



Van Helsing's Kelly Overton Gives Us A Peek Behind The Curtain At Vanessa's Return - Exclusive Interview

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As SYFY's "Van Helsing" careens toward the conclusion of its fifth season and the series as a whole, it's offering up all kinds of exciting action and moments of import for its dedicated fanbase. None may be as significant, however, as the return of Vanessa Van Helsing, the show's main protagonist, who's been absent from the proceedings since being trapped in the Dark Realm in Season 4. Her return comes just as her compatriots gear up for their final battle against Dracula, the single most powerful vampire in all of history. Good timing, that.

Vanessa's absence was triggered by actor Kelly Overton's pregnancy during the show's last go-round, and a return was always planned ... but little did the folks behind the show realize that they'd be facing a global pandemic that nearly scuttled their chances at wrapping things up. Fortunately, they were able to return to production to finish the series, and Overton got her chance to take up Vanessa's mantle once again and be a part of the final arc on "Van Helsing."

As the show prepared to air its concluding episodes, we sat down for a chat with Overton looking back on her time as Vanessa Van Helsing.

Vanessa Van Helsing's return



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So, Vanessa Van Helsing is back now. What can we expect from the character and her return?

Let's see. You can definitely expect some kick-ass and some power returning with her ... finishing things off here, so to speak. But yeah, I think you can expect the Vanessa that everybody hopefully loves coming back bigger and better than ever.

So there's going to be some consistency, but how will the time trapped in the Dark Realm have changed her?

Well, it must've been a profound change, because she's got short blonde hair now.

I'm teasing. But I do think, when I talked to the showrunners about the hair, and they were like, "No, leave it. We love it. We love it. We're going to use it." And so in some ways, I bring up the hair as a joke, but the hair is kind of symbolic of a deeper kind of transformation that happens inside of her. So, you'll get to see what that is soon.

How is it for you personally and artistically coming back to this character after a break and picking back up the mantle of Vanessa again?

Oh, it was wonderful. I love Vanessa. She obviously has such a dear place in my heart. And it was really nice, knowing that the show is ending, to come back and give not only

the character, the journey that I've been on with her for five years, but also the fans of the show the closure that I think it deserves. Just to be able to say goodbye in a really meaningful way felt really great.

Kelly Overton on returning to Van Helsing



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You're reaching the end of this years-long journey. What's the feeling around that? Do you feel sadness that it's over? Do you feel a bit of, "Okay, we've done the job that we came here to do?" What's your perspective on the end of the show?

Yeah, there's definitely a sadness. It was a very emotional goodbye. It was such a tight-knit group up there, and for those five years, even though we were doing a vampire show, everybody showed up and really brought a lot of heart to the show and really tried to make it an atmosphere where actors could do what they do, and that was really creative in that way. So, it became a special place to be artistically, and so saying goodbye to that was really hard, but, at the same time, there's so much gratitude for every season that it'd get picked up again, and so much gratitude for the five years that we got to do, and to be able to say goodbye. A lot of people don't get that opportunity, so there's so much gratitude. It just felt really good. It felt emotional in all the right ways.

On top of it being the end of the show, the final episodes of "Van Helsing" were produced in the midst of the ongoing pandemic. Can you speak a bit to that experience?

Yeah, sure. They were shooting the first half of Season 5 in Slovakia when everything started shutting down. So I know that, especially being over there, was kind of a really

scary time. Thankfully, everybody was okay, and they got everybody home safely, but then nobody knew if we were going to get the opportunity to complete Season 5.

When we were able to come back to work, it was really special, I think, twofold. Not only were we finishing the series, but we're also finishing it at a time where other productions weren't having that opportunity. And a lot of kudos to Nomadic, the production company, for that, because they really set up some wonderful protocols in record time to make it a safe environment for us all to come back and work. And we were not only the first production to finish a season successfully, but to finish without any COVID cases. So it was a really big deal, it was a big accomplishment for us. So, it really just made everything that much more meaningful.

What was that like for you, though? Because you've had this little bit of a hiatus, and then you're waiting for your big return, and suddenly this thing comes up and whether you're going to be able to finish the show or not is in doubt.

I think it was such a life-altering, mind-blowing event that there was a pandemic in the first place. So, just knowing that everybody is safe and that my family is safe, everything like that, that was the primary concern at that time. Getting to finish the show became a secondary thing. But of course, you're thinking, "Man, maybe I won't get that opportunity," and "What a shame that would be," but then, at the end of the day, we were talking life and death, and so that was not at the forefront of my mind. But of course, when it started unfolding that we were going to be able to come back and finish it, it just made everything more meaningful.

How the Van Helsing fanbase impacts the show



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"Van Helsing" has a very dedicated fanbase. What's your experience of that been? Have you had any particularly memorable interactions with the fanbase that you'll look back on fondly when the show's over?

