

Deliver Him from "THE WALKING DEAD"

Written by Samuel Zimmerman
Friday, 03 December 2010 18:06



THE WALKING DEAD has become the runaway success horror fans were hoping for, breaking ratings records for AMC during its first season's brief six-week run. The overwhelming response is in no small part due to the show's serious emphasis on the people it follows through its land of the undead, and just as in the comics, one of the most popular and resonant characters has been young Glenn, essayed by Steven Yuen. The actor spoke exclusively to Fango about Glenn's evolution, bringing season one to an end and what he hopes to see next year. Hit the jump for the full chat!

FANGORIA: So much press was done even before episode one had aired. Now that the first season is coming to a close, are your feelings different from the nervousness and excitement that were initially buzzing?

STEVEN YUEN: It's not a huge surprise in terms of how this has gone, because while filming, we were all kind of buzzing, "This is going to be a cool project." But I was actually on the phone with [co-star] Jon Bernthal yesterday, and we were just chatting about how crazy it is, how all this is happening. We didn't expect it to blow up like it has. I mean, there's still an air of amazement, and also maybe a little cautiousness. People are really digging it, and I hope they continue to and that they stick around when we get that second season going.



FANG: Glenn is so resonant because in both the series and the comic, he's very much coming of age and becoming a man after this apocalypse. What are your hopes and thoughts for Glenn continuing his development next season, both in your own summation and in relation to what you know from the comics?

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YUEN: Actually, I was a huge fan too prior [to doing the series], and I remember loving Glenn and drawing, when I had the opportunity, not just from the comic but also from myself. Glenn reminds me of myself as I was maybe four years ago, when you're kind of uncertain about your future and you're also coming into your own, so you kind of have to prove yourself and find inspiration. I think he's slowly getting there.

What's cool about doing this project is, reading the comic, you see some backstory, you know that he's a pizza delivery boy with not many family members to live for, but you don't really see the underlying subtext or maybe even what's going on his mind. For me to play Glenn was really cool, because I was being put in positions where I was like, “Oh my gosh, I would look up to this guy right now in this moment,” and maybe draw from that. A specific example would be Rick [played by Andrew Lincoln]; I think Rick is a huge influence on him and he looks to Rick, at this point, as someone that he wants to be as well.

What's cool is that Frank definitely wrote a little bit—excuse me, I'm sorry, I'm about to sneeze [*laughs*], I hope that's included—Frank definitely wrote in the building up of this character from a boy to a man, and I'm excited to see how much more he'll expand on it in the second season. I've definitely sensed it, even in that moment when he was telling everybody what the next plan of action was in the sewer. It rears its head here and there, but it's not fully realized yet, and it's going to be really cool. I'm really excited, in the second season, to play a little bit more confident, a little bit more of a man.

FANG: What have you taken from working with all these actors of various ages and, I'm assuming, their own styles?

YUEN: I remember going in, saying to myself, “This is not just an awesome experience, this is going to be grad school. Every question that you didn't have [answered], you can get it answered here.” I was very optimistic, assuming that everyone would be really, really nice, and what was great was that's exactly how it turned out. Every single person on this show was incredibly kind to me, and incredibly kind to each other. They were very professional, amazing actors, and even the first day I was on set, I just stuck with Andy and I was like, “Hey Andy, what would you do in this scenario?” It was awesome, and everyone had his or her own different style. It was kind of like Glenn in that way. I was picking up on other people's things that I enjoyed and I liked, and it really helped me.

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There were a couple of points where I was really worried about whether I could get there emotionally for certain moments, but when you're surrounded by an incredible cast, a very supportive cast, it's really easy to get there. Everyone makes you feel like you're a part of it. Everyone does have their own approach, but what's really cool is in that world, it's more of a respect of whatever they like to do, and they always meet in the middle if it's ever a crossing of paths for how they think a scene should work. It's a really helpful environment.

FANG: Obviously you have Frank Darabont and Gale Anne Hurd and the source material as guiding forces, but what's it like developing a character over many episodes while working with a revolving door of directors? Is there ever a push-and-pull, where you might think you know what's best as opposed to direction you're given?

YUEN: It was actually pretty cool. The directors who came in were very respectful of what we had already established as actors. Michelle [Maxwell MacLaren, director of episode two, “Guts”] helped me mold Glenn. That was a really tough episode to shoot, all hats off to Michelle. She had to bust out action sequence after action sequence in eight days and she did it, and made it look awesome. I remember there were moments where I had a choice and she had a choice and she helped me meet in the middle with it. I thought one might work, she thought another way worked, but it was this perfect compromise that ended up working for both of us. Beyond that, after about episode two, the directors really started to respect our choices and if they had any other ideas, they would always pitch them out there. It was a very collaborative environment. Because of that, there were never any issues. I had Glenn formed, and then he was molded through Frank and Michelle and every single other director, but the core values were never lost.

FANG: There's a balanced tone between the very bleak and the very hopeful, which is especially there in the season finale. Glenn, along with Rick, is a bright spot pushing for hope. Are you happy being that bright spot? Do you feel, confronted with the same situation, that you could maintain that energy?

YUEN: It's always nice to be the one with the positive energy. I am kind of an optimist in that regard, and I think I would always look to the next step. I believe Glenn is struggling at this point. He does attach himself to whatever's around him and fights for the people who are around him, but at the same time, he has this growing realization of, “What is there completely to live for? I know I can be so great to these people around me, but there's nobody I have, there's nobody I cherish.” Obviously, fans of the comic know how that changes, but he's kind of a mixed bag right now, and his optimism comes from a good person trying to do the right thing.

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FANG: With a couple of weeks having gone by since the official announcement of season two, do you have any idea of when that's supposed to get started, and what we can expect from it?

YUEN: To be quite honest, we have not heard anything. Even the cast have been calling each other asking, but we haven't heard anything.

FANG: Do you have any thoughts on Frank Darabont's recent decision to nix a consistent writing staff?

YUEN: That came as a surprise to me too. I have no real idea of how that world works, but I intrinsically trust Frank to make the right decisions. He's been great, because he's been a part of every single script and he's always had his hand in every part of the production, so if that's his choice, I trust him.

The season finale of THE WALKING DEAD airs this Sunday night at 10 p.m. You can also catch the previous five episodes airing directly before beginning at 4:30.

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