



Can't Stop the Serenity

Worldwide Charity Screenings for Equality Now

TV fans to raise \$150,000 for Charity at the 4th Annual "Can't Stop The Serenity" Worldwide Movie Screenings

Between May and September 2009, fans of popular cult television and film writer/director Joss Whedon, will gather worldwide to raise money for "Equality Now," a charity dedicated to promoting the human rights of beleaguered women and girls.

Worldwide (CSTS) May 7th, 2009 - For the fourth year in a row, thousands of people around the world will participate in "Can't Stop the Serenity" fund-raising events to benefit "Equality Now," a charity organization working to protect the basic human rights of women and girls across the planet. Since 2006, more than a quarter of a million dollars has been raised and they plan to add another \$150,000 in 2009.

Who is behind this phenomenon? It's not the product of any formal action network like Equality Now, a relief group or even a foundation. These humanitarians aren't even a group of rich philanthropists or celebrities. They are simply the fans of a prematurely canceled sci-fi television series called "Firefly" and its climactic movie, "Serenity". The volunteers who organize these charitable events, without prompting from the show's creators or Equality Now, have created a worldwide event that spans three continents. This annual celebration of equality and Joss Whedon's birthday is known as "Can't Stop the Serenity," and the men and women behind it are simply known as "Browncoats" after the heroes of the show.

Says Amanda Sullivan, director of Equality Now: "Amazing as it is, we are heading into our fourth season of CSTS global screenings! It is a difficult time for us and a difficult time for everyone right now. So it's especially important for all of you to know how grateful all of us at Equality Now are, and will always be, for the commitment to gender equality the Browncoats have demonstrated through their hard work and generosity."

Browncoats, like many other television fans, are dedicated to their fandom. The story of Firefly and Serenity is an interesting case in popular culture. Firefly premiered on the Fox Network experiencing a short run from September to December of 2002, before being cancelled mid-season due to low ratings and artistic disagreements with its creator, Joss Whedon. Many fans believe the show was a victim of poor promotion coupled with a bad time slot. Not content with the show's release on DVD in 2004, the Browncoats grew in number, thriving on any content related to Firefly and bolstering DVD sales enough to merit creation of a movie epilogue to the series in 2005: "Serenity."

Most fan stories usually end there, but inspired by Whedon's fiery post on Whedonesque.com in response to the senseless "honor killing" of Du'a Khalil, his fans continue to go above and beyond to focus their enthusiasm and community into a force

for good. He says, "...All I ask is this: Do something. Try something. Speaking out, showing up, writing a letter, a check, a strongly worded e-mail. Pick a cause – there are few unworthy ones..."

Public screenings of "Serenity" usually include prize giveaways and auctions. The list of items is endless: T-shirts, posters, CDs, celebrity photos, comic books, glass etchings, parasols, sword fighting lessons, and even a date with a favorite Whedonverse character. The entire net proceeds go to charity. At least 75 percent goes to Equality Now. The other 25 percent can be donated to other worthy charities like Kids Need to Read and local women's shelters. No one is paid for their time, including this year's Global Organizer, Anne Barringer. Anne and her Global Team bring it all together by coordinating almost 50 participating cities across the US, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia.

"Browncoats are an amazing phenomenon, accomplishing something that no other fandom has to date. I can't tell you how many wonderful people I've met while working on Can't Stop the Serenity. These guys and gals are giving, hardworking people who do more every year; they create new ways to screen Serenity, raise money for charity and still have an entirely festive time. And my Global Team is simply amazing. We've done more this year than I ever thought possible. I came here for the Cause, but I stayed here for the people." - Anne Barringer, Global Organizer of Can't Stop the Serenity.

The screenings are entertaining, theater-packing events where plenty of new friends are made. In many cases, the excitement of again seeing the "Big Damn Movie" on the silver screen can be more exhilarating than when the movie first opened in 2005. Each year brings new faces; people who are seeing the film for the first time and get fired up about the cause. Each event is unique, and this year's events will include costume contests, musical showcases, reenactments, fan films, and screenings of Whedon's recent internet hit "Dr. Horrible's Sing-a-long Blog".

"This year we've also been given a great boon by Joss Whedon. He's allowing CSTS organizers to screen "Dr. Horrible's Sing-a-long Blog" with no fee. In a time when the economy is less than stellar, it's helped rejuvenate excitement in the Cause. Joss is awesome and stands by his fans like no other. He inspires us to do more than just sit on our butts in front of the TV," says Barringer.

Between the multifarious activities, fun atmosphere and the community spirit showed by raising funds for Equality Now, it's easy to see why these events keep getting bigger each year. Browncoats enrich their own community and life experiences while simultaneously bringing hope and courage to those less fortunate. The fight for basic human decency will continue for as long as there are people in need and those willing to answer that call. The world needs equality. As Whedon says: "Because, equality is not a concept. It's not something we should be striving for - it's a necessity. Equality is like gravity - we need it to stand on this earth as men and women."

For more information, including local event details, see www.CantStopTheSerenity.com or contact:

Anne Barringer
Global Organizer

Anne@CantStopTheSerenity.com
(901) 210-6358

About Joss Whedon:

Whedon is a well known proponent of encouraging gender equality, from his mother being actively involved in Amnesty International and helping to found Equality Now precessing his dedication to the organization, to the well known strong female characters he has created in stories like Buffy The Vampire Slayer, Angel, Dollhouse, Firefly and Serenity. "There are two ways to fight a battle like ours." says Joss Whedon, "One is to whisper in the ear of the masses, try subtly and gradually to change the gender expectations and mythic structures of our culture. That's me. The other is to step up and confront the thousands of atrocities that are taking place around the world on an immediate, one-by-one basis. That's a great deal harder, and that's Equality Now. It's not about politics; it's about basic human decency."

About Equality Now:

Equality Now was founded in 1992 to work for the protection and promotion of the human rights of women around the world. Working with national human rights organizations and individual activists, Equality Now documents violence and discrimination against women and mobilizes international action to support their efforts to stop these human rights abuses. For more information, visit www.EqualityNow.org or contact Amanda Sullivan, Director, Women's Action Network, Equality Now at (212) 586-0906

About Serenity:

A passenger with a deadly secret. Six rebels on the run. An assassin in pursuit. When the renegade crew of Serenity agrees to hide a fugitive on their ship, they find themselves in an action-packed battle between the relentless military might of a totalitarian regime who will destroy anything - or anyone - to get the girl back and the bloodthirsty creatures who roam the uncharted areas of space. But, the greatest danger of all may be on their ship. From the mind of Joss Whedon (Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Angel) comes a new edge-of-your-seat adventure loaded with explosive battles, gripping special effects and fantastic new worlds!

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