

= Firefly (TV series) =

Firefly is an American space Western drama television series created by writer and director Joss Whedon , under his Mutant Enemy Productions label . Whedon served as an executive producer , along with Tim Minear . The series is set in the year 2517 , after the arrival of humans in a new star system and follows the adventures of the renegade crew of Serenity , a " Firefly @-@ class " spaceship . The ensemble cast portrays the nine characters who live on Serenity . Whedon pitched the show as " nine people looking into the blackness of space and seeing nine different things " .

The show explores the lives of a group of people who fought on the losing side of a civil war and others who now make a living on the fringe of society , as part of the pioneer culture that exists on the fringes of their star system . In this future , the only two surviving superpowers , the United States and China , fused to form the central federal government , called the Alliance , resulting in the fusion of the two cultures . According to Whedon 's vision , " nothing will change in the future : technology will advance , but we will still have the same political , moral , and ethical problems as today " .

Firefly premiered in the U.S. on the Fox network on September 20 , 2002 . By mid @-@ December , Firefly had averaged 4 @.@ 7 million viewers per episode and was 98th in Nielsen ratings . It was canceled after eleven of the fourteen produced episodes were aired . Despite the relatively short life span of the series , it received strong sales when it was released on DVD and has large fan support campaigns . It won a Primetime Emmy Award in 2003 for Outstanding Special Visual Effects for a Series . TV Guide ranked the series at No. 5 on their 2013 list of 60 shows that were " Cancelled Too Soon " .

The post @-@ airing success of the show led Whedon and Universal Pictures to produce Serenity , a 2005 film which continues from the story of the series , and the Firefly franchise expanded to other media , including comics and a role @-@ playing game .

= = Premise = =

= = = Backstory = = =

The series takes place in the year 2517 , on a variety of planets and moons . The TV series does not reveal whether these celestial bodies are within one star system , only saying that Serenity 's mode of propulsion is a " gravity @-@ drive " . The film Serenity makes clear that all the planets and moons are in one large system , and production documents related to the film indicate that there is no faster @-@ than @-@ light travel in this universe . The characters occasionally refer to " Earth @-@ that @-@ was " , and the film establishes that , long before the events in the series , a large population had emigrated from Earth to a new star system in generation ships : " Earth @-@ that @-@ was could no longer sustain our numbers , we were so many " . The emigrants established themselves in this new star system , with " dozens of planets and hundreds of moons " . Many of these were terraformed , a process in which a planet or moon is altered to resemble Earth . The terraforming process was only the first step in making a planet habitable , however , and the outlying settlements often did not receive any further support in the construction of their civilizations . This resulted in many of the border planets and moons having forbidding , dry environments , well @-@ suited to the Western genre .

= = = Synopsis = = =

The show takes its name from the " Firefly @-@ class " spaceship , Serenity , that the central characters call home . It resembles a firefly in general arrangement , and the tail section , analogous to a bioluminescent insectoid abdomen , lights up during acceleration . The ship was named after the Battle of Serenity Valley , where Mal and Zoe were on the losing side . It is revealed in " Bushwhacked " that the Battle of Serenity Valley is widely considered the loss which sealed the fate

of the Independents .

Throughout the series , the Alliance is shown to govern the star system through an organization of " core " planets , following its success in forcibly unifying all the colonies under a single government . DVD commentary suggests that the Alliance is composed of two primary " core " systems , one predominantly Western in culture , the other pan @-@ Asian , justifying the mixed linguistic and visual themes of the series . The central planets are firmly under Alliance control , but the outlying planets and moons resemble the 19th @-@ century American West , with little governmental authority . Settlers and refugees on the outlying worlds have relative freedom from the central government , but lack the amenities of the high @-@ tech civilization that exists on the inner worlds . In addition , the outlying areas of space (" the black ") are inhabited by the Reavers , a cannibalistic group of nomadic humans that have become savage and animalistic .

The captain of the crew of *Serenity* is Malcolm " Mal " Reynolds (Nathan Fillion) and the episode " *Serenity* " establishes that the captain and his first mate Zoe Washburne (Gina Torres) are veteran " Browncoats " of the Unification War , a failed attempt by the outlying worlds to resist the Alliance 's assertion of control . A later episode , titled " *Out of Gas* " , reveals that Mal bought the spaceship *Serenity* to continue living beyond Alliance control . Much of the crew 's work consists of cargo runs or smuggling . One of the main story arcs is that of River Tam (Summer Glau) and her brother Simon (Sean Maher) . River is a child prodigy , whose brain was subjected to experiments at the hands of Alliance scientists at a secret government institution . As a result , she displays schizophrenia and often hears voices . It is later revealed that she is a " reader " , one who possesses telepathic abilities . Simon gave up a career as a highly successful trauma surgeon to rescue her from the Alliance , and as a result of this rescue they are both wanted fugitives . In the original pilot " *Serenity* " , Simon joins the crew as a paying passenger with River smuggled on board as cargo . As Whedon states in an episodic DVD commentary , every show he does is about creating family . By the last episode , " *Objects in Space* " , the fractured character of River has finally become whole , partly because the others decided to accept her into their " family " on the ship .

== = Signature show elements == =

The show blended elements from the space opera and Western genres , depicting humanity 's future in a manner different from most contemporary science fiction programs in that there are no large space battles . *Firefly* takes place in a multi @-@ cultural future , primarily a fusion of Western and East Asian cultures , where there is a significant division between the rich and poor . As a result of the Sino @-@ American Alliance , Mandarin Chinese is a common second language ; it is used in advertisements , and characters in the show frequently use Chinese words as curses . According to the DVD commentary on the episode " *Serenity* " , this was explained as being the result of China and the United States being the two superpowers that expanded into space .

