TV News: ‘True Blood,’ ‘The Walking Dead,’ ‘The Vampire Diaries,’ ‘Dollhouse’ at C2E2

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CHICAGO – The Chicago Comic & Entertainment Expo, more popularly known as “C2E2,” took place last month, and featured TV series cast panels with “The Walking Dead,” “True Blood,” “The Vampire Diaries” and “Dollhouse.”

HollywoodChicago.com was there at those fan Q&A sessions, to record the highlights and have Joe Arce take photographs of all the stars who participated.

Laurie Holden and Jon Bernthal of “The Walking Dead”

The Walking Dead began life as a comic book series published by Image Comics, and was adapted for television by Frank Darabont (director of “The Shawshank Redemption” and “The Green Mile”) and premiered last Halloween on the AMC network. The series follows a group of survivors from a so-called “zombie apocalypse” who are escaping from the undead hordes, and from other survivors, in the midst of societal breakdown post that apocalyptic collapse.

Representing the series at C2E2 was Jon Bernthal (Shane Walsh) and Laurie Holden (Andrea).

Walking Live: Laurie Holden (left) & Jon Bernthal, C2E2, March 19th, 2011
Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

Question: Laurie, what have you learned about the Zombie life by participating in that world through the series?

Laurie Holden: What I love about our show, which is different from other zombie shows or films, is that we’re really exploring the humanity of the zombies. These were people who were once people, who loved and had families, and just got sick. They’re not just evil monsters. It’s your wife, daughter, brother and it makes it so much more conflicting and complicated.

With my scene with Emma Bell, in the Andrea and Amy dynamic [survivor vs. zombie], none of us in the camp had ever seen anybody come back, nobody we loved. A lot of fans were really angry that Andrea put the camp at risk by sitting over Amy’s body, but when you love somebody with all your heart, it’s kind of a natural thing where you hope this time it will be different, and maybe when she opened her eyes I’d see her again.

I love how she played it, like a sick baby that I have to put down rather than a fright night. And all I had to do was look at her and that’s all I needed. Zombies are complicated as to what they evoke in all of us, because there is pity, fear and longing.

Question: Jon, how will the show continue to keep the tension and emotion without resorting to cheap zombie antics?

Jon Bernthal: Nothing will never happen without a reason, there will have to be a reason for it to happen. Zombies won’t just ‘show up.’ Somebody or something will have to bring the zombies on, which is the mark of the cool writing.

Sam Trammell, Kristin Bauer & Brit Morgan of “True Blood”

True Blood is another HBO original sensation, coming back for a fourth season this summer. The morality tale, about vampires, humans and other beings living (somewhat) harmoniously together, has been hugely popular for HBO and has legions of “true” followers.

Sam Trammell (Sam), Kristin Bauer (Pam) and one of the newer cast members, Brit Morgan (Debbie), represented the show.

True Love: Sam Trammell, Kristen Bauer (center) & Brit Morgan, C2E2, March 19th, 2011
Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

Question: Brit, what were the circumstances of you joining ‘True Blood’?

Brit Morgan: I didn’t have anywhere the amount of credits it takes to book a show like True Blood, and it was a real shot in the dark. I was very excited about it, but most of me was saying I didn’t have a chance in hell. I just thought they’d want someone with more name recognition than me.

I knew Alan Ball was going to be in the audition room, and I was nervous. I just let it go. I messed up real bad, I stuttered through the first lines. But by some miracle, he got something from me. After my group was done, he immediately said he wanted to see me again. The second time around was much better, and three hard days later I found out that I got the part.

Question: Sam, what can True Blood watchers expect in Season Four?

Sam Trammell: What if we sat up here and just spoiled the whole fourth season? [cheers] I have a really fun season coming up, because we explore the mythology of the shapeshifters. We’ve seen the politics and societies of vampires, we’re now going to do this with the shapeshifting. We also explore the limits of that power, as to what you can shift into.

That’s great, and there is also a new woman I’m going to have a relationship with. [catcalls] Yes, it’s about time. [laughs] And that brings up this, if you work as a waitress at Merlottes and you date me you will die, basically. [laughs] Even if you wear the tee-shirt to the expo, it might be dangerous, so be careful.

