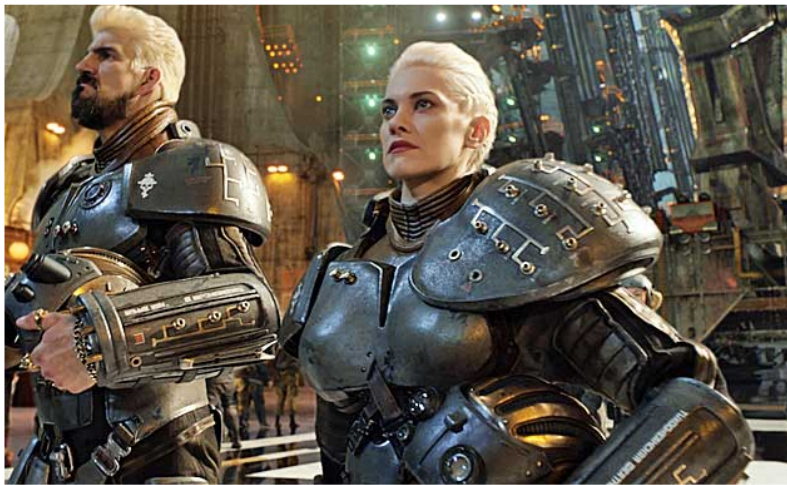




Meet Heather Doerksen, *Pacific Rim's* baddest babe

By [Andrea Miller](#) | Monday, July 08, 2013 | [Interviews](#) | [Movie News](#) | [\(0\) Comments](#) | [Add a Comment](#)

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Clothed in heavy armour, bleached hair slicked-back and jaw steeled for battle, Sasha Kaidanovsky climbs into a Russian Jaeger, massive fighting robots controlled by humans, and neurally linked with her co-pilot, does her part to help save humanity from the Kaiju sea creatures in [Guillermo del Toro's](#) sci-fi/adventure action flick [Pacific Rim](#).

This is one tough chick who commands respect, if incites a fair amount of fear, and has the muscle to prove it; muscle that required Vancouver actress **Heather Doerksen** to step into the gym for only the second time in her life.

"They asked me to get buff for the role," she explains on the phone from her temporary homebase in L.A. "Prior to [that] I'd stepped foot in a gym once before. I think I did some StairMaster and I just left; I wasn't into it." [Laughs] So I was in the gym every day for a month and then we did the actual training for the film, where they flew in an L.A. trainer, and we did that for a month and that was all prior to starting to shoot, which was a six month process."

The intense training and protein-packing regimen helped transform her body into a lean, mean machine and made spending 45 minutes getting in and out of an actual Jaeger head, suspended above the ground and hoisted on hydraulics at Pinewood Studios in Toronto, a little easier with strength of her side.

Another big part of the physical transformation: the Billy Idol hair.

"When I was being considered, my agent sort of hesitantly broached the topic on the phone with me, like, 'They're considering you but they want to know if you'd be willing to cut off your hair and dye it platinum blond?' And I said, 'It's just hair, that'll be fine!' It took almost a year to grow back."

You may recognize the normally brunette Doerksen from her previous work on sci-fi shows "Battlestar Galactica" and "Stargate: Atlantis" and from her impressive stature - she's almost 5'10" - which gives her an edge when it comes to portraying decidedly take-charge characters.



(L-R) Idris Elba, Roy Kazinaki and Guillermo del Toro discuss a scene in *Pacific Rim* (Photo by Kerry Hayes/Warner Bros.)

"I think with my height, and my voice is in a bit of a lower register, I think I started getting women in command [roles]. And the sci-fi genre is fantastic at creating female characters who are really strong and are in positions of power," Doerksen says, who along with **Rinko Kikuchi**, is the only other prominent female fighter in *Pacific Rim*.

"[But] Sasha's a lot more bad-ass than I am. She is a lot more, I'd say, confident than I am, although I feel like I know who I am. She's not afraid of anything; she lives her life like there's nothing to lose and I'd like to get to that point but I'm not there yet."

And when it came to working with del Toro, whom she counts among her dream directors, she says the Mexican auteur's easygoing attitude, encyclopedia knowledge of Japanese monster movies and hands-on approach made her feel secure that *Pacific Rim* was not only something

special but precisely drawn out in his mind.

"He has his hands in all of the aspects, from my hair, wardrobe – where he was sitting there with me making the decisions – to camera work, to lighting, to editing, he was involved in the whole process. So he just knows what he's doing. And he's hilarious! And everyone's very jovial on set and happy to be there. I felt very grateful."

While his cast, including **Charlie Hunnam**, **Idris Elba**, **Ron Perlman** and **Charlie Day**, may have been in stitches off-camera, they had to honestly convey a sense of apocalyptic doom as the relentless Kaiju warred with Earth's survivors in front of the cameras, making for an adventure that Doerksen admitted brought forth a wave of nostalgia.

"Guillermo's child-like take on everything was contagious on-set. I used to watch movies like that with my younger brother; I used to watch action movies when I was younger. If I wanted to watch TV, I had to watch those because I had a younger brother and we only had one TV so it appealed to my inner child too."