



Interview: Tricia Helfer on *Battlestar Galactica*'s legacy, voiceover work, and pretend running and driving.

Mallory Arbour June 20, 2019



Canadian actress, **Tricia Helfer** is best known for her roles as Number Six in Ronald D. Moore's re-imagined *Battlestar Galactica* series and Charlotte Richards/Mom in the newly-renewed series, *Lucifer*. She can also currently be seen playing Dracula in Syfy's *Van Helsing*. I spoke to the former model-turned-actress while she was in Melbourne for Australia's Ultimate Pop Culture event, *Oz Comic Con*.

Tricia, welcome to Melbourne! I understand it's your first time here and, judging by your Instagram, you've been taking full advantage of checking out all the wonderful sights the city has to offer. What are your first impressions of Melbourne?

I love it! It seems like a really cool city. I love the street art, beautiful gardens and people seem nice. So many people I talk to say it's their favourite city in Australia. I've had a nice time. It's

really got a lot to offer. It's a beautiful city and it's an interesting mix of artsy, older architecture with some new, and mixed with industrial.

I've been to Australia a few times – Sydney a few times, Perth twice, Adelaide and Lizard Island [near Cairns]. I was [in Lizard Island] many, many, many years ago when I was modelling in Sydney for a month. My boyfriend at the time flew down and we went up there for a week, and I so badly want to go back!

You're in Melbourne for *Oz Comic Con*, where your previous co-stars Sam Witwer from *Battlestar Galactica* and D.B. Woodside from *Lucifer* will also be appearing. Apart from travelling to different cities, is running into fellow actors you know or have previously worked with, who you may not have seen for a while, one of your favourite perks of doing conventions?

Yeah, especially at some of the bigger conventions you run into people you may not have necessarily worked with but you know – like **Brent Spiner** (best known for his role as android Lieutenant Commander Data in the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* franchise), who I adore! I've run into him at some conventions, and one of our trips together was Australia over two weekends, where we spent the week together in between and had a lovely time. He's a wonderful man. So, it's fun to run into people! **Sam Witwer** I saw not too long ago because he guested on my podcast, and **D.B. Woodside**, I adore. He's a good friend of mine, but I see him in LA so it's not like I haven't seen him for years.

I was lucky enough to speak to James Callis, who played your love interest Gaius Baltar in *Battlestar Galactica*. This was a question I asked him, so I will ask the same of you. You've had quite an extensive career with many interesting and varied roles, but which do you consider your best roles, meaning personal favourite or performance you're most proud of, and your least?

I guess I have had a longish career, but I don't feel like it's long. I modeled for ten years first, so I didn't start acting until I was 29 and I'm 45 now, so I feel like I've got a long way to go yet. I feel like my best work hasn't happened yet. But *Battlestar* was my first series and at this point it would still be one of my favourites, because of the love for the show that continues to build and the quality of the show. My closest friends are the *Battlestar* group. I moved to LA a year before and I didn't know anyone. When I got *Battlestar*, we became a family.

My worst was probably an independent film called *White Rush*. It was my first independent film, before I did *Battlestar*, and my first year of acting. I remember there was one scene where I'm meant to be running scared through the woods. I was playing a nurse and running from some bad guys. I can't remember the entire premise but the camera guy is also running through the forest backwards. Because it was low budget, they didn't have a dolly system set up where he was riding and they could move him quickly. So he's got to run really slow because he's stepping backwards and trying not to fall over. I'm meant to look like I'm running at full speed. Even at the time I was like, "I can't look like I'm running full speed if I'm barely moving" Now, I would have been more frantic like I'd been running and was worn out, than just trying to pretend I was running full tilt. As clearly I'm not running full tilt.

Even actors with the longest of careers would struggle to convincingly act like they're running at full speed though ...

The other thing is fake driving! You can always tell when people aren't actually driving. I've done it a few times and I think I'm okay at it because it bugs me so much when I see people being bad at it. When they never look at the road or they're looking at the person in the passenger seat for long stretches of time, I'm like, "Dude, you would have crashed!" Or they're over steering or not steering at all – it's a hard thing to do.

You mentioned *Battlestar Galactica* as one of your favourite projects. It's been over ten years since it ended, yet it's as praised today as when it first aired. How does it feel to not only have been part of such a universally loved series, but to have helped create such an iconic character not part of the original 1978 series?

It feels amazing! It's one of those shows, that, at the beginning, it was a little, cult hit and it was putting the Syfy channel on the map. But through streaming, it has continued to have people re-watch it and continue to find a new audience. It has that kind of staying power.

For me, I remember when I started the show and my character was the only known cylon, so I was kind of the bad one. I was hated in the beginning, until you see the arc of the whole show. Again, this was my first series. This was before social media, so I'm sure it would have been worse with social media hearing the constant barrage of how bad you are or the character. I remember saying to my husband at the time that everybody hates me. He said to me, "You're supposed to be bad. It means you're doing your job well!" And that totally changed it in my mind. I was like, "Yeah, they're not supposed to like me right now."

But looking back, I'm proud of it. I'm certainly proud of the work I did but more so proud of the people and the family that we are. And **Michael Rymer**, who is a Melbournite, so instrumental in building and developing the look and the style of the show.

You've also done a lot of video game voiceover work, notably Sarah Kerrigan in the *StarCraft* video games. A large part of Oz Comic Con is its gaming section, so that's another drawcard of your attendance. How'd you get involved in voice over work?

That has to do with *Battlestar* to be honest. A lot of producers are writers of video games, who happened to be *Battlestar* fans. My first video game and probably my second as well, was because they wanted Number Six's voice. Then once you start working with voice directors and get known in that space, more followed.

Then I did [a voice in 2009's] *Green Lantern: First Flight* and that was because I'd worked with the voice director on something else. I haven't done much voice over work in a while now. I think I did so many video games in a row that I exhausted the market a little bit. I'm due another video game.

And lastly, what can you say about playing Dracula in the latest Van Helsing adaption?

I'm currently filming. I've done one episode in the fourth season. My character is introduced mid-season and then I will be in the season finale. And, if we're lucky enough to get a next season, I will be in quite a bit of that. I'm extremely excited about their/my version of Dracula. I love the character. It's something I can sink my teeth into, without it sounding too on the nose. It's really fun character!