

Teen Terminator will be back

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At first glance, Summer Glau, a classically trained ballerina also versed in the tango and flamenco, seems an unlikely action hero. Her distinctive look seems more Kirov Ballet than Hollywood, and her deceptively vacant stare is the mirror opposite of Hollywood's propensity for over-emoting.

She would not even be on TV if not for the fact that she tried out for a small part -- as a ballerina -- in a 2002 episode of the cult series *Angel*, itself a spin-off of the cult series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

Joss Whedon, *Buffy* and *Angel*'s creator, saw a flash of lightning beneath that deceptively calm exterior, and cast Glau as the emotionally damaged empath River Tam in his sci-fi western *Firefly*.

From there, it was a short jump -- creatively and emotionally -- to playing teen terminator Cameron Phillips in *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*.

Sarah Connor Chronicles ends its strike-shortened first season Monday, March 3 with back-to-back episodes, but it will be back in the fall. In a season with more misses (*Bionic Woman*, *Big Shots*, *Cane*, etc.) than hits, the show is a bona fide contender. It has pulled down 24-size numbers in 24's original time period, and like Arnold Schwarzenegger's titular character in the original *Terminator* film, it will be back.

"I love the fact that I get to be very physical, and that they chose a girl to play this part," Glau said. "I think that's really exciting for girls, and a great role for an actress. As far as her personality goes -- if you can call it personality -- I love how open and how curious she is. That gives me a lot of opportunity, as an actress, to try different things and let her grow and change."

After a trippy, largely experimental start, Glau has eased into the role in recent weeks. Her character is different now than she was at the beginning.

"People have noticed that from the pilot to the series," Glau said. "We were experimenting with Cameron quite a bit early on. We wanted her to be able to seem human. We wanted especially for John (Connor) to be fooled by her, so he would let her into his life. And so, in the pilot, I do act very human. As I've gone through the series, I've taken steps back, though, and I'm acting more now like a terminator would. We did that for several reasons."

"I think sci-fi actors have to have very vivid imaginations. Playing River was difficult because I don't know what it's like to be a psychic; I don't know what it's like to be a government experiment and live on a spaceship and fly around in space. You really have to go there as an actor. It's not as easy as playing someone who might be your friend or your sister. It's very different. Sci-fi actors in general are very imaginative, creative people, and it's been really fun for me to be part of that world. I've loved it."

Firefly and its spin-off film *Serenity* remain close to Glau's heart. Glau struck up a friendship with Vancouver actor Jewel Staite while filming *Firefly*, and the two remain close. Glau also remains close to Edmonton native Nathan Fillion, who lives nearby in Los Angeles.

"*Firefly* is never over," Glau said. "We thought it was over after the series got cancelled, and that wasn't the case. We're really close. I see Nathan the most because he lives the closest. Jewel lives in Vancouver and she's working up there, so I don't get to see her as much as I'd like. We all have a strong bond, though."

"That was my first real experience in front of a camera. I didn't even know how to stand on my mark. I lost the camera all the time. I ran into people, and yet they treated me like an equal and part of the family. I think we would all come back if we got the opportunity. It's never over."

Learning to fight like a fembot has not been easy, Glau admits.

"When I met (fight supervisor) Joel Kramer to talk about the fighting, I said 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. It's not about being creative and using dynamic movement. It's just about brute force.' It's been a real fun change of pace for me, because I worked so hard on Firefly and Serenity. I had to learn all those martial arts. I did it myself. I did it from start to finish, every fight scene, and it was incredibly challenging.

"With Cameron, it's challenging, but in a different way. I have to constantly remind myself not to react humanly, not to move in a human way. Even things like crossing my 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 goes, it's really fun."
Looking ahead, Glau says she has three career goals.

"I'd like to do a movie about dance, which is something I'm working on right now, with Joss Whedon. And I want to do a western. That's been once of my dreams. From the time I was a little girl and first thought about being an actress, I always wanted to do a period film -- a romantic, Jane Austen kind of movie. That's not what I'm doing right now, but I hope to at some point."

Taken from Canada.com's website:

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