The show also features slang not used in contemporary culture , such as adaptations of modern words , or new words altogether . For example , " shiny " is frequently used in a similar manner as the real world slang " cool " , and " gorram " is used as a mild swear word . Written and spoken Chinese as well as Old West dialect are also employed . As one reviewer noted : " The dialogue tended to be a bizarre purée of wisecracks , old @-@ timey Western @-@ paperback patois , and snatches of Chinese " .

Tim Minear and Joss Whedon pointed out two scenes that , they believed , articulated the mood of the show exceptionally clearly . One scene is in the original pilot " *Serenity* " , when Mal is eating with chopsticks and a Western tin cup is by his plate ; the other is in " *The Train Job* " pilot , when Mal is thrown out of a holographic bar window . The DVD set 's " making @-@ of " documentary explains the distinctive frontispiece of the series (wherein *Serenity* soars over a herd of horses) as Whedon 's attempt to capture " everything you need to understand about the series in five seconds " .

One of the struggles that Whedon had with Fox was the tone of the show , especially with the main character Malcolm Reynolds . Fox pressured Whedon to make Mal more " jolly " , as they feared he

was too dark in the original pilot , epitomized by the moment he suggests he might " space " Simon and River , throwing them out of the airlock to die . In addition , Fox was not happy that the show involved the " nobodies " who " get squished by policy " instead of the actual policy makers .

= = Cast = =

= = = Main characters = = =

Firefly maintained an ensemble cast that portrayed nine crew members and passengers of the ship , Serenity . These characters fight criminals and schemers , Alliance security forces , the utterly psychotic and brutal Reavers , and the mysterious men with " hands of blue " ? who are apparently operatives of a secret agency which is part of the megacorporation referred to in the DVD commentary only as The Blue Sun Corporation . The crew is driven by the need to secure enough income to keep their ship operational , set against their need to keep a low profile to avoid their adversaries . Their situation is greatly complicated by the divergent motivations of the individuals on board Serenity , but complex characterization was hampered by the show 's brief run .

All nine of the main characters appeared in every episode , with the exception of " Ariel " , from which Book is absent ? he was meditating at an abbey .

Nathan Fillion as Malcolm " Mal " Reynolds ? the owner and captain of Serenity and former Independent sergeant in the pivotal Battle of Serenity Valley . Malcolm grew up on a ranch , and was raised by his mother and the ranch hands . In the Unification War , he fought for the Independent Army , the " Browncoats " , as a platoon sergeant in the 57th Overlanders . He is cunning , a capable leader and a skilled fighter . Mal 's main character drive is his will for independence . While he is not above petty theft , smuggling or even killing to maintain his free lifestyle , he is generally honest in his dealings with others , fiercely loyal to his crew and closely follows a personal moral code . He is openly antagonistic toward religion .

Gina Torres as Zoe Alleyne Washburne ? second @-@ in @-@ command onboard Serenity , a loyal wartime friend of Captain Reynolds , and the wife of Wash . Her surname during the Unification War was Alleyne . She was born and raised on a ship and served under Mal during the war as a corporal . Described by her husband as a " warrior woman " , she is a capable fighter who keeps calm even in the most dangerous situations . She demonstrates an almost unconditional loyalty to Mal , the only exception noted being her marriage to Wash , which the captain claims was against his orders .

Alan Tudyk as Hoban " Wash " Washburne ? Serenity 's pilot and Zoe 's husband . Deeply in love with his wife , Wash expresses jealousy over his wife 's " war buddy " relationship and unconditional support of their captain , most particularly in the episode " War Stories " , in which he confronts Mal regarding their relationship . He joined pilot training just to see the stars , which were invisible from the surface of his polluted homeworld , and he joined Serenity despite being highly sought after by other ships . He is very light @-@ hearted and tends to make amusing comments , despite the severity of any situation .

Morena Baccarin as Inara Serra ? a Companion , which is the 26th century cross between a geisha and an escort or mistress , who rents one of Serenity 's two small shuttles . Inara enjoys high social standing . Her presence confers a degree of legitimacy and social acceptance the crew of Serenity would not have without her on board . Inara displays great dignity , civility and compassion . There is strong romantic tension between her and Mal , who share many character traits , but each jokingly objects to the other 's " whoring " or " petty theft " , respectively . Both refuse to act on their feelings , and try to keep their relationship professional .

Adam Baldwin as Jayne Cobb ? a mercenary . He and Mal met on opposite sides of a rivalry ; Mal , while held at gunpoint , offered Jayne his own bunk and a higher cut than his current employer , so he turned coat and shot his then @-@ partners . In the original Pilot " Serenity " he intimates to Mal that he did not betray him because " The money wasn 't good enough , " however previously he had pointedly asked the Alliance agent whether he would be required to turn on the captain to help him ,

and in " Ariel " defends his actions alerting the authorities regarding Simon and River by claiming he had not intended to betray Mal . He is someone who can be depended on in a fight . He tends to act like a " lummoX " who thinks he is the smartest person in space , but occasional hints of intelligence peek through this façade , giving the impression that he acts dumber than he is . As Whedon states several times , Jayne is the man who will ask the questions that no one else wants to . Even though he is a macho character , he has shown a particularly intense fear of Reavers , more so than the rest of the crew . Despite his amoral mercenary persona , he sends a significant portion of his income to his mother , again suggesting that there is more to his character than what he presents to the rest of the crew .

Jewel Staite as Kaywinnet Lee " Kaylee " Frye ? the ship 's mechanic . In the episode " Out of Gas " , it is established that she has no formal training , but keeps Serenity running with an intuitive gift for the workings of mechanical equipment . Jewel Staite explains Kaylee 's character as being wholesome , sweet , and " completely genuine in that sweetness " , adding " She loves being on that ship . She loves all of those people . And she is the only one who loves all of them incredibly genuinely . " She has a crush on Dr. Simon Tam . Kaylee is the heart of the ship : according to creator Joss Whedon , if Kaylee believes something , it is true .