Question: Kristin, how do you relate to the concept of vampires now that you’ve experienced True Blood?

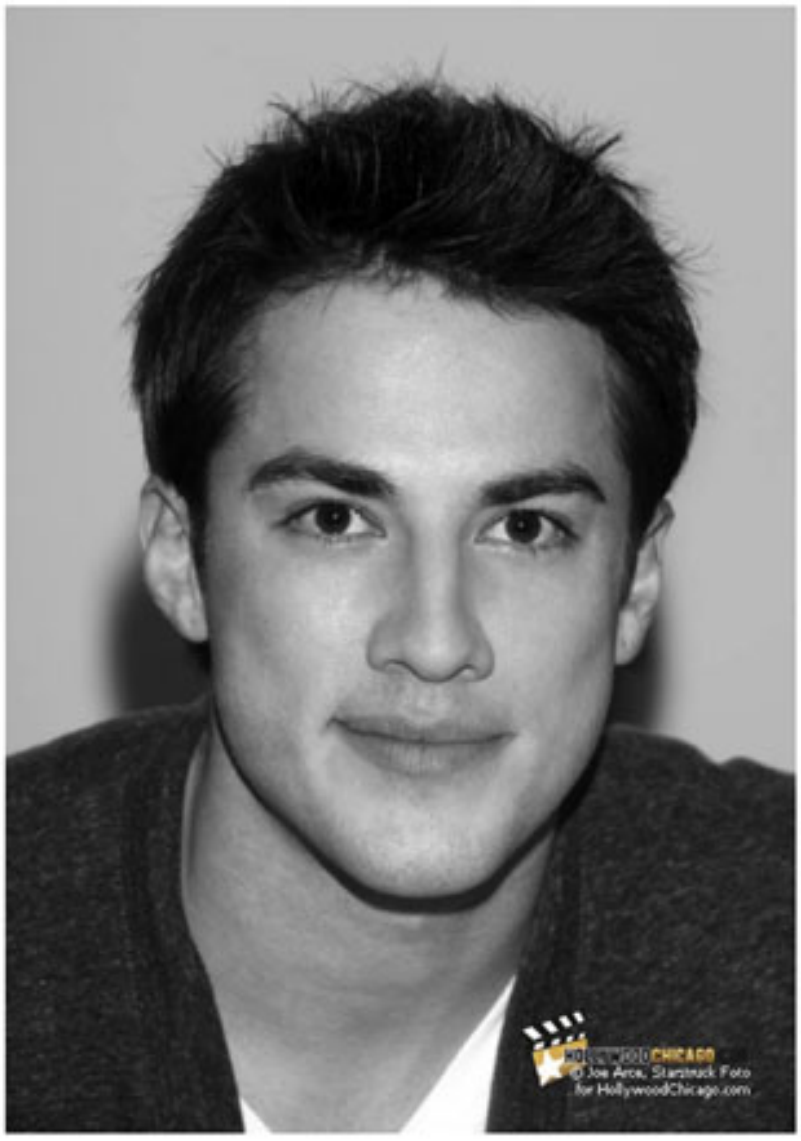
Kristin Bauer: I really think vampires don’t have to worry about illness, dying, money, aging, all the things that occupy 90% of our thoughts as humans. This is the ultimate escapist personality, it’s a lot of fun. I actually think a lot about ‘would I do it?’ if I could become a vampire, and I never quite come up with the answer. At first, being a spiritual person, I believe it’s set up the way it should be set up, and then I’m like…it would be awesome. [laughs]

And then I realize if I were a vampire, I bet you my personality would end up being identical to Pam’s [her character on True Blood], which is kind of funny. She feels different than I am, but then I realize I don’t think we are that different, I’m just human. Right? I don’t know. [laughs]

Michael Trevino & Candice Accola of “The Vampire Diaries”

Another TV hit with a bloodsucking theme is “The Vampire Diaries,” currently in its second season on The CW Television Network. Based on a book series by L.J. Smith, the show is set in fictional Mystic Falls, Virginia, a town haunted by supernatural beings. It follows the life of Elena Gilbert (Nina Dobrev), who is involved in love triangle with two vampire brothers, Stefan and Damon.

