

Exclusive: 'Terminator' Summer Glau Bares All!

Jan 16, 2008 - Tara DiLullo Bennett

Sometimes there's a Hollywood story that's actually shocking because it bucks the trend. Take for example the career of actress Summer Glau. In her mere five years in Hollywood, the tiny, slip of a woman has managed to buck Hollywood typecasting, bypassing the damsels in distress roles for the kick-ass, don't-mess-with-me parts that are the envy of all her peers. Be it River Tam from Firefly/Serenity, Tess Doerner on The 4400 or her new role in Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles as Cameron, the latest protector Terminator sent to the past to protect future savior John Connor, Glau's making a strong mark on the genre landscape. Straight from the set of T:SCC, Glau shares with us the trials and tribulations of saving the world...again!

Were you a fan of the Terminator film franchise before you got this job?

No, but Terminator is such an iconic story that even if you haven't seen the films, you still know what it is. When I first got the audition for the role, I didn't even want to go in I was so intimidated. I didn't think that I fit the look for what I thought they would want for the girl Terminator. I thought they would want someone statuesque and strikingly beautiful and imposing. I was reluctant to go in but my mother told me I needed to go take chances. But even when I was testing for it, I thought this is just silly and they are going to laugh at me. After I got the role, my dad bought the movies for me and I watched them all over the Christmas break. I knew what Terminator was and when I saw the movies, they were everything I anticipated with huge action and Arnold Schwarzenegger being superhuman and Linda Hamilton looking amazing. But what I didn't expect was to be so touched by the characters. Even Arnold's character being a Terminator, it was heartbreaking to watch him sacrifice himself and then watching Linda be so strong and yet so vulnerable. That's what surprised me the most and what I held onto the most going into the series.

How is the mythology holding up in series form compared to the films?

Our scripts have been amazing. Every script I get, I'm really shocked how good it is. One great thing about making this story as a TV series is that we have a lot more time for humor and for character development. There are quiet moments between characters, while still having all the big action.

Cameron is just another in a line of very strong female characters that you've played in film and TV. Have you just been lucky or is this path very much your plan?

I have definitely been blessed in my work so far. I've chosen roles like this on purpose. I always want to play characters that portray women in a light that makes me feel good about being a woman and it's not always easy. I have had to say no and draw lines for myself, but looking back I have been very fortunate. I think [the show] is going to be inspiring for girls and make them feel good about themselves. It's really nice for me and a great blessing.

Do you feel your previous roles have all been preparation for this starring role on T:SCC?

I don't know how much I have prepared for it as opposed to just jumping into it. The most challenging part of this job is that I am not number nine on the call sheet anymore. There are only four of us [in the cast] and the hardest thing is balancing staying healthy and going to the gym. I play a role that is extremely physical but when I get up at 4:30 am and don't get home until after gym classes are over, that's the most challenging part

along with being creative with your schedule, staying focused on the acting and the physicality. If we didn't get along so well as a cast it would be a lot harder.

You did a lot of your own stunt work on Firefly and in Serenity. Are you getting to continue your skills on this series?

They use me a lot and I'm always so excited to do it because you can really see the difference. They showed me a stunt the other day where I got hit by a car. I didn't get actually hit, it was simulated, but you could tell it was me and it made it look so much cooler. Sonia [Munsterman], my stunt double is amazing, and we do so much second unit that sometimes it's necessary [to use her]. But I did do a stunt the other day. I do not like falling. I'm not afraid of heights but I don't get on rollercoasters or do anything where I am falling. I love to spin but I don't like that sensation of being out of control falling. So I had to do this jump and there was just no time to be hesitant about it. TV moves so fast. But I was like, 'Can we practice going up halfway and falling.' They were like, "Babe, up." I had to do it quite a few times and by the end I just figured I better get used to this because I'm guessing I'm going to be jumping quite a bit. [Laughs.]

Are the stunts on the show different from what you've trained for before?

On Serenity, Joss didn't let me do any wire work because he wanted it to look organic. River isn't a Terminator so she can't be jumping off of things. So I didn't do much wire work and it's been the one thing that that has been uncomfortable for me. Everything else has been really fun. It's very different though. It's not martial arts. Terminators are just brutes. It's about breaking things and wrestling and that's been fun. Plus, we have a lot of very handsome Terminators so it's been fun.

Cameron is obviously a cyborg, but there's some chemistry between her and John. Do you think as the series progresses she might become more sentient?

I really don't know where we are going to go with it at this point. In my audition when I was cast in the role, I did a scene where I had to cry. I thought this is going to be the first time I am going to test for a job where I don't have to cry and I ended up doing a very dark, emotional scene. It's really exciting for me because I have no idea now where my character is going to go.

Taken from FearNet.com's website:

<http://www.fearnet.com/MCNewsDetailPage.aspx?catid=30&mid=12561>