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CARMILLA CAST AND CREATORS DISCUSS THE SERIES' FINAL ACT, ANNOUNCE FEATURE FILM AT NYCC



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Dec 12, 2016, 9:12 PM
EST (Updated)

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Two years ago, the internet was introduced to a brand-new web series featuring a gung-ho freshman journalism student, her broody gay vampire roommate, their quirky cast of supporting characters and a supernatural conspiracy threatening their strange college campus. That series was *Carmilla*, and in the intervening years it has become a force of nature online, garnering hundreds of thousands of views, a handful of awards, and a legion of loyal fans calling themselves “Creampuffs.”

The series, now in its third and final season, will be coming to a close on Thursday with the release of the last 12 episodes. The stakes have been raised considerably since Season 1. The show's main character, Laura Hollis, has gone from optimistic journalism student intent on saving the school to “realist.” Her on again/off again vampiric girlfriend, the titular character, Carmilla, has shifted from reluctant hero to team leader. Meanwhile, the campus is overrun with vampires as Carmilla's mother, the former dean, now inhabiting the body of one of their friends, unleashes her plans for a global apocalypse. The final episodes are an event both eagerly awaited and utterly feared.

With only a few days to go before the release, the cast and crew of the Canadian series hopped over the border for their very first American convention: New York Comic Con. We were able to sit down with series stars Elise Bauman (Laura) and Natasha Negovanlis (Carmilla), along with series writer Jordan Hall, and producer Steph Ouaknine, to talk about the journey so far and to preview what's to come as the heroes take on their greatest challenge yet.

Coming to an end

Of course, the very first thing we wanted to know was why they had decided to end the series now, despite the success they've seen so far. The consensus: It was time.

"I was originally doing a pitch for about 100 episodes," said Hall, "and then the order for the first season became the 36 episodes and it was like 'Well, there's act one.' So we had kind of an act two and an act three in sketchy terms, but it seems reasonable as an arc."

"And when we talked with our partners and our brand, it seemed like the right amount of seasons to do, because for them it's a very big investment," added Ouaknine. "But even creatively, we wouldn't want to keep spinning our wheels and stretching again, and it was really lovely to be able to write toward a conclusion this year."

Growing up and moving on

It's hard to argue with that logic, especially if you've been following along with the season so far. This season's massive stakes come with a certain sense of finality. They're dealing with an end-of-the-world scenario, and every decision they make brings with it potentially deadly consequences.

They've also gone to great lengths to make the characters feel like they're in a period of transition in their lives, ready to take major steps toward whatever is next. For Laura, that step comes from her relationship with her overprotective father (Enrico Colantoni), who joined the cast this season.

Carmilla, meanwhile, is dealing with a much different kind of family drama. Her mother, possessing their friend Lola Perry, is once again trying to destroy the world. Carmilla has quickly transitioned from broody reluctant hero to the motivating force behind the entire team's actions. We asked Negovanlis what it was like to make that switch.

"I think it was really fun and interesting to play that sort of role reversal," said Negovanlis. "Now Laura is the one saying 'Carmilla, you might get yourself killed' and Carmilla is willing to do that to save her friends and to save Laura ... it actually made acting a lot easier, because there was something to drive me, and something behind all the text."

Sidekicks and super villains

This season has also meant big changes for the supporting cast. As I've already mentioned, Perry (Annie Briggs) has been possessed by the Dean, spending most of this season striking terror into the hearts of viewers. Meanwhile, her best friend LaFontaine (Kaitlyn Alexander) has been fiercely trying to save their friend, even while Laura and Carmilla work to destroy her.

"The writers have done such an amazing job this year of bringing so many storylines. Everything has a purpose," said Bauman of the expanded role of the supporting cast this season.

"Kaitlyn's also been doing such a great job the season," added Negovanlis. "They've really come into their own, and it's been really fun playing off of them. Carmilla and LaF are sort of bros this season, so it's been really interesting because Carmilla is usually just in the background sort of lurking around, and only really interacts with Laura, so it's been nice."

