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# Burgeoning career taking off for actor

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Life is good for Simu Liu these days.

Raised in Erin Mills after immigrating to Canada from Harbin, China at the age of 5, Liu is riding a hot streak when it comes to his acting career. He stars as both Jung in the new CBC show *Kim's Convenience*, and Faaron in the NBC program *Taken*, which is based on the Liam Neeson movie of the same name and will air in February.

At one point this summer, he was filming both shows simultaneously in Toronto.

"It was probably the most stressful but best summer of my life," said Liu, 27.

*Kim's Convenience* is an adaptation of a 2011 play by Ins Choi about a Korean-Canadian family-owned convenience store in Toronto. Liu's character Jung is a young man estranged from his father (Paul Sun-Hyung Lee), but still in touch with his mom (Jean Yoon) and sister, Janet (Andrea Bang).

After having more dramatic roles in the past, honing his comedic chops on *Kim's Convenience* has been quite the experience for Liu.

"I really didn't expect comedy to be as difficult as it is," said Liu, with a laugh.

His role in *Taken* returns him to the dramatic realm. He plays ex-CIA analyst Faaron, who's part of the main character Bryan Mills' team.

Liu described him as humorless, extremely serious and very smart.

"He's very different from Jung," said Liu. "Jung is probably the closest to me of any

character I've ever played."

Acting wasn't supposed to happen for Liu, who didn't study theatre in school. He studied accounting at the University of Western Ontario and worked on Bay Street after graduating.

But, he said, his heart wasn't in it and, when he was laid off, he decided to explore his passion for film and television. A posting

on Craigslist led him to extra work in the Guillermo del Toro movie *Pacific Rim* being filmed at Pinewood Toronto Studios.

"I was getting paid \$11 an hour," said Liu. "But I would have paid to do it."

His acting career since has included the role of Paul Xie in the show *Blood and Water*, and appearances on Nickelodeon's *Make It Pop* and CW's *Beauty and the Beast*. Liu's first speaking role was a 2012 episode of *Nikita*, and he remembers the lines well.

"Inspector, you have a call from headquarters. Headquarters, Beijing," he recalled.

Liu's resume has grown to include credits as a writer, producer and director (and, according to IMDB.com, a "shirtless greeter for clothing retailer Abercrombie and Fitch"). He's

also done theatre, and in 2016 was nominated for a Dora Mavor Moore Award along with the Factory Theatre cast of *Banana Boys*.

Trained in martial arts, he worked as a stunt performer on the Mississauga-filmed *Heroes Reborn* TV series, and as the stunt double for singer Pete Wentz in the Fall Out Boy video *Centuries*. ~ CC



Mississauga-raised Simu Liu stars as Jung in the CBC television show *Kim's Convenience*.

Caitlin Cronenberg photo