

Variety, challenge of roles keeps area actor/writer busy

JOANNA LAVOIE

jlavoie@insidetoronto.com

Allison Graham isn't one to shy away from taking on a variety of challenging roles.

Graham, who has lived near Gerrard Street East and Woodbine Avenue on and off for the last decade, recently wrapped up production on a new mini-series called *Exploding Sun*.

Shot this past summer in Montreal and set to air on the Sci-Fi Network in January, the show is about the commercialization of space travel.

In it, Graham plays the Command Pilot Fiona Henslaw who is in charge of the first commercial space flight with the wife of the U.S president, a well-known philanthropist, a scientist, the owner of the corporation funding the commercial space flight and the so-called lottery winner.

Inevitably, catastrophe ensues leaving planet Earth in danger of exploding.

In the spring of 2011, Graham filmed *Deadfall*, a feature film about two siblings on the lam after robbing a casino in the U.S. The two main characters get stuck in a snow storm on their way to Canada and that's where Graham comes in, playing the owner of the rough bar the duo stop at for a brief time.

"I get to hear bits and pieces of their stories," Graham said.

"It was a fun role and I got to do a Northern American accent. I had a really good time."

Deadfall is set to be released in North America Dec. 7.

"They were totally different but they were both really strong women," said Graham of her recent roles. "I love the challenge of (taking on) different roles."

Currently, she's working on producing a short film she wrote called *Still Life*, the story of a man and a woman who have known each other for years but are faced with the dilemma of deciding whether or not to take their unorthodox relationship to the next level or just remain friends.

Graham, who also has a number



Photo/HELEN TANSEY

East Toronto actor Allison Graham in new sci-fi mini-series.

of writing projects on the go, hopes to begin shooting her short film by the end of the year.

A native of Perth, Ont., which is about 70 kilometres west of Ottawa, she didn't get involved in the world of theatre arts until she went to university.

TRIED IT AND LOVED IT

"As a kid, I was really into sports but after high school there wasn't a lot of opportunity for me to play professionally so I took a drama class at Queen's University and I really liked it," Graham said during the recent interview.

Before long she'd fallen in love with acting and by the late 1990s had moved to Vancouver, B.C. to follow her dreams. There, Graham took some acting classes, got an agent and landed some commercials.

Her next step was to obtain formal training in theatre arts at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in Los Angeles, California.

Graham was among a handful of her classmates invited back to participate in the prestigious school's repertory company after graduation.

"It was a great training ground," she said of the experience, which

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~ Actor Allison Graham
on her two recent roles

saw her and her teammates stage a new theatre production every six weeks.

"Every day we were memorizing pages and pages of lines."

With a desire to keep her options open and to remain creative in between roles, Graham then started exploring the writing side of things.

"For me, writing was another outlet that balanced the acting," said Graham, who decided to move to Toronto about 12 years ago to be closer to her family after living out west for about seven years.

A professional actor for more than 10 years, Graham continues to write in her down time and in between gigs and has written several screenplays over the years.

She also pens an ongoing column for an online publication and early next year will publish her first children's book.