Yeah. Sci-fi fans in general, I got to first experience that being on "True Blood," and they are really the most passionate fans I've ever met. And when I started doing "Van Helsing," I was thrilled that I was able to continue to interact with those fans, and hopefully a lot of those fans followed me over to "Van Helsing." And it was really, really awesome to see the fans that did and to acquire new ones in this genre, because, like I said, I think they're just the most dynamic fans out there.

I think one of the most impressive things for me was the fans that have stuck by the show for the past five years and how vocal they are on social media. And shout-out to one of my fans, Ashley, who ... she's a photographer, artist, who does beautiful sketches. She sends some beautiful sketches of me and some of the other actors on the show, and she really supports some of my e-commerce businesses, and she's a fellow Nike lover. I just want to give her a shout-out because she's been really awesome, and I appreciate her. Katie Lester, of course, is one of the show's biggest fans, so shout-out to her.

So there are so many great fans on social media that really just feed the fire and make it so exciting to go to work. Vancouver is where we shoot the show, and it's such a small community up there, and I think one of the most memorable parts of the fanbase of "Van Helsing" for me is being up there and in shooting, because I'm based in America, so when we do shoot, I am up there, and I get to experience the small community of fans up there.

There are times where they'd figure out where we were dining or where we were, and they'd be waiting for us when we came outside. And that really blew me away when I got to experience that, that they cared that much, that they were following along in real time, and then would get in their car, or however they got there, to quickly be there so that they could say hello in person and get an autograph. And that was really cool.

Is that something that you feel the impact of when you're on set in terms of artistic decisions that are being made or creative decisions about what's happening to certain characters?

Yeah, no, 100% as far as the big creative decisions that go into the show. Those are things that are premeditated way in advance by the writing team and the showrunners. So, that bigger arc stuff, most likely, that stuff is not driven by the fanbase, but Jonathan Walker and some of the writers might pipe in if they were on this call and say, "Well, wait a second, there was that one time."

But I will say that we talk about the fans. When we're on set and we're shooting, we talk about them, we talk about what they would, like you said, what they were going to think about that. They are a presence, and they should know that.

What Kelly Overton wants fans to know about Van Helsing



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One of the reasons people praise "Van Helsing" is for what it's done for representation, for female characters, for queer characters. Can you speak a bit to that experience and what it's been like being a part of a show that gets that kind of attention?

"Van Helsing" really took some awesome chances, not only by taking even just a traditionally male character and making it female, but then making it a mother story, a mother and daughter story, and then continuing to cast throughout the seasons such strong female characters, I think was really incredible of them. And I'm really proud to have been on the show that did that.

What's something that even the most diehard fans might not know about the process of making the show that you think they should, as we head toward the finish line?

I feel like we're so transparent that they know everything, so I didn't really think about that.

Like I said, we do talk about them. So, I think that's maybe something that they might not realize, that's fun for them to know. I mentioned before how much fun it is, even these scenes where we're dying, and blood is everywhere, and it looks really gory or scary. They yell, "Cut," and we just all bust out laughing. So, that's something that I think people would find, "What really?"

I think everybody knows how grueling working hours are, that we're all working really hard to give them the best show possible. I think they might be surprised with just some of the conditions that we, as actors, have to shoot in, and sometimes it's in the freezing snow and rain, but we all just huddle up in tents and stay warm and cozy and have family time.

Kelly Overton's favorite memories of Van Helsing



Dia Dipasupil/Getty Images

Is there a particular sequence or action beat or crazy horror scene or anything that really sticks out to you as something you'll always remember from shooting "Van Helsing"?

Yeah, Season 1 for me was just really special, and I think the pilot itself, because that's the thing that got me so excited to sign on for five years or however long it would have run for. That pilot script, those first even three episodes, I will never forget that experience and what it felt like. The wake-up scene, for me, being in the hospital and on that slab, and getting to fight. There were such great fights in those first three episodes, too. And that was my first time really doing extensive fight scenes on the show before.

I think Dylan's death was really impactful and powerful to me. At the time, I was five months pregnant. There was just a lot that went into shooting that, a lot of buildup for my character throughout the years, just a lot, personally, for me, like I said, being pregnant and her death and that scream, I think I will always remember. And probably, by the way, that was a moment that I was very proud of, how life and art kind of came together. It was really cool.

My death scene, actually, in one of the first couple of episodes, with my daughter in my apartment, dying before I was able to have the transformation and then wake up. That was really exciting, too.

A lot of those early times in the hospital, when those relationships were just starting and it was new, it was very special. I'll always remember Season 1 the most ... and of course, the finale, and the end, too.

You've now gotten to play a werewolf on "True Blood" and a vampire on "Van Helsing." What supernatural creature would you want to play next?

Oh, no! I've had so much fun playing both of those, I would do it again in a heartbeat. Maybe this time, if I was a vampire, I'd get to fly, though. That would be awesome.

It's funny, when I do think about the sci-fi genre, the next thing that always pops into my head is that I want to be in space. I would love to explore that aspect of science fiction and fantasy. Whether I'm an alien or not, I don't know, but I'd love to be on the spaceship and just to be in that world. That would be really cool.