

## **Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles: Robot wars**

February 20, 2008

It's safe to say that the three Terminator movies contain more than enough mythos to sustain a weekly TV series. Enter The Sarah Connor Chronicles, Fox's thunderously exciting expansion of the franchise... Words: Abbie Bernstein

Thomas Dekker, who plays John Connor in Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles, is keen to ease any fears that fans may have. "There are a lot of people concerned that this is just an excuse to make money off a franchise and that it's a bad idea," he sighs. "I can assure you, there is only respect for it and we really want to give the fans something great."

The show follows Sarah Connor (Lena Headey) and her teenage son/future freedom fighter John (Dekker) as they attempt to halt a nuclear holocaust while avoiding malevolent cyborgs sent from the future. This time they've got a helpful Terminator on their side, played by Firefly's Summer Glau.

Executive producer James Middleton explains that, after producing T3, the Halcyon Co., decided to develop a TV series based on the franchise. "We were fascinated with the idea of what Sarah did at that moment after the end of T2, when she has defeated the Terminator and is on the run. She's going to be pursued by law enforcement. She's still going to be pursued by threats from the future, and she still has a son to raise. So we were very interested in exploring that idea."

"I think it's an opportunity to explore the characters," adds showrunner/writer/ executive producer Josh Friedman. "The great thing is, there's so much stuff in the movies, there's so much dramatic relationship stuff in the movies, that you can just mine Jim Cameron's brain forever and be pretty good, because the movies are pretty deep. The more that you study them, the more that's in them. It's like the Torah!"

Friedman says the main reason that The Sarah Connor Chronicles picks up after T2 rather than T3 is that Terminator 3 doesn't feature Sarah Connor. "I'm really more interested in doing this as the third version of the Sarah Connor trilogy," he explains. "So to me, this is what T3 would have been if they had Sarah Connor."

### **Sexy cyborgs**

In the movies, of course, the central Terminator was played by the imposing figure of Arnold Schwarzenegger. So how did the role of the cyborg that protects the Connors in the TV show go the young, lithe Summer Glau? "I was always a huge fan of Summer's," Friedman explains. "I tried to cast her in previous pilots, so when I was writing this, I kind of had Summer in the back of my mind. It was a good excuse to try to work with her. Second, in terms of a show that has a big mother/son motif to it, you think dramatically, what's the best kind of third side to that triangle? It's always going to be a hot teenage girl."

Glau says of her character: "I feel that she's very childlike. I think she will definitely learn and grow. She's like a sponge. John sends her back from the future to protect him. So in a way, she's his follower. She looks to him for guidance and she's been sent back by him to protect him. So in a way, she has to put her foot down sometimes and be strong, but she's doing it because he asked her to."

"There's a lot of tension in the pilot, but I think over time [Sarah] realises that I'm going to be her best ally and that we have to find a way to co-exist. I think it's going to be a really fun relationship, kind of like a traditional family...I'm talking with Josh constantly about it, looking for guidance. I want it to be what he envisioned. I've always played girls

who were very vulnerable and very emotional, so I wanted her to be a sympathetic character, I wanted people to be able to relate to her. But I also wanted it to be obvious at moments how robotic she is."

It also seems obvious that Glau has been enjoying the butt-kicking aspects of playing a cyborg. "I would never turn down the opportunity to do action. I think it's really fun. And I never thought I would end up doing action. I didn't think that I had that look. But I've always played girls who don't look like they do action and [yet] are physical."

As she did with the character River in *Serenity*, Glau has trained hard for her new role. "It was very different. No martial arts this time, but lots of stunt training. This is about brute force. River is much more finesse and technique, martial arts."

### **Action and emotion**

Lena Headey says that for her the appeal of TSCC is simple. "It encompasses everything I love, which is the physicality and the action of something, which then kind of impels you emotionally. So with *Sarah Connor Chronicles*, we have both."

Both Headey and Dekker are keen to point out that the performances of Linda Hamilton and Edward Furlong in the first two *Terminator* films were a source of inspiration. "Obviously, I greatly respect Linda Hamilton," Headey says. "There's a lot to Linda in terms of the humanity she had and the heart she had, but I'm making my own stamp on it."

Dekker is more explicit. "I am completely influenced [by Furlong]," he gushes. "It's a character that is beloved by everyone who we want to love this show. It's really important that I pay every respect to that."

"There was a whole week before we started shooting where we just sat in a room and discussed every angle of the character, every angle of the stories. I studied the films, I drew a lot of influence from my friends who had moved around a lot or who had criminal experiences in their pasts and had to keep their heads down. Those kinds of things. I did quite a bit of research on it."

And how would Dekker sum up his character? "John Connor's very similar to me. He's very brash...he makes decisions very quickly and he really fights for what he believes in. Even if he doesn't think he necessarily is ready to do that, he is."

### **Conspiracy theory**

In reality, there's only a 14-year age difference between Headey and Dekker, but Headey feels the mother/son relationship works on camera. "When we shoot the show, Thomas looks younger and I look older than I am. So I think it's more of a feeling than a physical look, and I think just her frustration and her terror brings an element of age."

Headey is keen to sing the praises of her co-stars. "I absolutely love Summer and Thomas. We had such an intense time [filming] in Albuquerque and they're both absolutely adorable. I mean this truly - they're great people to be working with...It's a very easy job!"

As for what viewers can expect from the show, Middleton says: "There will be a lot of things that our characters discuss and talk about in terms of what's happened with technology... There's a lot of catching up that they have to do, and there's a lot of world events that would be very disturbing to these characters, and they will comment a little bit about that."

"We want them to be in the real world. We learn that there's a much bigger conspiracy that is taking place to change world events..."

Taken from DWScifi.com's website:

<http://www.dwscifi.com/interviews/1608-terminator-the-sarah-connor-chronicles-robot-wars>