Perry, of course, is also getting a lot more screen time this year, as she lends her body to the evil Dean. Annie Briggs has turned in a captivating performance so far, turning from Perry's usual bubbly persona to the Dean's special brand of sinister.

"Annie is a stellar, stellar actress," lauded Hall. "When you have actors like that you want to give them more to do, not less."

Oddly enough, despite the overwhelmingly positive response her possession has garnered, Perry wasn't originally meant to play this role, though the Dean was always going to possess someone.

“When we started writing season two ... Laura was gonna have an intern for her little news program,” explains Hall, introducing the assembled reporters to Intern Jenny for the first time. “Intern Jenny was going to be one who became possessed.”

As they were breaking down season two, they realized they had far too many characters. Intern Jenny had to go, but who would the Dean inhabit instead?

“It worked thematically for Perry,” adds Ouaknine. “because she was getting frustrated with this vampire situation and living under the floor boards, she would get a little more pressed, which worked well with the Dean’s goals.”

Act III and burying your gays

So what’s still to come for our mighty band of heroes? Everyone remained pretty tight lipped on the subject, careful not to spoil anything ahead of Thursday’s release. In fact, when asked what was on the horizon, Hall simply gave a maniacal laugh.

But a little careful questioning did unearth a couple tidbits. For example, despite the fact that his heart remains the final talisman, Vordenberg is definitely dead. This means our heroes are going to have to find an alternative solution if they want to stop the Dean’s evil plan.

“Everything is at stake in the final act,” said Bauman. “The world is about to end, and it’s interesting to see characters in the most extreme and desperate of times, what they’re willing to do.”

One thing the creators say they’re acutely aware of is the ongoing struggle in TV surrounding the Bury Your Gays trope, which came to a head earlier this year following the death of lesbian warrior Lexa on The CW’s The 100.

"There was a lot of discussion about that," said Hall, unwilling to dive into too much detail for fear of revealing spoilers.

Ouaknine added that so far the only characters they have killed off on the show have been straight, cisgendered white people (Vordenberg and Sarah Jane from season one).

But on a genre show approaching its final episodes, and a major climax, where the vast majority of characters are LGBT women, it's hard to ignore the possibility that one or more may not survive past the finale.

During the panel immediately following our interview, a concerned fan asked the same question, and Hall added that they were "going to put forth our absolute best story."

"With respect to the world, the characters," added Ouaknine. "I think half of our writer and transmedia and story editor room is queer, so this is so important to us. Not only to us, but to everyone else who works on it. I can't tell you how important it is that we discuss it in detail, not only with what the story is saying, but on a meta level. What do our choices mean in a broader context, because we don't write into a void. So just know that we really care, and we want to do our best."

***Carmilla* the movie?**

Of course, we couldn't let them go without asking about the future of the *Carmilla* world once the series comes to an end. With a story taking place across so many mediums, could we look forward to exploring the expanded universe of *Carmilla* in a book, comic, future series ... or perhaps even a movie?

Hall and Ouaknine played coy with their answer.

"[Director] Spencer always jokes that he'd love to do a Rocky Horror style tour. I would love that too," responded Ouaknine,

adding, "That's not in the cards."

"It's a large world," added Hall. "At present, we're thinking this is the arc. For the web series, this is the arc. It's a nice contained conclusion. But it is a big world, and certainly, it would be lovely."

Little did we know they were cooking something up for the panel later on, doing their best to dodge the question so as not to ruin the surprise. While this might be the end of this adventure, the gang will be getting back together for a feature film to be released sometime next year. The teaser trailer closed out the NYCC panel to uproarious applause - and no small amount of screaming - from fans.

***Carmilla* Season Three, Act Three, drops Thursday, October 13th at 7:30 PM EDT on their Youtube channel, following a live hangout with the cast.**

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