks. They didn't bite. And over time, he was able to, ultimately, get Universal's attention, and they agreed to make the film. But Joss never gave up. Joss never stopped "fighting for the future." And so while it was very hard for all of us and devastating emotionally...I don't know about you guys, but I never felt that Joss gave up, and I always kind of felt that this was where we would end up, until he said, "I can't do it anymore." And he never did. So while we miss our show, you're right that we have closure, whatever happens to the movie. We do. And we can move forward whether we're a hit and we get to make two more, or come what may. I'm not even going to spell out the other alternatives.

### **What storyline has a profound impact on you?**

JEWEL: You know what really bugs me? Mal and Inara. Their tension just gets to me. I want them to kiss and get together and get it over with. It drives me crazy! Those characters are so incredibly stubborn that no matter what, they cannot admit how they feel about the other person. And that's definitely the story arc that I would like to see come to some sort of conclusion. Just because it bugs me.

### **Assuming the franchise doesn't end here, what new thing would you like to see your characters do in the future?**

ADAM: Needlepoint. No, seriously. Little girly things.

JEWEL: I think Kaylee should have a baby. [laughs]

SEAN: [laughs, acknowledging Kaylee's connection to his character] I agree.

### **Should Jayne come out of the closet, or what?**

JEWEL: It would be very interesting. [laughs]

ADAM: Well, no. I think...Joss'll disagree with this, but my subtext was that Jayne had a crush on Inara, and that was sort of his driving energy through there. But Joss was always like, "No! Wrong, Adam, he does not!" [laughs] But what would I see like to happen? I'd like to see Kaylee have a

baby.

JEWEL: I think there needs to be a baby on that ship!

SEAN: We always talk about what new characters could come on the ship. I mean, sadly, we've seen two leave us, and so it only seems right. If, God willing, the story continues...

JEWEL: Yes. [knocks in table] Knocking on wood.

ADAM: I think we should meet Jayne's parents. That would be fun.

**Sean, did you enjoy getting more action scenes than you normally got on the TV series?**

SEAN: Yes, yes, yes! That was great, actually. What I would like to [do] is go further with that. Because it was very gratifying to see [my character] get a little rougher around the edges, and I'd love to continue with that. But not lose [his] incredible gift for medicine. To sort of mesh the two. And I think he was figuring that out during the movie, so I'd love to see that go further.

**What sort of training did you have in the weapons department?**

SUMMER: We had quite a bit of gun training.

SEAN: We had quite a bit.

JEWEL: Yeah. They made me shoot everything from this big [demonstrates a small gun with her hands] to this big [demonstrates a big gun with her hands]. And this one gun was so incredibly heavy...

SEAN: [laughs] I remember that.

JEWEL: Do you remember? I looked like the biggest geek in the world. I was leaning back, it was so heavy. And I thought I would be cute that day and wear shorts and a tank top. And every time I would shoot the gun, it would sort of ricochet and I would get little burns all over my legs. It wasn't super fun, but...It was crazy.

SEAN: I thought it was fun. [laughs]

SUMMER: I loved doing that part.

JEWEL: Everybody else thought it was fun but me!

SEAN: It was scary how fun it can be.

ADAM: [jokes] I've been coming up with weapons for years.

SEAN: But I think they weren't sure exactly who was shooting what, or what was going to be used, so they just had us get familiar with everything that could possibly find its way into the script somehow. So there was a lot of firing to be done.

**Summer, how much of River's climactic fight scene is you, as opposed to a stunt double?**

SUMMER: There were two dangerous stunts that they wouldn't let me do. The one falling down the stairs, that was just too risky, and one other flip that my stunt double ended up getting hurt doing. [cringes] I felt terrible! But everything else...I mean, those swords and all the blade work I do myself. All the guns I do myself. The daggers. Joss wanted it to look real. And I felt it--every punch and every kick! [laughs]

**Adam, what do you think about the script's use of gallows humor?**

ADAM: Well, I keep going back to Jayne being a practical guy. [laughs] You know, what do you do in the face of mortal peril? You either panic and cry and crap your pants, or you make a joke and you try to survive. Joss wrote the lines for me. It's a great device. I think it worked out for that character--you know, this false bravado.

**Is Joss particularly protective against people changing the dialogue he has written?**

JEWEL: He's pretty specific.

SUMMER: He's like poetry.

ADAM: He's open to any good suggestion. It's just his standards are very high. So to get there, you have to come up with a very good idea or an alteration. He was not completely inflexible. He's got it so completely formed on the page for you, and in his mind and his vision. And again, we had two weeks of rehearsal to suss out all the problems, that by the time we were actually shooting, it was just go-go-go. There were no real stumbling blocks.

SEAN: Yeah. But I think specifically with *Firefly* and then *Serenity*--I don't know how it was with *Buffy* or *Angel*--but there's such a specific way that these characters speak. There was a very clear rhythm to the language.

***Serenity* makes frequent use of Chinese phrases in its dialogue. Is that a difficult element to tackle?**

JEWEL: Yeah? [laughs]

SEAN: I got none in the movie! [jokes] So it's a piece of cake.

