

Summer Glau Interview

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Last week, I was able to participate in a Q&A with Summer Glau, who plays Cameron in the new Sarah Connor Chronicles!

One of the things that's interesting about Cameron is that not only does she have the action scenes, but the comedy is very central to the character. Could you talk about sort of that deadpan attitude that you have to play there?

S. Glau - It's just Josh Friedman. It was his idea, you know, and it was a fine balance from the pilot to the series, deciding exactly how Cameron was going to relate to the people around her. And I think we all felt that it was a great comic opportunity. It's been really fun for me.

What are the logistics of sort of playing that deadpan? How flat do you have to play it, or is there an inflection that we maybe aren't picking up necessarily?

Well, I always told Josh it's just me trying to be as honest as possible as Cameron. I never want to ask the audience to laugh at me because then it just doesn't feel real, and so I just approach everything and try to be really sincere, as Cameron would be. She's so – I think that is what is so funny about her is just that she can't be anything but genuine. She's very open, like a child. She absorbs the behavior around her and tries to understand it as best she can, and sometimes it ends up being extremely funny.

Can you tell us if there's ever going to be sort of an exploration of Cameron's point of view? Right now it's the Sarah Connor Chronicles and we're trying to find Sky Net, but Cameron obviously would have a very unique point of view of all of this, and is that something in the show will they explore, do you think?

I think that it is sort of – I think that we do work as a dysfunctional family right now, and I think it is sort of – it's a mystery at this point if Cameron's intentions are what she presents them to be. I don't even really know what's going on with Cameron. I do know that maybe she has a mysterious past. And it's unclear what she ends up being in the future. But at this point, I think that all three of us, as far as what I know from the script, we are all fighting for the same goal, but that might turn out to be sort of a front. Cameron might have come back from the past for a different purpose.

Can you discuss some of the differences between playing River on Firefly and playing Cameron?

It's funny because I actually see some similarities between them. They're both kind of foreigners in their surroundings. River was never good at being able to relate to people around her, and she always seemed to be somewhere else in her mind. And Cameron is the same way. She's from a different place. She's from a different time. She's not human. She doesn't really know how to relate to the people that she's living her life with now, so in that way they're similar.

But River was so emotional and so vulnerable, and Cameron can't really be those things. That was the biggest challenge for me when I first was cast in the role was trying to define how I could make her relatable and how I could relate to her as an actress, so it's been an interesting balance. I'm still finding out who she is, and I think that she's constantly growing. She's constantly changing from scene-to-scene and absorbing

human characteristics, so I think that she will continue to become more relatable as time goes on.

What do you think the prospects are for a Cameron/John romance?

The writers are keeping me guessing. At this point, I can't tell. I know that it's a possibility. And I think that in her own way, Cameron does love John because, when I think about it, her entire existence is to protect him. Her purpose in life is to keep him safe and to be with him always. I think that she does love him, as best a robot could.

But at this point, their relationship is very complicated. John is still trying to figure out how he wants to treat her and what his relationship with her should be. It's really complicated, but I think that anything is possible at this point.

Can you give us any hits or spoilers as to what we might see in upcoming episodes?

Well, I think people are going to be surprised at the direction of the show is going in. We have a lot of really strong subplots and a lot of great guest stars coming in constantly. I'm always amazed at what our writers come up with. I think people have a feeling of what they think the show is going to be, but there's going to be a lot of interesting twists because, when you take a concept from film and you put it into a television show, you can really take time to develop the story. So there are things that I think people haven't thought of.

What are some of your favorite things about Cameron and what are some things that you feel Cameron couldn't hurt to learn or to have part of her characteristic?

Well, I would say my favorite things about Cameron are I love the fact that I get to be very physical and that they've chosen for a girl to be John's bodyguard. I think that that's really exciting for girls and a great role for an actress. As far as her personality, if you could call it her personality, I love how open she is and how curious she is. That gives me a lot of opportunity, as an actress, to try different things and for her to grow and change.

But one of the interesting things that I've been thinking about, especially with ... Selena is, does the terminator understand what death is, and do they understand the value of life. I think that that's something that Sarah has a really hard time with because she needs Cameron and she keeps Cameron around because she understands how valuable Cameron can be to keep John safe, but I think that it constantly breaks her heart to watch Cameron and her coldness. That's something that Cameron is very curious about, I think. I love that part of their relationship.

You came in with a character that, unlike everybody else, is not kind of a recast of the characters that we're familiar with, with other actors. Does that make it easier or does that make it harder? How does that actually work as an actor when you don't really have to have the same type of challenges some of the other actors do in terms of trying to create a character as your own?

I think that Lena and Thomas have done an amazing job, and they're both very brave actors and very independent and strong. And so I completely trust their version of their characters. But for me, it was easier, I have to say. People still ask me about Arnold Schwarzenegger and how does that feel to be the new terminator. I can laugh about it

because no one can possibly compare me to him. He is an icon, and I'm doing something really different, so it is a relief for me.

