

Van Helsing: Aleks Paunovic Delves Into Julius' Surprising Depth

Ahead of *Van Helsing's* upcoming fifth season, Aleks Paunovic delved into his favorite elements of the SyFy series.

BY BRANDON ZACHARY



Described as "humanity's last hope," Vanessa Van Helsing is set to resume her mission of restoring order in the world in the fifth and final season of *Van Helsing*. During an exclusive interview with CBR, Aleks Paunovic, who plays Julius, discussed the appeal of post-apocalyptic stories and how fun it is working in a show with such a deep bench of impressive female characters.

After a massive dust cloud blots out the sun, a handful of figures fight against the vampiric hordes that have spread across the globe, making *Van Helsing* one of many shows to explore a post-apocalyptic setting. *The 100*, *The Walking Dead*, *Snowpiercer* and a host of other stories from recent years have explored what happens when the world falls apart and needs to be put back together again. Reflecting on the popularity of such settings, Paunovic noted how "when you look back at the '50s, '60s, '70s and to the '80s, then all of a sudden the internet comes and everything is so fast. It's speeding up that you almost feel like [the world] is bound to go over the cliff at some point."



"Everyone has a feeling of it can't be sustained, the way the world is going. It's just on the other side of where we're at... the post-apocalyptic world, you're just going back to day one. You're going back to the Bible. You're going back for the survival of the fittest-type thing. It's an interesting concept, an interesting world to be a part of because it was there before and we could be headed towards that, too. So it's an interesting topic. There's something primitive and barbaric about it that really interests me for sure."

Across the course of the series, Julius has transformed from a minor but vital villain into one of *Van Helsing*'s most fascinating characters -- a heroic figure seeking redemption after he is forcibly given his humanity once more. "It was so great," Paunovic recalled. "That evolution of Julius growing from vampire Julius. It was a thirst for power. When you switch into human Julius, where he just wants redemption, he wants to go out on

his terms, doing something good for someone because he's done so many bad things as a vampire. The depth that the writers gave me was something that I really latched on to and understood. I just innately understood the character, especially talking with the writers of the show and our showrunner Jonathan Walker -- who were all fantastic."

Paunovic specifically enjoyed the surprisingly heartfelt storyline given to Julius about his mother, commenting how the creators truly impressed him with the depth he gave the character. "I was pleasantly surprised with the depth of the character and what they wrote for me, and then just trying to dig in a little deeper so I can find some more with the character -- that's so rare. When you're in this industry, to have such a huge arc for the character, I'm really happy about that. Honestly, I thrive at that. I think every performer thrives on how you can drop into the character and find the turn in the motivation of the character. It's going from point A to point B, and I love that. I love when the writers keep you on your toes. I definitely relish it, and I feel very lucky to be getting a character like [Julius] and them allowing me to explore it."



Looking back at the four previous seasons of the show and the fanbase it has resonated with, Paunovic noted how he "was so happy with it because it's such a strong story for female characters. Kelly Overton does such a fantastic job playing Vanessa, showing the strength and vulnerability and the motherhood and the losing of a child. All the things that the vampire slayer has to go through and then they bring in a female version of

Dracula." Speaking about his co-star Tricia Helfer -- who plays the Dark One, aka Dracula -- Paunovic said, "I've been a fan of hers since *Battlestar Galactica*. We were friends before when she was doing *Battlestar*. So to have her as a part of this show and see the type of energy that she brings to such an iconic character -- I loved it."

"I absolutely love badass women as the [heart] of this show. One of the things that the writers wrote in is that I am a mama's boy in real life, so I understand the power of a woman, and I give it so much tribute to see that in a show that I'm a part of. It just makes my heart really full that these women are portrayed as just *badass* and get to do roles that they probably never thought they would do. I don't think Tricia ever thought she would be playing Dracula. I think she just absolutely *nailed* the role. I love being a part of a show that shows such strong women as a part of it."

Looking forward to the upcoming final season of *Van Helsing*, Paunovic spoke about "the gift of completing the show, getting the fifth and final season as opposed to just canceling the show, giving us the chance to finish it on our own terms. That led to a lot of really interesting storylines, not only developing, but finishing. That's the biggest thing that people are really going to take away from this season, is to see where each character goes and how they end up and where the end of their story lies. I think that's special."

"Syfy and Netflix giving us this fifth and final season that anybody now can watch the show Season 1 to Season 5 and have a completely wrapped up story -- that's the biggest thing that I'm excited about. I can't obviously get into storylines or anything like that. I don't want to give anything away, but it's going to be really fun to watch. I think there's going to be quite a few tears shed, for sure."

Van Helsing stars Kelly Overton, Jonathan Scarfe, Tricia Helfer, Nicole Munoz, Keeya King, Neal McDonough, Vincent Gale, Rukiya Bernard and Aleks Paunovic. Season 5 will air on April 16 at 10 p.m. ET on Syfy.