Sean Maher as Dr. Simon Tam ? a trauma surgeon of the first caliber (top 3 % in his class at a top core @-@ planet institution) , who is on the run after breaking his sister River out of a government research facility . In the episode " Safe " , it is revealed that he and River had a privileged upbringing with access to the best education . In rescuing River over his stern father 's severe objections , Simon sacrificed a highly successful future in medicine . His bumbling attempts at a romantic relationship with Kaylee are a recurring subplot throughout the series , and at every turn he seems to find a way to unwittingly foil his own attempts at romance . His life is defined by caring for his sister .

Summer Glau as River Tam ? smuggled onto the ship by her brother . A highly intelligent , compassionate and intuitive child prodigy . Experiments and invasive brain surgery at an Alliance secret facility left her delusional , paranoid , and at times violent , though her uncanny ability to seemingly sense things before they happen leaves questions as to where the delusions end and reality begins for her . The experiments seemed to have made her a psychic . The experiments also gave her with a seemingly innate ability in hand @-@ to @-@ hand combat , and she is capable of killing or incapacitating several stronger opponents with ease . She gets frequent fits of anxiety and experiences post @-@ traumatic flashbacks of her time in the Alliance facility . Her mental instability and uncanny abilities , paired with several erratic and violent acts , are a recurring source of fear and doubt among the crew , especially with Jayne , whom she once slashed with a knife . Jayne very frequently requests that River and Simon be taken off the ship .

Ron Glass as Derrial Book ? a Shepherd (equivalent to a pastor) . Although presented as a devout Christian , Book has profound , unexplained knowledge about criminal activities , police corruption , and military strategy , tactics , and weapons . In " Safe " , he was shown to have sufficient status in the Alliance to receive emergency medical treatment from an Alliance ship , with no questions asked . He is also proficient in hand @-@ to @-@ hand combat and the use of firearms . While objecting to violence most of the time , on a rescue mission he joins the fight , stating that while the Bible is quite specific about killing , it is " somewhat fuzzier on the subject of kneecaps " . Book is a moral guide for Mal and the rest of the crew , a voice of reason , conscience and spirituality . At the same time , he seems to get along well with the amoral mercenary Jayne , with the two spotting each other while working out using a bench press . His hidden backstory would have been gradually revealed , had the series continued , but was instead explored in the 2010 comic book The Shepherd 's Tale .

= = = Recurring characters = = =

Despite the series ' short run , several recurring characters emerged from the inhabitants of the Firefly universe :

Badger (Mark Sheppard) is an established smuggling middleman on the planet Persephone . He

provided jobs for Serenity on at least two occasions . In the DVD commentary for the episode " Serenity " , it was revealed that this part was originally written with the intention of Whedon himself playing the part . Badger appeared in the original pilot " Serenity " and in " Shindig " , with a return in the comic book series Serenity : Those Left Behind .

Adelai Niska (Michael Fairman) is a criminal kingpin who has a reputation for violent reprisals , including severe , prolonged torture , against those who fail him or even irritate him . He appeared in " The Train Job " and " War Stories " .

" Saffron " (Christina Hendricks) is a con artist whose real name is unknown . She first appeared in the episode " Our Mrs. Reynolds " as Mal 's involuntarily acquired wife . She has a habit of marrying her marks during her scams . She returns in episode " Trash " , where Mal jokingly addresses her as " YoSaffBridge " , a portmanteau of her three aliases , " Yolanda " , " Saffron " , and " Bridget " .

" The Hands of Blue " (Jeff Ricketts and Dennis Cockrum) : Two anonymous men wearing suits and blue gloves who pursue River , apparently to return her to the institute from which she escaped , as shown in " The Train Job " , " Ariel " , and the Serenity : Those Left Behind comic . They kill anyone , including Alliance personnel , who had contact with her , using a mysterious hand @-@ held device that causes fatal hemorrhaging in anyone at whom it is aimed . River , during anxiety attacks or psychological meltdowns , has repeated the phrase " Two by two / hands of blue " in a way that resembles poetic meter . This suggests that River has had close experience (s) with them .

= = Episodes = =

= = Production = =

= = = Origin = = =

Whedon developed the concept for the show after reading The Killer Angels , the Pulitzer Prize @-@ winning novel by Michael Shaara chronicling the Battle of Gettysburg during the American Civil War . He wanted to follow people who had fought on the losing side of a war and their experiences afterwards as pioneers and immigrants on the outskirts of civilization , much like the post @-@ American Civil War era of Reconstruction and the American Old West culture . He intended the show to be " a Stagecoach kind of drama with a lot of people trying to figure out their lives in a bleak pioneer environment " . Whedon wanted to develop a show about the tactile nature of life , a show where existence was more physical and more difficult . After reading The Killer Angels , Whedon read a book about Jewish partisan fighters in World War II that also influenced him . Whedon wanted to create something for television that was more character @-@ driven and gritty than most modern science fiction . Television science fiction , he felt , had become too pristine and rarefied .

Whedon wanted to give the show a name that indicated movement and power , and felt that " Firefly " had both . This powerful word 's relatively insignificant meaning , Whedon felt , added to its allure . He eventually wound up creating the ship in the image of a firefly .

= = = Format = = =

During filming of the pilot episode , Whedon was still arguing with Fox that the show should be displayed in widescreen format . Consequently , he purposely filmed scenes with actors on the extreme edge of both sides so that they could only be shown in widescreen . This led to a few scenes on the DVD (and later Blu @-@ ray) where objects or setups that were not visible in the original 4 : 3 broadcasts were now displayed ? such as the scene in the pilot where Wash mimes controlling the ship with a non @-@ existent yoke . However , the pilot was rejected by the Fox executives , who felt that it lacked action and that the captain was too " dour " . They also disliked a

scene in which the crew backed down to a crime boss , since the scene implied the crew was " being nothing " . Thus , Fox told Whedon on a Friday afternoon that he had to submit a new pilot script on Monday morning or the show would not be picked up . Whedon and Tim Minear closeted themselves for the weekend to write what became the new pilot , " The Train Job " . At the direction of Fox , they added " larger than life " characters such as the henchman " Crow " , and the " hands of blue " men , who also introduced an X @-@ Files @-@ type ending .