But I will say that I'm only one person who is working on this character. It's an entire team that helps me shape Cameron. Josh Friedman created her and then the writers develop her from episode-to-episode. And even Joel Cramer, our stunt coordinator, helps me decide how Cameron moves and how she fights. So I always take comfort in the fact that I have people around me who are helping me make decisions about who she is, and I'm getting more and more comfortable.

Were there a lot of changes between Cameron in the pilot and then Cameron in the rest of the series? I know when we first met Cameron, she kind of had that kind of valley girl personality, but then it went very robotic after that. Were there other changes like that?

Yes. We did make some changes, and people will notice that from the pilot to the series. We were experimenting with Cameron quite a bit, and we wanted her to be able to seem human. We wanted especially John to be fooled by her, so that he would let her into his life. And so in the pilot, I do act very human. And then as I go through the series, it appears that I've taken steps back and that I am acting more like a terminator would. We did that for several different reasons, but I know for me it's fun because I get to take more time for her development, her human development. I think that it also is funny and I think once her cover was blown with the Connors, she kind of was able to drop that persona and become who she really is around them, if that answers the question.

What were your thoughts about the cancellation of The 4400? How did you feel about that?

I was heartbroken. I love all of those actors. I have to say, I enjoyed my time there immensely, and I thought it was an excellent show. You know, they had a really long run though. The show was on for a long time, and I'm sure all those actors are going to do great in new projects. I wish I could have been there for the finale too because I had to leave before the last episode because I was shooting Sarah Connor, and I always thought, well maybe I'll come back. Now I don't know. Maybe some of those actors can come be on Terminator, so I get to see them.

Are you a sci-fi fan? Is there something about the genre that attracts you, that makes you want to be in it?

Firefly was the first sci-fi show that I ever auditioned for, so I kind of got lucky, and I feel like once I became a member of the Joss Whedon family, those actors have found to like to see ... actors on other shows. It is sort of a small world. Those actors that are in sci-fi shows tend to make an easy transition into other sci-fi shows. It's interesting, and of course I've always been a fan of science fiction. I would say more of books. When I was little, my mom used to always read us science fiction, and I think that it did a great service to me in developing my imagination.

I think sci-fi actors have to have a very vivid imagination. Playing River was difficult because I don't know what it's like to be a psychic and I don't know what it's like to be a government experiment and live on a spaceship and fly around in space. You have to really go there as an actor, and it's not as easy as playing someone that might be your friend or someone that might be your sister. It's very different.

I think that sci-fi actors in general are very imaginative, creative people, and it's been really fun for me. I've loved it. I've loved being a sci-fi actress.

Was there a pivotal moment in your life that compelled you to be an actor, or was it an accident or something you fell into?

It's funny. When I was a little girl, I just had a feeling that I was going to be an actress. I don't know why. I just thought I think one day I'm going to be an actress, but I never did it. I danced since I was five. And I did it all day every day. I traveled, I danced, and I was in ballet companies, and I was a very serious dancer. Then I got hurt, and it's kind of the cliché story of the girl who put all her eggs in one basket and that's all I ever learned how to do. Then I got hurt, and I thought what am I going to do.

I ended up coming to LA to dance tango for a year, because I couldn't dance on point anymore. I started auditioning for acting jobs, and something just fit for me. And I felt this piece that I was supposed to be doing it, and I ended up, after a year, I got enough acting work where I could completely switch over. So I was very lucky, very lucky.

Do you keep in contact with any of the Firefly gang? And is there any word on another movie, or is that series pretty much put to rest?

You know, it's never over. We thought it was over after the series got cancelled and that wasn't the case. We're really close. I'd say I get to see Nathan the most because he lives the closest. I still see everyone whenever I can. Jewel lives in Vancouver and she's working up there, so I don't get to see her as much as I like, but we all have such a strong bond. I'd have to say, that was my first experience. I didn't even know how to stand on my mark. I lost the camera all the time. I ran into people, and they treated me like an equal and the family, so I think that we would all come back if we got the opportunity. And it's never over.

How much training and martial arts, did you have to have to play Cameron, especially after having played River?

When I met with Joel Cramer to talk about the fighting, I said I don't know how a terminator fights. He said, well it's going to be very different from what you did before with River. You're not going to be doing all these beautiful martial arts movements and it's not about being creative and having to use dynamic movement. It's just about brut force. It's been a really fun change of pace for me because I worked so hard on Serenity. I had to learn all that martial arts. I did it myself. I did it from start to finish, every fight scene, and it was incredibly challenging.

For Cameron, it's challenging in a different way because I can't – I have to constantly remind myself not to react humanly, not to move in a human way. Even things like crossing your legs, I can't touch my hair to move it out of my face. I have to really reprogram my mind. But as far as the actual fighting, it's really fun. Most of the training I did was just going to the shooting range with Joel. It was a great time.

Taken from ScifiChick.com's website:
<http://scifichick.com/2008/02/02/summer-glau-interview/>