The C2E2 panel consisted of Elena’s childhood friend in the series, Tyler (Michael Trevino) and also her close friend Caroline (Candice Accola).



Dear Diary: Candice Accola & Michael Trevino, C2E2, March 19th, 2011
Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

Questions: Michael, how difficult was it as an actor to transform into a werewolf character?

Michael Trevino: It was probably the most challenging thing I’ve done as an actor. I’m glad we didn’t rush into it, it was written gradually and brilliantly. We had an amazing crew and we shot on a closed set. I was in a very vulnerable state the whole time and it took a couple weeks of preparation to get there, and one day of rehearsal before. We shot it in two days, back-to-back 14 hours days, where I was chained up and basically naked.
If it wasn’t for the crew, and my colleague Candice, I wouldn’t been able to get through it. The things you don’t see behind the scenes, that aren’t in the script, for me to get there emotionally is like running a marathon. And Candice helped me with that pacing. In scenes where she is trying to get me to calm down, there is no dialogue, but she just put it upon herself to keep me calm. It really helped me, and if it wasn’t for things like that, I wouldn’t have got to it as easily.

Question: Candice, what do you hope happens with the relationship with Tyler? And who is the best kisser on the show?

Candice Accola: A girl doesn’t kiss and tell. [laughs] As for Tyler, I think is depends on the circumstance and the intention of him coming back. That’s going to be the biggest factor.

Eliza Dushku and Tahmoh Penikett on “Dollhouse”

Writer and Director Josh Whedon followed up his very popular ”Buffy the Vampire Slayer” TV series with a spotlight series for Buffy cast member Eliza Dushku. It was the short-lived but intriguing science fiction cult show “Dollhouse.” Dushku also served as producer on the show, and appeared at the Dollhouse panel.

Dushku played Echo, who was a “doll” or “Active” for the Los Angeles “Dollhouse,” a series of facilities that hired out these human beings to wealthy clients. The idea was that after each assignment – which ranged from romantic interludes to high-risk criminal enterprises – the memory and personality of the Actives were wiped out, and they would exist in a child-like blank state until re-programmed for the next assignment. Echo is unique because she retains bits of memory even after the “wipes,” and gradually became more self aware.

Also on the panel is Tahmoh Penikett, who played FBI agent Paul Ballard on the show, trying to crack the secrets of the Dollhouse. Pennikett also played Karl “Helo” Agathon on the SyFy series “Battlestar Galactica.”

Panel of the Dolls: Eliza Dushku & Tahmoh Penikett, C2E2, March 19th, 2011
Photo credit: Joe Arce of Starstruck Foto for HollywoodChicago.com

Question: Eliza, what were some of the challenges as an actor that you had to experience in ‘Dollhouse?’

Eliza Dushku: We kept trying to find the doll ‘expression,’ it was a blank slate look, and how do you keep that interesting? I’m very expressive and gesticulate a lot, and they told me not to do that. [laughs] The doll was an interesting challenge, because I have multiple personalities as it is, so that was up my alley. It also made great lines out of ‘I like broccoli.’ [laughs]

Question: Tahmoh, what was your view of the evolution of ‘Dollhouse’?

Tahmoh Penikett: It was tumultuous at times, when Josh was describing the ideas and arc that the characters were going to have, it would have taken a very different direction. Based on the original pilot, things would have happened so much differently. We had to cannibalize the pilot into the first three episodes, so we didn’t start that well. I had to keep reminding myself who I had met, and Josh had to put notes in the script to keep us straight on it.

The relationship between Echo and I was finding its feet in the first season, but it became clearer as I began to know my character. For example, it took a while for me to find Echo, was I an idiot? It came together with the line, ‘The Dollhouse is real.’

Chicago Comic and Entertainment Expo 3.0 will take place in the Spring of 2012. Click here [19] for the full HollywoodChicago.com Slideshow from C2E2 2011.

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