

Summer Glau Gets Physical as a New Superhero on 'The Cape'

Jan 3, 2011 - Drew Mackie

Following her 2002 acting debut on "Angel," Summer Glau has starred in the kind of TV series and movies that prompted fanboys to call her the new queen of sci-fi. Glau has appeared on cult favorites such as "Firefly," "Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles" and "Chuck," but on Jan. 9, her new series, the superhero drama "The Cape," premieres on NBC. And her starring role as Orwell -- an all-seeing, tech-savvy superheroine -- will not only cinch that "queen of sci-fi" title but also mark her greatest opportunity to win the hearts of mainstream TV audiences. Wonderwall visited Glau on the set of "The Cape" for a chat about her background as a dancer, becoming a superhero and her loyal fans.

(Wonderwall publisher BermanBraun also produces the NBC series "The Cape.")

Wonderwall: You've done a whole range of sci-fi projects, but as far as I know this is the first superhero series that you have starred in. How do you feel about that?

Summer: Well, I guess you can consider The Cape a superhero. I think about it as being inspired by a comic, but it is different because it's set in present day, and there's no magic and there's no superhuman qualities to it, but it isn't really just your regular drama. It's different.

Wonderwall: That's a good way to put it. It's not quite Batman or Superman, but it's edging more toward that than most things on TV, right?

Summer: Exactly, and I love that quality because I feel that's it something unique that's not on TV right now. I think it bridges a gap between having something very grounded, like a medical drama or law drama, but it's not quite science fiction. So I think people will really respond to that.

Wonderwall: So The Cape himself is most like a superhero, but Orwell is too; you're a tech superhero. What's your take on that?

Summer: I think it's a miracle because I can't even type very well, so I have to really, really work on being convincing with all the [computer work] Orwell does. Orwell knows more than anybody about the fate of the world, and she can hack into anything. She knows every camera in the city, and that's her way of infiltrating and taking over. So I guess you're right: She is sort of superhuman in that way. But she also gets out in the field, holding her own and getting into fights all the time.

Wonderwall: I can't think of another female TV character who's powerful in the way Orwell is. How does it feel to be playing someone who could be a role model for girls who want a smart action hero to look up to?

Summer: I always gravitate towards roles where women are empowered. There are certain roles that I feel are expected from women. Orwell [isn't that]. In the pilot especially you think that she's a man three-fourths of the way through.... I love that she's standing up for what she believes in and she's been willing to sacrifice a normal life to fight for what's right. I also like the dynamic between her and Vince because she feels like Vince [the man who becomes The Cape] is joining her team. Vince is very headstrong, always going off on his own and thinking he knows better, and she's always having to get him out of trouble. So I love that dynamic between a man and a woman.

Wonderwall: Do you draw on you background as a dancer for the action sequences?

Summer: Always. I feel like whenever I'm thrown in these situations, I end up getting a high off of it. I grew up being so physical and expressing myself through physicality. Acting gets very psychological, so when I do these fight scenes, it brings out that more visceral quality for me. [In an upcoming episode] Orwell uses these aerial silks, and she's trying her hand at this circus act. I definitely could not have done that if it weren't for being a dancer.

Wonderwall: Did you do your own stunts for that?

Summer: I did. I got to go to circus school for a week. It was so incredible. I had the time of my life. I was really proud that if it wasn't for my dancing I don't think I would have been able to do it on such short notice like that.

Wonderwall: You've done a lot of series that have drawn loyal, geeky followings. Have you had an interaction with a fan that was especially surprising? Touching? Weird?

Summer: I've received some really special letters over the years. You can't imagine what people take from your work. I always hope that I entertain people, [but I appreciate] when it does something more -- that I've maybe made somebody feel better about their life or I've made them think about something in a new way. It's one of the greatest blessings of being an actor. And I have also had some really awkward moments -- you know, when you are just really feeling ordinary and you're in the grocery store or at the drug store and you're buying something embarrassing. Things like that inevitably happen, but you just have to give into it. But luckily nothing ever really bad. The fans have always been really sweet and supportive.

Wonderwall: That's awesome.

Summer: Yeah, it is. I'm really lucky. I'm a lucky girl

Taken from Wonderwall's website:

<http://wonderwall.msn.com/tv/summer-glau-your-next-favorite-tv-superheroine-1589845.story>