For the new pilot , Fox made it clear that they would not air the episodes in the widescreen format . Whedon and company felt they had to " serve two masters " by filming widescreen for eventual DVD release , but keeping objects in frame so it could still work when aired in pan and scan full frame . To obtain an immersive and immediate feel , the episodes were filmed in a documentary style with hand @-@ held cameras , giving them the look of " found footage " , with deliberately misframed or out @-@ of @-@ focus subjects . As Whedon related : " ... don 't be arch , don 't be sweeping ? be found , be rough and tumble and docu [mentary] and you @-@ are @-@ there " . Computer @-@ generated scenes mimicked the motion of a hand @-@ held camera . This style was not used , however , when shooting scenes that involved the central government , the Alliance . Tracking and steady cameras were used to show the sterility of this aspect of the Firefly universe . Another style employed was lens flares harking back to 1970s television . This style was so desired that the director of photography , David Boyd , sent back the cutting @-@ edge lenses which reduced lens flare in exchange for cheaper ones .

Unlike most other science fiction shows , which add sound to space scenes for dramatic effect , Firefly portrays space as silent , because a vacuum cannot transmit sound .

= = = Set design = = =

Production designer Carey Meyer built the ship Serenity in two parts (one for each level) as a complete set with ceilings and practical lighting installed as part of the set that the cameras could use along with moveable parts . The two @-@ part set also allowed the second unit to shoot in one section while the actors and first unit worked undisturbed in the other . As Whedon recalled : " ... you could pull it away or move something huge , so that you could get in and around everything . That meant the environment worked for us and there weren 't a lot of adjustments that needed to be made . " There were other benefits to this set design . One was that it allowed the viewers to feel they were really in a ship . For Whedon , the design of the ship was crucial in defining the known space for the viewer , and that there were not " fourteen hundred decks and a holodeck and an all @-@ you @-@ can @-@ eat buffet in the back " . He wanted to convey that it was utilitarian and that it was " beat @-@ up but lived @-@ in and ultimately , it was home " . As Joss Whedon discusses in the DVD commentary , each room represented a feeling or character , usually conveyed by the paint color . He explains that as you move from the back of the ship in the engine room , toward the front of the ship to the bridge , the colors and mood progress from extremely warm to cooler . Besides evoking a mood associated with the character who spends most time in each area , the color scheme also alludes to the heat generated in the tail of the ship . Whedon was also keen on utilizing vertical space ; thus , having the crew 's quarters accessible by ladder was important . Another benefit of the set design was that it also allowed the actors to stay in the moment and interact , without having to stop after each shot and reset up for the next . This helped contribute to the documentary style Whedon strove for .

The set had several influences , including the sliding doors and tiny cubicles reminiscent of Japanese hotels . Artist Larry Dixon has noted that the cargo bay walls are " reminiscent of interlaced , overlapping Asian designs , cleverly reminding us of the American @-@ Chinese Alliance setting while artistically forming a patterned plane for background scale reference " . Dixon has also remarked on how the set design contributed to the storytelling through the use of color , depth and composition , lighting , as well as its use of diagonals and patterned shadows .

Their small budget was another reason to use the ship for much of the storytelling . When the characters did go off the ship , the worlds all had Earth atmosphere and coloring because they could not afford to design alien worlds . " I didn 't want to go to Yucca Flats every other episode and

transform it into Bizarro World by making the sky orange " , recalled Whedon . As Meyer recalled : " I think in the end the feel was that we wound up using a lot of places or exteriors that just felt too Western and we didn 't necessarily want to go that way ; but at some point , it just became the lesser of two evils ? what could we actually create in three days ? "

= = = Music = = =

Greg Edmonson composed the musical score for the series . He stated that he wrote for the emotion of the moment . However , one reviewer averred that he also wrote for the characters , stating : " Edmonson has developed a specialized collection of musical symbolism for the series " . To help illustrate the collection , the reviewer gave key leitmotifs , or " signatures " , various names , noting that " Serenity " recalls the theme of the show and is used when they return to the ship , or when they were meeting clandestinely ; it was " the sound of their home " . The slide guitar and fiddle used in this piece are portable instruments which fit the lifestyle of the crew : " the music they make calls up tunes played out in the open , by people who were hundreds of miles away yesterday . ' Serenity ' conjures the nomadic lifestyle the crew leads and underlines the western aspect of the show . " Another emotional signature was " Sad Violin " . It was used at the end of the Battle of Serenity Valley , but also helped set up the joke for when Mal tells Simon that Kaylee is dead in the episode " Serenity " . The most memorable use of " Sad Violin " , however , is at the end of " The Message " , when the crew mourned the death of Tracey . This was also the last scene of the last episode the actors shot , and so this was seen by them , and Edmonson , as Firefly 's farewell . To denote impending danger , " Peril " was used , which is " a low pulse , like a heartbeat , with deep chimes and low strings " . The reviewer also noted character signatures . The criminal Niska has his own signature : Eastern European or Middle Eastern melodies over a low drone . Simon and River 's signature was a piano played sparsely with a violin in the background . This is in contrast to the portable instruments of " Serenity " : the piano is an instrument that cannot be easily moved and evokes the image of " the distant house and family they both long for " . The various signatures were mostly established in the first pilot , " Serenity " , and helped enhance the narrative .

In every episode , the musical score intensified my experience of this intelligent , remarkable show . Using and combining all these signatures , Greg Edmonson brought out aspects of Firefly 's story and characters that were never explicitly revealed in the other elements of the series .

