

**Sarah Connor Chronicles: The Terminator and the Leader
IGN TV talks with stars Summer Glau and Thomas Dekker.**

by Travis Fickett
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If you've happened to have seen one of the seemingly endless number of ads, billboards, "advance looks" and preview pieces on entertainment websites - then maybe you knew that Fox is premiering its new show Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles this weekend. It's going to be a back to back premiere (not unlike 24 has done in the past) with the pilot episode premiering Sunday night, followed by the first episode in the show's regular timeslot on Monday nights. The reason for this seems to be clear. As we tell you in our review, the pilot is quite good. But the following episode adds all of the elements to the mix that enables a great movie franchise to become a television series with loads of potential.

We told Thomas Dekker our take on this. "Thank you!" he said, enthusiastically agreeing with our assessment. "It sucks because most people have only seen the pilot, and we as the cast feel the show just gets better and better and better. We're all very happy with the pilot, but honestly I'd say it's our lamest episode." Perhaps not the sentiment you'd expect from a star of the show, but Dekker explains his reasoning: "The pilot does what it has to, and is almost a remake of one of the movies in a way, to get the audience and set everything up. But it's episode two where we're doing our own thing and it's really cool."

Summer Glau, who plays the "protector machine" of the series, agrees: "A lot of pilots have a "pilot look" as everyone is learning how to work together and working out all the kinks. I think our show starts to take on the look that we want in the first episode. Our pilot is great too. Another thing I'm really proud of with our series is that yes, it's a huge action show and the fight scenes and visual effects are really important. But there's a lot of funny moments in our series too, and I think the first episode really starts to blossom that way."

As for how the movie series translates to the small screen, Glau explains why she finds the idea exciting: "There are a lot of subplots that are being introduced. Films don't get to do that. You have two hours to get the point across, make it big, make it exciting and then it's over. A TV show can meander more. You can have all these cool guest stars and sub-plots, and I love that all of that stuff is starting to develop in the first episode."

While Cameron is an original creation, Lena Headey is playing a role made famous by Linda Hamilton. However, Dekker is playing a role played already by Edward Furlong and Nick Stahl – and now none other than Christian Bale will be playing John Connor in the next trilogy of Terminator movies. Dekker, however, has the opportunity to chronicle John's transformation into the leader of the resistance against the machines. "I'd be really happy if we were on for many years. It's a little scary, because we all had to sign a contract for eight years. It's a big commitment, but we all love these characters and – more importantly – we love each other. We could do this for a long time I think."

As Cameron, Glau plays a Terminator that isn't programmed to just look human, but to assimilate even more than previous models – which means the ability to mimic emotion and humanity. "I was really excited about this idea," the actress says, "especially when I talked to Josh Friedman about it. Of course it's fascinating to for things to shape shift and turn to liquid and be able to change form. But I think that I am more excited as an actress to play a machine that can impersonate lots of different people. And that can be convincingly emotional. I want people to realize that she's a robot, but I also want people to stop every once in a while and think 'Oh my Gosh, it seems there's something more going on behind her eyes than just math.'"

In fact, in the first episode, you can see John Connor himself torn on this subject. Not only does the first pretty girl he meets in a new town turn out to be another Terminator, but even later John seems to be spooked by the appearance of some humanity. Something that becomes apparent in the early episodes is the dichotomy between the two women of the show. Sarah Connor has spent much of her

life becoming more of a machine to protect John, whereas Cameron – who is literally a machine - needs to become more human in order to achieve the same goal.

"One of the major themes that we're doing now is that Cameron is posing as the daughter of Sarah Connor, and John's [sister]," Glau explains. "It's really interesting to watch the dynamic between Cameron and Sarah. Sarah really doesn't want to trust Cameron, but has to because she has no better option right now. But part of Sarah begins to care what happens to her because we do begin to become something of a family. But Sarah is, of course, always on guard. There are moments that develop where John has to make a decision about how he feels about me and about how much he trusts me."

With the ongoing writers' strike, the last two complete episodes of Sarah Connor were finished without the show's creator, Josh Friedman. When asked about doing the show in his absence, Glau said "It's been horrible. I'll be honest. I've only seen him a few times and it brings me to tears. He's the reason I got this part. He wanted me to have this role, and he's like the daddy. When daddy's not home you don't know quite what to do all the time. We want his stamp of approval for anything. The show is his and we wouldn't be here without him. Being here is an honor, but I also feel a little guilty that we're able to carry on and he's not here. So I hope that [the strike] is over soon." She later added that "It's very fragile to do Terminator as a series. There's a lot of roadblocks, there's a lot of things that can happen and I think we need our leader."

Dekker agreed it was difficult not having Friedman around, and sympathized with his position. "It's a difficult thing for the writers," he says. Though when Friedman wasn't there for the filming of the final episodes Dekker says "I tell you, I took advantage of it. I basically rewrote a scene. Hopefully Josh won't be too bummed when he sees the episode." Dekker is no stranger to writing – or directing. He was actually finishing a feature film that he wrote and directed when Sarah Connor began. "I never slept. I was literally doing 14-hour days of acting with every weekend, every evening, every everything else going to the film. Fortunately I had a crew and a cast that was willing to work around the show. This is why I've normally tried to take the smaller acting parts, so that I have time to do these other things that are just as important to me. But this was the chance of a lifetime and I couldn't walk away from it."

Adding one more hyphenate to the mix, Dekker is adding a song of his own to the soundtrack of the show. Dekker says that one of the things that made him comfortable with the show was the presence of composer Bear McCreedy (Battlestar Galactica, Eureka). "He's a genius. When I saw the rough cut of the pilot, it had a temp score, but now that it has his score, it's night and day."

On Friedman's blog, "I Find Your Lack of Faith Disturbing," he related a series of problems that befell his home and family – from bad dreams to mold infestation – and after eliminating all of the logical possibilities for his bad luck, he was left with: "Joss Whedon is very upset with me for casting Summer Glau and has somehow invoked a powerful curse and relocated the Buffy Hellmouth underneath my home."

We asked Glau if she happened to see this entry. She laughs, "My mom read it and emailed it to me. It's so funny. Joss was actually really excited when I got this part. He loves The Terminator. He was really happy for me, and there are some similarities between the two of them. Of course, Joss is the reason I'm still in LA. I don't know what would have happened to me if I hadn't met him, and he hadn't given me all the opportunities that he did; because nobody wants to give you a chance when you're new. For a year I was here and I was always second place. They would bring me to the end of casting and light me, but in the end they would go with the other girl who had the bigger resume. When I met Joss he was the first person who said "You know, I have a feeling about you. And I'll never forget what he's done for me. I'll never forget what Joss has done for me, because there are always obstacles and to have someone fight for you is very precious and Joss I believe is the reason why I got this role."

Taken from IGN's website:
<http://tv.ign.com/articles/845/845103p1.html>