



Tricia Helfer Talks Playing Dracula on *Van Helsing*, *Creepshow*

Tricia Helfer talks embodying a more alien Dracula on *Van Helsing*, as well as starring in her own *Creepshow* nightmare.

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It is safe to say that you've never met a Dracula quite like Tricia Helfer's, who is scheduled to make her *Van Helsing* debut later this year. Teased only for a moment in *Van Helsing*'s Season 4 trailer, Helfer is notably portraying the undead count (or in this case, countess) in a way that is unlike anything we've seen before. And while Helfer admits the role may just be amuse bouche for wicked things to come on *Van Helsing*, we couldn't help but ask her at San Diego Comic-Con how exciting it is to put her own spin on such an iconic character.

“My character is introduced this season, kind of midseason and [again at] the end of the season,” Helfer says. “So I’m introduced for a potential next season, and it’s pretty full-on... I’m just having fun with it, because it’s so over the top, in not camp, but just pure evil.”

Indeed, this Dracula might be one of the few that hews closer to the warped physiology of Max Schreck in the first Dracula movie, *Nosferatu* (1922). Pale white skin and demonic features, it’s a departure in more than gender from traditional Bram Stoker adaptations, which is par for the course for the *Battlestar Galactica* alum portraying her. According to Helfer, she leaned into some of the classic pomposity of the character, but she intentionally did not acquaint herself with the many previous interpretations in order to make something new.

“I think *Van Helsing* has its own take on the vampire mythology world in comparison to the Hugh Jackman or the Gary Oldman [version],” Helfer says. “It has its own story and with that, our Dracula is different. I haven’t seen a lot of the other movies, and when I got the role I purposely didn’t go out [to find them]. I just wanted to make it my own, and I didn’t want to have just freshly watched all these other characters, because it’s such an iconic role.”

With that said, Helfer does add that she intends to keep some of the mannerisms you might expect while also adding her own uniquely otherworldly style. “I mean I’m female for one, so that’s different, but also we wanted to make her a little more just really enjoying it. And I think that sticks with a lot of the Draculas. All-powerful, and it’s hard to ruffle their feathers... just such a supreme confidence, but there’s a little bit more of an alien creature-ish quality to her than others. In my look as well, I’m completely whited out, it’s not about sexy hair and makeup. It’s just more about being dark and a little more creature and alien.”

It seems to be a departure from many roles Helfer is generally associated with, and she seems to be relishing the opportunity, as she is with her turn in Shudder’s new anthology horror series, *Creepshow*. The series is based on a 1982 cult classic written by Stephen King and directed by George Romero, and it came to Helfer in an unusual way. Having worked with executive producer Stan Spry on, of all things, a Hallmark movie, Spry knew she’d be perfect for something a little more nefarious.

“My character Olivia Lane is a very high-powered CEO and she has a promotion to give,” Helfer teases. However, Olivia’s choice of which employee to send to Europe takes on insidious implications when you realize the woman who gets passed over is secretly Olivia’s lover. “It’s not necessarily the wrong choice, but there is a slight element of selfishness that she chooses Tom to go away instead of Cecilia, and it comes back to haunt her. It’s a story of a little bit of guilt, her losing her mind, her conscience of making this decision. Of course there’s a death involved... and I’m stuck in an elevator and dealing with the demons that come along, not knowing if what’s happening is real or if I’m manifesting it by my own guilt.”

Helfer also reveals her standalone story in the series is partially inspired by one of King’s short stories in *Creepshow 2*, “The Hitchhiker.” Although this one takes its own sadistic twists. Yet even though Helfer confirms the series will maintain the comic book panel flourishes on screen from the original films, she appreciates that showrunner Greg Nicotero kept the drama and

horror grounded. Audiences may find it darkly funny when a dead body comes back to life, but there is nothing amusing about this for Helfer's character.

"It is a heightened world, but there's also a groundedness to it," Helfer says. "I think the the heightened part, in many ways, in my particular episode... the heightened part is much more the graphics and the extreme of what happens with Cecilia coming back to life as her decomposition starts. In terms of performance, I looked at it more as just portraying this character who accidentally kills her lover and is distraught over it. She doesn't do it on purpose; it's a complete accident, but then makes the wrong decision."

Such supernatural morality tales often end with unforgiving morals, which is something that Nicotero has long appreciated about the original *Creepshow*, as he relayed to us via his unique personal history with the classic film. Helfer, meanwhile, is thrilled to just have a variety of unique roles, be they on cable or streaming, to sink her teeth into.