The musical score expressed the cultural fusion depicted in the show . Cowboy guitar blended with Asian influence produced the atmospheric background for the series . As one reviewer stated :

Old music from the future ? the music of roaring campfires and racous [sic] cowboys mixed with the warm , pensive sounds of Asian culture and , occasionally , a cold imperial trumpet , heralding the ominous structural presence of a domineering government . Completely thrilling .

? Steve Townsley

The show 's theme song , " The Ballad of Serenity " , was written by Joss Whedon and performed by Sonny Rhodes . Whedon wrote the song before the series was greenlit and a preliminary recording performed by Whedon can be found on the DVD release . The soundtrack to the series was released on CD on November 8 , 2005 , by Varèse Sarabande , although a 40 @-@ minute soundtrack was released by Fox Music in September 2005 as a digital EP . " The Ballad of Serenity " was used by NASA as the wake @-@ up song for astronaut Robert L. Behnken and the other crewmembers of STS @-@ 130 on February 12 , 2010 .

= = = Casting = = =

In casting his nine @-@ member crew , Whedon looked first at the actors and considered their chemistry with others . Cast member Sean Maher recalls , " So then he just sort of put us all together , and I think it was very quick , like right out of the gate , we all instantly bonded " . All nine cast members were chosen before filming began . However , while filming the original pilot " Serenity " , Whedon decided that Rebecca Gayheart was unsuitable for the role of Inara Serra , and shot her scenes in singles so that it would be easier to replace her . Morena Baccarin auditioned for

the role and two days later was on the set in her first television show . " Joss brought me down from the testing room like a proud dad , holding my hand and introducing me , " Baccarin recalled .

Whedon approached Nathan Fillion to play the lead role of Malcolm Reynolds ; after Whedon explained the premise and showed him the treatment for the pilot , Fillion was eager for the role . Fillion was called back several times to read for the part before he was cast . He noted that " it was really thrilling . It was my first lead and I was pretty nervous , but I really wanted that part and I wanted to tell those stories . " Fillion later said he was " heartbroken " when he learned the series had been cancelled . Fillion has called his time on Firefly the best acting job he ever had , and compares every job he has had to it .

Alan Tudyk applied through a casting office and several months later was called in for an audition , where he met with Whedon . He was called back to test with two candidates for the role of Zoe (Wash 's wife) and was told that it was down to him and one other candidate . The Zoes he tested with were not selected (Gina Torres eventually received the role) and Tudyk was sent home , but received a call informing him he had the part anyway . His audition tape is included in the special features of the DVD release .

Gina Torres , a veteran of several science fiction / fantasy works (Cleopatra 2525 , The Matrix Reloaded , Alias , Hercules : The Legendary Journeys) , was at first uninterested in doing another science fiction show , but " was won over by the quality of the source material " . As she recalled , " you had these challenged characters inhabiting a challenging world and that makes for great storytelling . And no aliens ! "

For Adam Baldwin , who grew up watching westerns , the role of Jayne Cobb was particularly resonant .

Canadian actress Jewel Staite videotaped her audition from Vancouver and was asked to come to Los Angeles to meet Whedon , at which point she was cast for the role of Kaylee Frye , the ship 's engineer .

Sean Maher recalls reading for the part and liking the character of Simon Tam , but that it was Whedon 's personality and vision that " sealed the deal " for him . For the role of Simon 's sister , River Tam , Whedon called in Summer Glau for an audition and test the same day . Glau had first worked for Whedon in the Angel episode " Waiting in the Wings " . Two weeks later , Whedon called her to tell her she had the part .

Veteran television actor Ron Glass has said that until Firefly , he had not experienced or sought a science @-@ fiction or western role , but he fell in love with the pilot script and the character of Shepherd Book .

= = = Production staff = = =

Tim Minear was selected by Whedon to be the show runner , who serves as the head writer and production leader . According to Whedon " [Minear] understood the show as well as any human being , and just brought so much to it that I think of it as though he were always a part of it " . Many of the other production staff were selected from people Whedon had worked with in the past , with the exception of the director of photography David Boyd , who was the " big find " and who was " full of joy and energy " .

The writers were selected after interviews and script samplings . Among the writers were José Molina , Ben Edlund , Cheryl Cain , Brett Matthews , Drew Z. Greenberg and Jane Espenson . Espenson wrote an essay on the writing process with Mutant Enemy Productions . A meeting is held and an idea is floated , generally by Whedon , and the writers brainstorm to develop the central theme of the episode and the character development . Next , the writers (except the one working on the previous week 's episode) meet in the anteroom to Whedon 's office to begin ' breaking ' the story into acts and scenes . For the team , one of the key components to devising acts is deciding where to break for commercial and ensuring the viewer returns . " Finding these moments in the story help give it shape : think of them as tentpoles that support the structure " . For instance , in " Shindig " , the break for commercial occurs when Malcolm Reynolds is gravely injured and losing the duel . " It does not end when Mal turns the fight around , when he stands victorious over his

opponent . They 're both big moments , but one of them leaves you curious and the other doesn 't . "

Next , the writers develop the scenes onto a marker @-@ filled whiteboard , featuring " a brief ordered description of each scene " . A writer is selected to create an outline of the episode 's concept ? occasionally with some dialogue and jokes ? in one day . The outline is given to showrunner Tim Minear , who revises it within a day . The writer uses the revised outline to write the first draft of the script while the other writers work on developing the next . This first draft is usually submitted for revision within three to fourteen days ; afterward , a second and sometimes third draft is written . After all revisions are made , the final draft would be produced as the ' shooting draft ' .

= = = Costume = = =

Jill Ohanneson , Firefly 's original costume designer , brought on Shawna Trpcic as her assistant for the pilot . When the show was picked up , Ohanneson was involved in another job and declined Firefly , suggesting Trpcic for the job .

The costumes were chiefly influenced by World War II , the American Civil War , the American Old West , and 1861 samurai Japan . Trpcic used deep reds and oranges for the main cast , to express a feeling of " home " , and contrasted that with grays and cool blues for the Alliance . Since the characters were often getting shot , Trpcic would make up to six versions of the same costume for multiple takes .

