

Dancer in a Daydream: An Interview With Summer Glau

by Russ Matthews and Geoff Termorshuizen

Daily Dragon: *Let's start out with some basics. We'd like to know if you were interested in science fiction and fantasy before you got the role in Angel? Was science fiction a part of your life then?*

Summer Glau: Well, I think science fiction in general was a part of my childhood. I grew up reading C.S. Lewis books all through my childhood, at lunchtime, and at bedtime. I'm also a great fan of the Madeline L'Engle books. I was a big fan, and the one *Star Trek* show that I watched was *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. And I watched it religiously. I thought it was amazing. I would sneak into my parent's bed every night at ten and watch with them while they fell asleep.

DD: *What resources or influences have you drawn on to create the character of River Tam? Were there other characters that you saw from other television shows or books and said, "I am going to take this and I'm going to build on that?"*

SG: Not any characters specifically, no. When I first read River, though, I had a very distinct feeling about who she is. Joss really touches me with his writing, and I have a story about reading one of his scenes before I knew it was his, and it made me extremely emotional. I just think that he is such a gifted writer, that his writing brings characters to life before the actors get a hold of them, you know? So I felt really strongly about River.

Also, as a teenager, I was very isolated and confused and, I think, very sad and had a hard time expressing myself to others or relating to others. So in that way, I felt very close to River.

DD: *You have said earlier that you see Tess Doerner from The 4400 as being completely separate from what River is. Both of them have mental problems, as Tess is schizophrenic and River has been terribly emotionally abused. Did the part of River help prepare you to play Tess, or is that comparing apples and oranges?*

SG: Well, I don't if I would have been [prepared] if I hadn't played River before I played Tess. In a way, I found it even more challenging because I have to try to find ways to make her different. And I told Joss when I got the role, I said, "When you watch it, please don't [think] it's a River knock-off." But I tried to make them different. I tried to stretch my acting skills. [Laughs]

DD: *Speaking of acting skills, you just completed production on the movie, The Initiation of Sara, and you have also been cast in the television series The Unit. Can you tell us something about these projects and those roles?*

SG: *The Initiation of Sarah* is a movie that was made in the Seventies originally. It's about these two twin girls who go off to college and have kind of a complicated relationship with their mother. They go off to college, and all their lives they've been isolated and strange and never really fit in at high school. My character is dying to just be normal. And my sister is rebellious and a little wild and yet she's more centered than my character. My character is desperately trying to figure out who she is. So it starts out with them trying to find their way in college, and then throughout the course of the story, they find out that they're actually witches. And it's really funny and it's scary and it's airing on Halloween [on ABC Family network]. It's a really fun movie, and it's the first movie I've done with girls my own age. It's just a group of girls my age. [laughs] It's... it was crazy. I had a great time. It was a very different role for me than I've ever played. Just a normal teenage girl, who's insecure and trying to fit in. Really happy and enthusiastic, and then all of a sudden, there's a really dark turn.

DD: *So what can you tell us about The Unit?*

SG: *The Unit* is... complicated and over my head because it's about Army stuff. [laughs] Which I don't really understand. I play the girlfriend of one of the recruits and I'm loving it. I'm *loving* it I'm recurring on that show, and I hope that they keep me around at least

for a few episodes because it's really fun for me to get to play someone Middle American. She's an American girl; she lives in a trailer park. She's funny, she's a little wild. She's a little bit.. um... she's a little bit *trailer*. [laughs again] That's been a blast for me. I love the cast. It's a really, really talented cast. I love being around them.

DD: *Are there any other projects we should know about?*

SG: I've been cast in another movie that is supposed to shoot in October. I don't want to say what it is because we're finishing up negotiations. I'm almost sure I'm going to do it, but I'm not on the plane yet. So I'm not going to say anything.

DD: *Everyone knows about your [ballet] dancing background, about how you got your start. Have you had a chance to dance professionally since you started acting? Is it something you think you're going to get back to?*

SG: No. You know, dancing professionally is a life commitment. I have a hard time telling myself that it's okay just to go take class. All through my childhood and through my teenage years, ballet was my life. When I got hurt and had to quit dancing, I thought that people wouldn't recognize me anymore. I was known as "Summer the Girl Who Dances." It was a really, really hard adjustment for me after I started acting to even go back to take class because that was my identity. I was very proud, and I didn't really know how my relationship with dance would be after I started acting. But I have since gone back. See, I got back in shape in the summer and through the fall and then I shot *Initiation of Sara* and had to quit dancing and lost everything that I worked on. I mean, I was doing ballet every day. That's what happens when you're dancing. It's like a sport or like gymnastics. It's like climbing a ladder and then, if you stop climbing, you fall down. I have to set aside time to get back in shape.

DD: *So what is it that you do when you're not shooting?*

SG: I'm working on my cooking skills, actually. I want to take a cooking class. I'm not very gifted in the kitchen at all. I don't want to live my life being a bad cook. And just reading a ton. I love to read. Working out every day.

DD: *We know about Nathan Fillion and his infamous pranks. Do you have one that particularly sticks out in your mind?*

SG: Well, you know, he's kind of just always *funny*. I can't think of one specific thing that he did. There were a lot of things that were kind of an ongoing joke. Like the Summer joke where everything was my fault. Nathan started that. I'm the first one who always breaks. If there is something funny going on in a scene, I cannot keep a straight face. I'm so embarrassed, I can't keep the joke going. They know if there's a scene, then I'm going to ruin it by laughing because Nathan likes to stand behind the camera and try to make people lose their concentration. He does that all the time and he's always got me.

DD: *This is your first Dragon*Con. What do you think?*

SG: There's just so **many** people. I can't believe how many people there are. I love the fans. I feel really comfortable when I'm signing. Everyone's been so warm and kind. I love being in the South. There's something about it that's different. When I went to shoot my movie in Louisiana, I could have lived in Shreveport. It was a little town; it wasn't anything like LA. People were saying, "There's nothing to do at night," and "Things are so spread out." I was just loving it. I love being in Atlanta. It feels the same to me.

DD: *Nathan Fillion, Jewel Staite, Adam Baldwin and Ron Glass have all been to Dragon*Con. What, if anything, did they tell you about Dragon*Con? Did they prepare you in any way for any of this?*

SG: We talk about different conventions and everyone always says, "Definitely have to do Dragon*Con!" Everyone that goes *loves* it. It's one of the biggest ones; it's one of the most famous ones. And I've never been to this part of the States. I try to choose

conventions in places where I haven't been so that I can meet fans I haven't had the opportunity to meet.

DD: *Are there any charities or organizations that you are a part of that you'd like to let people know about?*

SG: No, I'm still looking for my special one. I'm trying to find something that has to do with dance. Right now, what I do is I read letters that people send to me, and I usually just send to each one that I can. But I really want to find one that is special to me, and I haven't yet.

DD: *Thanks for coming out today and talking to us, Summer. We really appreciate it.*

SG: Thank you.

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<http://www.dragoncon.net/dailydragon/2006/20.htm>