

Summer Glau

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Summer Glau was three years old when *The Terminator* was originally released in 1984. So the fact that she missed the opportunity to behold the Governator in all his glory on the big screen as a child can be excused. But never renting it – or its far superior sequel *T2: Judgment Day* – growing up as a teenager in San Antonio, Texas?

Miss Glau, you have some explaining to do if you want us to believe you have the enchiladas to play the cybernetic hasta la vista babe Cameron Phillips on Fox's upcoming *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*.

"My dad was so embarrassed that I got cast as the Terminator and I hadn't even seen the films," laughed Glau, who also admits she failed to check out *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* in 2003. "He went and got all three of them for me and I watched them with him. The thing is, I don't think anybody can go without knowing something about Terminator. It's so iconic and it's a story that everybody knows a little bit about. When I finally saw movies, they were everything that I thought they were going to be but they were more touching than I expected them to be and the Terminator was more compelling than I expected him to be. He was big and fabulous and strong and impressive but he was also very touching and human at times, too, which is something I have really taken to heart with my character."

Glau, whose Geek cred was long established amongst the Browncoats starring as River Tam in Joss Whedon's 2002-03 television series *Firefly* and its follow-up feature film *Serenity*, says her model of Terminator would make Robert Patrick's T-1000 melt into a puddle of tears.

"When I was working with [series creator] Josh Friedman on the role, before I was even cast, I was really daunted by the idea of playing a robot because I always play really vulnerable and emotional characters, so I was really intimidated and didn't quite know how to go about it," explained Glau, who captured a Saturn Award for best supporting actress in 2005 for *Serenity* and hopes its oft-rumored sequel will be made.

"But he said the model that my Terminator is supposed to be is the most advanced make so far, and instead of making her liquid or being able to shape-shift or something physical like that, the way she is most advanced is in her ability to mimic humans perfectly. She is able to mimic emotion perfectly, which is fun as an actress."

According to Glau, her character Cameron – named with a tip of a hat to Terminator family patriarch James Cameron – is sent back from the future by John Connor to be his bodyguard when he is a teenager.

"I am supposed to look like an innocent teenage girl. I go to school with him, which is really funny," said Glau. "Cameron can be tough and cold and a Terminator in one breath and then in the next breath, she can be this vulnerable, child-like character, because she is absorbing everything around her for the first time. This reality, and going back in time, and trying to blend into normal society is new for her."

While being classically trained as a ballerina does lend itself nicely to landing a gig as a Terminator, Glau says the fact she also knows how to kick a little butt, goes a long way too.

"Being a dancer is always a big part of how I communicate as an actor. It's a great outlet for me. It's a way for me to get really close to my character, keeping with the physicality," said Glau, who was in between takes of busting threw some concrete during this interview.

"When I did Serenity, I trained intensely in wushu, kung fu and kick boxing. Chad Sakowski was the stunt coordinator and he met with me months before we started shooting and kind of watched me move and made sort of a hybrid fighting style for me.

"I worked harder on that than I worked in almost my whole life because Joss really wanted me to do all the stunts myself and he wanted to be able to shoot the fight scenes from start to finish without having to do any rigging or tricks or new camera angles. It was just a pure, choreographed fight scene where I really got to hit the guys. The stunt team was amazing. I would actually make contact on all my hits and kicks. I learned how to hit them, but lightly. We had to make all of the punches real. So I worked really hard on that.

"But this is more fun. I get to break things and use more guns and cars. It's really fun. "

Glau says she is far from being considered 'technologically savvy,' but does understand why Terminator-heavy concepts like time travel and the predestination paradox – at least conceptually – are deemed sexy by the scientific set.

"I don't like change much. I waited the longest time before I bought a computer myself but I do think it's interesting in just the past 10 years, how much computers have taken over our lives. So I think that it's natural that our imaginations would go in that direction," said Glau, who read everything from Madeliene L'Engle's A Wrinkle in Time to C.S. Lewis' The Chronicles of Narnia as a child.

"I can't really imagine time travel myself but I can see why the story was written. I can see why we are making a television series about this concept."

Someone else who likes the concept is Joss Whedon – the person who gave Glau her start in Hollywood with her first-ever guest appearance role in his Buffy the Vampire Slayer spin-off Angel.

Glau, who considers the ruler of the Buffyverse her mentor, said "Joss was one of the first people I called. It meant so much to me that he was excited about it. He told me that Terminator films had meant a lot to him when he was writing as a younger man and he really felt that The Terminator was significant film in history.

"And now that I am part of it and I have seen the movies and I have been cast, I know exactly what he meant."

And while Whedon played proud papa, Glau is yet to have a tête-à-tête with the big guy sporting the Gargoyle 85s.

In fact, she said if she did get a congratulatory call from Governor Schwarzenegger, she might just pass out.

"I do get to say a couple of his classic lines," teased Glau. "But it's hard for me to say them without an accent."

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