For River , mostly jewel tones were used to set her apart from the rest of the Serenity crew . River had boots to contrast with the soft fabrics of her clothes , " because that 's who she is ? she 's this soft , beautiful , sensitive girl , but with this hardcore inner character , " recalled Trpcic .

The designers also wanted to contrast Simon , River 's brother , with the rest of the crew . Whereas they were dressed in cotton , Simon wore wool , stiff fabrics , satins and silk . He was originally the " dandy " , but as the show progressed , he loosened up slightly .

For Kaylee , Trpcic studied up on Japanese and Chinese youth , as originally the character was Asian . Other inspirations for Kaylee 's costumes were Rosie the Riveter and Chinese Communist posters .

Inara 's costumes reflect her high status , and are very feminine and attractive .

Trpcic designed and created the clothes for the minor character of Badger with Joss Whedon in mind , since he intended to play that part . When Mark Sheppard played the role instead , he was able to fit into the clothes made for Whedon .

For the Alliance , besides the grays and cool blues , Trpcic had in mind Nazi Germany , but mixed it with different wars , as the first sketches were " too Nazi " . The uniforms of the Alliance soldiers are from the 1997 film Starship Troopers .

In the commentary for the pilot episode Whedon points out that " bad guys wear hats , good guys don 't " .

= = = Unproduced episodes = = =

Since the cancellation of the series , various cast and crew members have revealed details they had planned for the show 's future :

Alan Tudyk had the idea for an episode about a planet that is always day on one side , and night on the other . On the night side , Jayne accidentally spills a type of pheromone on himself and the crew , which attracts a species of dogs . The crew are chased back to the ship by these dogs . There River uses her mind powers to domesticate the dogs .

Adam Baldwin wanted to make an episode in which Jayne goes up against Mal as captain of his own ship .

Tim Minear revealed the secret of Inara 's syringe , as seen in the pilot episode ; she is infected with a deadly disease . There would have been an episode where she is gang @-@ raped by Reavers . Because she injected herself with the syringe , all of the Reavers on the ship die .

According to Nathan Fillion , there was an episode in which the crew land on a dying planet . The

inhabitants try to steal *Serenity* , after they explain to the crew about their need to get off the planet . The problem is that unless they were to run into another ship along the way , with the extra passengers , *Serenity* would not have enough fuel and oxygen to make it to the closest destination . While everyone else is asleep , Mal takes the ship himself and discovers that help never would have arrived .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical response = = =

Many reviews focused on the show 's fusion of Wild West and outer space motifs . TV Guide 's Matt Roush , for instance , called the show " oddball " and " offbeat " , and noted how literally the series took the metaphor of space operas as Westerns . Roush opined that the shift from space travel to horseback was " jarring " , but that once he got used to this , he found the characters cleverly conceived , and the writing a crisp balance of action , tension and humor . Several reviewers , however , criticized the show 's setting ; Tim Goodman of the San Francisco Chronicle felt that the melding of the western and science fiction genres was a " forced hodgepodge of two alarmingly opposite genres just for the sake of being different " and called the series a " vast disappointment " , and Carina Chocano of Salon.com said that while the " space as Wild West " metaphor is fairly redundant , neither genre connected to the present . Emily Nussbaum of the New York Times , reviewing the DVD set , noted that the program featured " an oddball genre mix that might have doomed it from the beginning : it was a character @-@ rich sci @-@ fi western comedy @-@ drama with existential underpinnings , a hard sell during a season dominated by Joe Millionaire " .

The Boston Globe described *Firefly* as a " wonderful , imaginative mess brimming with possibility " . The review further notes the difference between the new series and other programs was that those shows " burst onto the scene with slick pilots and quickly deteriorate into mediocrity ... *Firefly* is on the opposite creative journey . " Jason Snell called the show one of the best on television , and one " with the most potential for future brilliance " .

Reviewers also compared *Firefly* to Whedon 's other series , *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* . Chocano noted that the series lacks the psychological tension of *Buffy* , and suggests that this might be attributable to the episodes being aired out of order . MSN , on the other hand , pointed out that after viewing the DVD boxed set it was easy to see why the program had attracted many die @-@ hard fans . " All of Whedon 's fingerprints are there : the witty dialogue , the quirky premises and dark exploration of human fallacy that made *Buffy* brilliant found their way to this space drama " .

= = = Fandom = = =

Firefly generated a loyal base of fans during its three @-@ month original broadcast run on Fox in late 2002 . These fans , self @-@ styled Browncoats , used online forums to organize and try to save the series from being canceled by Fox only three months after its debut . Their efforts included raising money for an ad in *Variety* magazine and a postcard writing campaign to UPN . While unsuccessful in finding a network that would continue the show , their support led to a release of the series on DVD in December 2003 . A subsequent fan campaign raised over \$ 14 @,@ 000 in donations to have a purchased *Firefly* DVD set placed aboard 250 U.S. Navy ships by April 2004 for recreational viewing by their crews .

These and other continuing fan activities eventually persuaded Universal Studios to produce a feature film , *Serenity* . (The title of *Serenity* was chosen , according to Whedon , because Fox still owned the rights to the name ' *Firefly* ') . Numerous early screenings of rough film cuts were held for existing fans starting in May 2005 as an attempt to create a buzz to increase ticket sales when the final film cut was released widely on September 30 , 2005 . The film was not as commercially successful as fans had hoped , opening at number two and making only \$ 40 million worldwide during its initial theatrical release .

On June 23 , 2006 , fans organized the first worldwide charity screenings of Serenity in 47 cities , dubbed as Can 't Stop the Serenity or CSTS , an homage to the movie 's tagline , " Can 't stop the signal " . The event raised over \$ 65 @,@ 000 for Whedon 's favorite charity , Equality Now . In 2007 , \$ 106 @,@ 000 was raised ; in 2008 , \$ 107 @,@ 219 ; and in 2009 , \$ 137 @,@ 331 .

