

Summer Glau: Teen Terminatrix

Jan 10, 2008 - Lynn Barker

If you've watched "Firefly" or seen the Serenity film, you know that petite, delicate actress Summer Glau can kick serious butt... with grace (she was a prima ballerina!) Summer was also a running character on TV's "The Unit" and "The 4400" but, starting January 13th, "she'll be back" as a new, sexy teenaged Terminator from 2027 protecting a teen John Connor in the new action sci-fi series "The Sarah Connor Chronicles" on Fox.

We chatted with Summer last summer on the Santa Monica Pier at a party thrown by Fox TV. The actress looked sexy and casual and we were standing under a roller coaster while actors and press were busy on the midway playing games and winning stuffed animals. Summer is from San Antonio, Texas and this reporter is from New Mexico, so, after gushing about how cool Santa Fe is, we got down to talking about her career, how she likes playing roles that empower girls and the challenges of playing a female "Arnold" in this TV extension of the Terminator franchise.

TeenTelevision: How familiar with the Terminator universe were you before you started this?

Summer: Not at all. My dad was so embarrassed that I hadn't seen the films yet, so he loaned me all three and we watched them, back to back. I think it actually helped me. I had the hardest time saying that line, 'Come with me, if you want to live'. I loved them. I was impressed. I knew how big it was in terms of action. I knew the iconic symbols around Terminator but I was surprised at how touching it was; the relationships. I got so into it because of a mother's love for her son. I understood on a different level and I loved how human Arnold was; how much I cared about him. It's not just about robots and blowing things up and killing people. It was a real story.

TeenTelevision: You are no stranger to stunts and you have a dance background so did you get to do any of your own stunts in the pilot?

Summer: I got to do quite a bit. But the thing about TV, it's different from film, you don't have the same amount of time. I worked for months and months on Serenity to learn those fight scenes. When you're doing TV, you might not get the script until the night before you shoot it so that's going to be a challenge. I'm hoping we can do a lot of our stunts ourselves. I know we're all really into it, really pumped about it but it's going to be a team effort and we have a great stunt team too.

TeenTelevision: Were you injured making the pilot?

Summer: I was. I have a scar on my face. I was on a shooting range and a shell flew back and burned my face. They let it show all through the pilot. I was so happy. If you watch the pilot you can see that scar but she's supposed to be human so we let it show. It was great.

TeenTelevision: How has your ballet training helped you?

Summer: I think it's helped me, in my discipline and my ability to come to set and know that I have to be warmed up and know my choreography, and that, when I go home, I have to go to the gym. That's definitely helped me, with all the work I've done so far, as an actress. I still go to class. I still dance all the time.

TeenTelevision: Do you think about the possibility that your character can become the popular focal point of the show?

Summer: I've never been in a cast this small. I'm used to being with an ensemble, and being part of a team. It's been a challenge for me to be around the cast every day, and be more responsible for the outcome of the show and, on top of that, being a Terminator and being compared to an icon like Arnold Schwarzenegger. Josh [Friedman] has some amazing ideas for Cameron. Not only is she going to be hardcore and doing action scenes every week but, on top of that, she's also going to be a teenager. She's going to go to school and do normal teenage girl things, and that's something we haven't seen from a Terminator so far.

TeenTelevision: What is it with you getting cast as a sci-fi girl with superpowers?

Summer: I don't know. I think I've only played one role where I was just a normal girl, so it's better than I could ever have imagined. When I came to L.A., I wanted to do these romantic period pieces. I wanted to be Jane Eyre. And then, I got out there and they gave me a revolver, and here I am. And, it's better than I could have ever imagined.

TeenTelevision: How do you feel about playing a strong teenaged girl?

Summer: I called Joss Whedon when I got the role because I wanted his input. I love any opportunity for a young girl to be empowered. We can't get enough of that, in this day and age. There's still a lot of oppression for girls in Hollywood. There are a lot of roles that are still degrading for girls. I've turned down a lot of things because I want to play roles like this, where girls are celebrated and they're empowered. It's inspiring.

TeenTelevision: Yay, gurlpower! Your character in "Firefly" and Serenity is an emotional wreck and Cameron, in this new show, is pretty much emotionless but mimics emotion so what have been your acting challenges bringing her to life?

Summer: It's been complicated for me. The first time I read the sides [partial script] I was really intimidated by playing this character. I've never come to a role with these stipulations. I've played very vulnerable characters and this is different. We're still working on it; still figuring out how I want her to be. I want people to relate to her and care about her so I'm trying to find ways of doing that. As she grows through the series, I think she's going to become more human. Who knows how far she can take it?

TeenTelevision: When you first read the script, were you reluctant to take on another role where you kick butt? What attracted you to the project?

Summer: When I first read it, I thought I wouldn't be what they were looking for. I felt like I looked too much like a normal girl. I thought they would want someone more statuesque, like Kristanna Loken. I see her in real life and she's amazing. I'm not exactly like that so I thought 'well, I'll go in and it'll be embarrassing; everybody will be tall.

TeenTelevision: But they probably had seen your work in "Firefly" or Serenity, right?

Summer: Well I came in and I saw Josh Friedman and I knew him from years before from a pilot of his that I was absolutely in love with. I was reading and reading for it and getting closer then Serenity came up and I finalized the deal on that. But, I remember that pilot. When you run into a good writer, you read it and you know. It touches you. You don't have to work on your acting. It comes. So when I read his work again, I was really excited.

TeenTelevision: So you really campaigned for the role, 'choose me! Choose me!'

Summer: [laughing] Of course!!

TeenTelevision: What types of roles do you turn down?

Summer: I've turned down a lot of roles that I feel are not portraying women in a light that I would like to see. I can't change the way people write and produce. I turn down roles that I feel are not encouraging to young girls. That's just my way of contributing. I'm not a writer. But, I love opportunities like this, to play girls that I think can inspire.

TeenTelevision: Now that John knows who Cameron is, that she's a Terminator, will he continue to have a crush on her?

Summer: I don't know. There was one scene that they cut out of the original cut of the pilot, and they're putting it back in. It's a really important scene between the two of us, where he talks about how I can't care about him because I'm a robot and I'm just doing my job, and there's just a hint of something between us that makes it seem as if there's something more coming from Cameron than it just being a job.

TeenTelevision: Are you hoping to be great friends with your castmates and hang out after work?

Summer: Absolutely. We spend all of our time together. We get there at five in the morning and don't leave until nine. You'd better hope you get along because it's your life.

TeenTelevision: Are you a brand-conscious girl or just don't care about the designer stuff?

Summer: I'm not. I've been wearing the same clothes since I was fifteen. I'm pretty laid back about my clothes. I'm kind of like a ballerina/cowgirl. I'm from Texas and I love it there so I'm really into boots, denim skirts. I was comfortable [shooting] in Albuquerque but it was cold. I'm from South Texas. I got there and it was snowing but it was magical.

TeenTelevision: What kinds of music do you listen to?

Summer: I'm really into Country. I'm a Country girl. I'm really into Gretchen Wilson. I'm crazy about her and then the classics; love Loretta Lynn, Dolly Parton, Patsy Cline.

Taken from TeenHollywood's website:
<http://www.teenhollywood.com/d.asp?r=166704&p=1>