JEWEL: It's hard.

SUMMER: It's hard for me to make it emotional. I had this one really emotional scene where I had to do Chinese. And I felt ridiculous.

ADAM: [referring to line in movie] It damaged my calm...

SUMMER: [laughs]

SEAN: I think the hardest thing about the Chinese is that there are these phrases. It's not just like "yes" or "no." It's just these chunks of phrases that the other actors had to stumble over.

ADAM: But it's just great that [Joss] would actually figure out these phrases like "the explosive diarrhea of an elephant," and translate it into Chinese. And then you get to go and say that.

SEAN: [laughs] Right.

**Jewel and Summer, did you have any input on your costumes?**

JEWEL: I think the costuming was very specific, too. I lucked out. I got to wear a nice, comfy jumpsuit for the entire movie! It was great! But yeah, I think [the costume designer] really knew what she was doing. She had a specific vision, and she sort of had it all planned out when I arrived.

SUMMER: I get to fight in a dress! [laughs]

**Did you keep your outfit after filming wrapped?**

SUMMER: I kept the boots. [laughs]

**What kind of encounters have you had with the *Serenity* fans?**

JEWEL: We've been doing these science fiction conventions. It's been really interesting.

ADAM: We've had a lot of interaction with the fans.

JEWEL: A lot.

ADAM: [They were] supportive from the get-go. I think again, it goes back to this underdog story

of us struggling to get back in the air, and the people that are going along for the ride have been very helpful in keeping us there. I know that the DVD sales were very important to Universal's decision [to make the movie]. I don't know if it was the ultimate decision making reason, but it was very important. And we very much appreciate how much the fans have helped with our return to the screen.

JEWEL: Absolutely. I'm not even sure we'd be here if we didn't have such an amazing, dedicated following.

ADAM: Yeah. I mean, they make us shirts. And they make us trinkets.

JEWEL: And they dress up like us. They do.

SUMMER: They sing our song!

JEWEL: They sing all the songs. They quote our lines. *I* don't even remember my lines from the series, and they all know the dialogue. It's amazing.

SEAN: This past summer, there were a bunch of secret screenings with fans that we all attended. And watching the movie with fans is just an experience unto itself. There's really nothing like it. They're incredibly loyal, and it's flattering. It's wonderful.

JEWEL: And they're smart, too.

ADAM: They're smart, but you also get this huge cross-section of demographics. You get young and old, men and women, left and right. They love the writing, they love the characters, they just love the show. It's amazing.

**What's the strangest experience you've had at a conventions? Or what has been the strangest gift you've received?**

JEWEL: I had a fan come up to me, who was so sweet. And I guess he was quite nervous. And he farted.

ADAM: Nice gift.

JEWEL: [laughs] And it was audible.

ADAM: [adds] Memorable.

JEWEL: And I felt so bad! And I know he felt really bad. And we both pretended like nothing happened. [laughs] And we took a picture with each other, and then he walked away.

ADAM: There have been a lot of useful gifts, though. Like t-shirts. And stationery with logos.

**How would you characterize the struggle to complete a film based on a canceled TV show?**

ADAM: I can't remember exactly the line that Joss gave in Edinburgh, but it was a brilliant line, and it talked about how his struggle, his journey, to get this movie made utilized the fuel of love, as opposed to the fuel of anger or vindictiveness. I wish I had the quote exactly. Do you remember him saying that?

SEAN: Yeah.

ADAM: It was beautiful. It was like, anger is not an efficient fuel, love is. I'm paraphrasing, but that's basically what his intent was. And that's true. So the love that we get for the show, for the characters, for Joss' writing...a lot of that, you just see in the energy, I think, when you watch the show. I love the show. I love the movie. It's great.

**Was the decision to kill off a few central characters based on the needs of the story or the careers of the actors involved?**

ADAM: I think you'll have to ask Joss and Alan [Tudyk] and Ron [Glass] that. Put those questions to them. But Joss has said in public, "If we get back and make movies, I'm sure you'll see those characters again." I've heard him say that in public, so I don't think I'm stepping on any toes there.

SEAN: I think it was to tell the story. Again, it's a question for Joss, but I know he says that he just felt these characters have to die. This is what has to happen.

JEWEL: If we all lived, it wouldn't be very believable.

SEAN: My favorite moment is when Kaylee says, "Where's Wash?" That's like one of my favorite moments in the movie.

**As a viewer, do you think it is easy to separate *Serenity* from *Firefly*?**

ADAM: It definitely stands on its own.

SEAN: Yeah, it stands on its own, but it also embodies everything that the show had.

JEWEL: I'm hoping people will see the movie and say, "Wow, that was really interesting. There was a TV show? Oh, great! I'm going to buy the box set!"

ADAM: The box set's a really cool package, and they put it together real well.

**Thanks a lot for your time, guys.**

ADAM: In closing, I just want to say thank you, to all of you, for being here, because this is a labour of love for us. And we hope for the best for it. And you actually being here shows that you care about the show, too. So thank you for taking your time.

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