In July 2006 , a fan @-@ made documentary was released , titled Done the Impossible , and is commercially available . The documentary relates the story of the fans and how the show has affected them , and features interviews with Whedon and various cast members . Part of the DVD proceeds are donated to Equality Now .

NASA Browncoat astronaut Steven Swanson took the Firefly and Serenity DVDs with him on Space Shuttle Atlantis 's STS @-@ 117 mission in June 2007 . The DVDs were added to the media collection on the International Space Station as entertainment for the station 's crews .

A fan @-@ made , not @-@ for @-@ profit , unofficial sequel to Serenity , titled Browncoats : Redemption , premiered at Dragon * Con 2010 on September 4 , 2010 . According to the film 's creator and producer , Whedon gave " his blessing " to the project . The film was sold on DVD and Blu @-@ ray at the film 's website , with all proceeds being distributed among five charities . The film was also screened at various science @-@ fiction conventions across the United States , with admission receipts similarly being donated . All sales ended on September 1 , 2011 , one year after its premiere , with total revenues exceeding \$ 115 @,@ 000 . Community discussion continues regarding screenings in conjunction with the Can 't Stop the Serenity project .

= = = Cult status = = =

In 2005 , New Scientist magazine 's website held an internet poll to find " The World 's Best Space Sci @-@ Fi Ever " . Firefly came in first place , with its cinematic follow @-@ up Serenity in second . In 2012 , Entertainment Weekly listed the show at No. 11 in the " 25 Best Cult TV Shows from the Past 25 Years , " commenting , " as it often does , martyrdom has only enhanced its legend . "

Brad Wright , co @-@ creator of Stargate SG @-@ 1 has said that the 200th episode of SG @-@ 1 is " a little kiss to Serenity and Firefly , which was possibly one of the best canceled series in history " . In the episode , " Martin Lloyd has come to the S.G.C. [Stargate Command] because even though ' Wormhole X @-@ Treme ! ' was canceled after three episodes , it did so well on DVD they 're making a feature [film] " . The follow @-@ up film , Serenity , was voted the best science fiction movie of all time in an SFX magazine poll of 3 @,@ 000 fans . Firefly was later ranked # 25 on TV Guide 's Top Cult Shows Ever . The name for the Google beta app Google Wave was inspired by this TV series .

On the CBS sitcom , The Big Bang Theory , Sheldon Cooper is a fan of Firefly . When he and Leonard Hofstadter are discussing their roommate agreement , they include a passage in which they dedicate Friday nights to watching Firefly , as Sheldon believes it will last for years . Upon its cancellation , he brands Rupert Murdoch , the owner of Fox , a traitor . During the second season of The Big Bang Theory , in episode 17 (" The Terminator Decoupling ") , Summer Glau appears as herself , encountering Sheldon , Leonard , and their friends on a train to San Francisco . When Raj tries to hit on her he says that although he is an astrophysicist , she was actually in space during the shooting of Firefly . Glau chides him for believing this and Raj backtracks , saying , " Those are crazy people ! "

On the NBC comedy Community , the characters Troy and Abed are fans of the show . They have an agreement that if one of them dies , the other will stage it to look like a suicide caused by the cancellation of Firefly , in the hopes that it will bring the show back .

In the 2003 Battlestar Galactica miniseries / pilot , a ship resembling Serenity appears in the background of the scene with Laura Roslin (Mary McDonnell) . Serenity is one of several spaceships inserted as cameos into digital effects scenes by Zoic Studios , the company responsible for digital effects in both Firefly and Battlestar Galactica .

In an interview on February 17 , 2011 , with Entertainment Weekly , Nathan Fillion joked that : " If I got \$ 300 million from the California Lottery , the first thing I would do is buy the rights to Firefly , make it on my own , and distribute it on the Internet " . This quickly gave rise to a fan @-@ run

initiative to raising the funds to purchase the rights . On March 7 , 2011 , the organizers announced the closure of the project due to lack of endorsement from the creators , with \$ 1 million pledged at the time it was shut down .

Joss Whedon , Tim Minear , and cast members Nathan Fillion , Alan Tudyk , Summer Glau , Adam Baldwin and Sean Maher reunited at the 2012 San Diego Comic @-@ Con for a 10th anniversary panel . Ten thousand people lined up to get into the panel , and the panel ended with the entire crowd giving the cast and crew a standing ovation .

A tenth anniversary special , Browncoats Unite , was shown on the Science Channel on November 11 , 2012 . The special featured Whedon , Minear , and several of the cast members , in a discussion on the series ' history .

The television series Castle , where Fillion plays the lead character Richard Castle , has made ongoing homages to Firefly . Castle has props from Firefly as decorative items in his home , has dressed up as a " space cowboy " for Halloween (" You wore that five years ago , " cracked his daughter) , speaks Chinese that he learned from " a TV show [he] loved " , and has made rapid " two @-@ by @-@ two " finger motions while wearing blue surgical gloves . He has been humorously asked if he has ever heard of a spa known as " Serenity " , and Firefly catchphrases such as " shiny " , " special hell " and " I was aiming for the head " have been used as punchlines during various dramatic scenes in Castle . He has worked a murder case at a science fiction convention with suspects being the cast of a long @-@ cancelled space opera that only ran for a season , and has had incidental interaction with people portrayed by Firefly cast members .

Con Man , a 2015 comedy web series created by Tudyk and co @-@ produced by Fillion , draws on the pair 's experiences as cult science fiction actors touring the convention circuit . Though it is not autobiographical , the show 's fictional Spectrum echoes Firefly and Tudyk 's and Fillion 's roles reflect their own Firefly roles . Torres and Maher made guest appearances . Maher played himself as a former Firefly actor .

According to Reason 's Julian Sanchez , Firefly 's cult following " seems to include a disproportionate number of libertarians . " The story themes are often cautionary about too @-@ powerful central authority and its capacity to do bad while being considered by the majority as good . The characters each exhibit traits that exemplify core libertarian values , such as the right to bear arms (Jayne , Zoe) , legal prostitution (Inara) , freedom of religion (Book) , logic and reasoning (Simon) , and anti @-@ conscription (River) . Joss Whedon notes this theme , saying " Mal is , if not a Republican , certainly a libertarian , he 's certainly a less @-@ government kinda guy . He 's the opposite of me in many ways . "

= = = Awards = = =

Firefly won the following awards :

Emmy Award : Outstanding Special Visual Effects for a Series , 2003

Visual Effects Society : Best visual effects in a television series , 2003 (episode " Serenity ")

Saturn Award : Cinescape Genre Face of the Future Award , Male , 2003 (Nathan Fillion)

Saturn Award : Saturn Award for Best DVD Release (television) , 2004

SyFy Genre Awards : Best Series / Television , 2006

SyFy Genre Awards : Best Actor / Television Nathan Fillion , 2006

SyFy Genre Awards : Best Supporting Actor / Television Adam Baldwin , 2006

SyFy Genre Awards : Best Special Guest / Television Christina Hendricks for " Trash " , 2006

SyFy Genre Awards : Best Episode / Television " Trash " , 2006

The series was also nominated for the following awards :

Visual Effects Society : Best compositing in a televised program , music video , or commercial , 2003

Motion Picture Sound Editors , USA , " Golden Reel Award " : Best sound editing in television long form : sound effects / foley , 2003

Hugo Award : Best Dramatic Presentation , Short Form , 2003 (episode " Serenity ")

Hugo Award : Best Dramatic Presentation , Short Form , 2004 (episodes " Heart of Gold " and "

The Message " , which at that time had not been shown on television in the USA)
Golden Satellite Award : Best DVD Extras , 2004

= = = Ratings = = =

At the time the series was cancelled by Fox , it averaged 4 @. @ 7 million viewers and ranked 98th in Nielsen ratings .

= = Broadcast history = =

Firefly consists of a two @-@ hour pilot and thirteen one @-@ hour episodes (with commercials) . The series originally premiered in the United States on Fox in September 2002 . The episodes were aired out of the intended order . Although Whedon had designed the show to run for seven years , low ratings resulted in cancellation by Fox in December 2002 after only 11 of the 14 completed episodes had aired in the United States . The three episodes unaired by Fox eventually debuted in 2003 on the Sci Fi Channel in the United Kingdom . Prior to cancellation , some fans , worried about low ratings , formed the Firefly Immediate Assistance campaign whose goal was to support the production of the show by sending in postcards to Fox . After it was canceled , the campaign worked on getting another network such as UPN to pick up the series . The campaign was unsuccessful in securing the show 's continuation .

The A.V. Club cited several actions by the Fox network that contributed to the show 's failure , most notably airing the episodes out of sequence , making the plot more difficult to follow . For instance , the double episode " Serenity " was intended as the premiere , and therefore contained most of the character introductions and back @-@ story . However , Fox decided that " Serenity " was unsuitable to open the series , and " The Train Job " was specifically created to act as a new pilot . In addition , Firefly was promoted as an action @-@ comedy rather than the more serious character study it was intended to be , and the showbiz trade paper Variety noted Fox 's decision to occasionally preempt the show for sporting events .

Fox remastered the complete series in 1080i high @-@ definition for broadcast on Universal HD , which began in April 2008 .

On March 12 , 2009 , the series was the winner of the first annual Hulu awards in the category " Shows We 'd Bring Back " .

The Science Channel began airing the series on March 6 , 2011 . All episodes aired in the intended order , including episodes " Trash " , " The Message " and " Heart of Gold " , which were not aired in the original Fox series run . Along with each episode , Dr. Michio Kaku provided commentary about the real @-@ life science behind the science fiction of the show .

= = Home video releases = =

A box set containing the fourteen completed episodes (including those which had not yet aired in the United States) was released on region 1 DVD on December 9 , 2003 , region 2 on April 19 , 2004 , and region 4 on August 2 , 2004 . The box features the episodes in the original order in which the show 's producers had intended them to be broadcast , as well as seven episode commentaries , outtakes and other features . The DVDs feature the episodes as they were shot in 16 : 9 widescreen , with anamorphic transfers and Dolby Surround audio . By September 2005 , its DVD release had sold approximately 500 @, @ 000 copies .

The series was re @-@ released on Blu @-@ ray Disc on November 11 , 2008 , comprising three discs ; exclusive extras to the Blu @-@ ray release include extra audio commentary from Joss Whedon , Nathan Fillion , Alan Tudyk and Ron Glass for the episode " Our Mrs. Reynolds " , as well as an additional featurette , " Firefly " Reunion : Lunch with Joss , Nathan , Alan and Ron .

= = Media franchise = =

The popularity of the short @-@ lived series served as the launching point for a media franchise within the Firefly universe , including the feature film Serenity , which addresses many plot points left unresolved by the series ' cancellation .

Additionally , there are two comic @-@ book mini @-@ series , Serenity : Those Left Behind (3 issues , 104 pages , 2006) , Serenity : Better Days (3 issues , 80 pages , 2008) and a one @-@ shot hardcover Serenity : The Shepherd 's Tale (56 pages , 2010) , along with the one @-@ shots Serenity : Downtime and The Other Half and Serenity : Float Out in which Whedon explored plot strands he had intended to explore further in the series . The comics are set , in plot terms , between the end of the TV series and the opening of the feature film . The two mini @-@ series were later published in collected form as hardcover and paperback graphic novels . A six @-@ issue series titled Serenity : Leaves on the Wind began in January 2014 and the series takes place after the events of the film .

In July 2014 , the release of video game Firefly Online was announced , in which all the cast will reprise their roles .