

**SD:** Renee was a hit in "Fishsticks," but not much else about the episode went over well.

**Rob:** You know what, I will freely cop to this because we had to do a totally Lucy-free episode or only use her half a day. And I wanted to try, as the basis for another show, the concept of a *Simpsons* in an underwater *Jetson's*-like environment. South Florida kitsch, mermaids, all that stuff in a live action format. And it didn't work.

**SD:** Was it supposed to be partly animated?

**Rob:** No, totally live action. Even Steve Rosenberg, the head of sales, called me and said, "It was good eye candy, but what were you thinking?" (laughing)

**SD:** Are there any rules to writing Xena?

**Rob:** What are the rules, hmm. Every rule is meant to be broken. Is there anything written in stone? I can only say that, going forward, the relationship between the characters is the heart of the show. That's what has to be serviced by the story rather than the characters serving the story. That's what happened in the fifth season. When you lose that, it becomes a big story and who cares about the people in it.

I went out of my way recently to watch a bunch of *Buff* and *Angel* episodes. And I wondered why I enjoy watching *Xena* more? It's because of Lucy and Renee. It's the actors and their characters of Xena and Gabrielle that I love.

**SD:** As the executive producer, do you have to make a decision about who you make the show for — kids or adults?

**Rob:** You do. You have to decide tonally. And Xena was schizophrenic more so this season than ever.

**SD:** Will you be going more for the adults next season?

**Rob:** Yes, I am. And there'll be no more Joxer next season.

**SD:** Do you kill him off in a good way?

**Rob:** We do. You know who kills him?

**SD:** No, who?

**Rob (chuckling):** (whispers the answer to me)

**SD:** Oh, my God!

**Rob:** He dies saving Gabrielle. That's all Joxer's wanted to do.

**SD:** There have been some pretty hot scenes between Xena and Ares lately.

**Rob:** We have an episode coming up that's the most sexually predatory story we've ever told. And if I have any concern, it's over that.

**SD:** Predatory?

**Rob:** Xena uses sex as a weapon. "Amphipolis" was the first time we've ever done that. We do it again in "Antony And Cleopatra." It didn't bother me with Ares in "Amphipolis" because it was part of Xena's ruse.

**SD:** They've played so many games with each other?

**Rob:** Yeah, but in that episode it was the only weapon left to her. The siege mentality was the justification for her going to Ares and spinning her web that way. Lucy as an actress is hot and Kevin's a good-looking guy. There's a certain chemistry between them that we wanted to utilize.

**SD:** Renee and I had a talk about kissing scenes and the guy in "Back In The Bottle." There just seemed to be something missing in their scenes.

Their lack of chemistry might have helped the story. What I saw was Gabrielle focused on Xena and what they had to accomplish. That was where her life was. She couldn't go off and settle down with Lin.

**Rob:** There was no passion. Renee came to me and said, "This is not going to work." I told her to do her best and I'd try and rescue it in the editing room.

But the story between Gabrielle and Lin was such a bad idea. It needed to be about Xena and Gabrielle and the weight on their shoulders.

**SD:** You need more of that.

**Rob:** I know.

**SD:** I heard you were thinking of using

Karl Urban to play Octavius/Augustus Caesar? By the way, who is Augustus Caesar?

**Rob:** Caesar was Julius Caesar and after he died, Augustus Caesar was his grand-nephew. He was originally born Octavius and took the name Augustus. He tried to get the name Caesar added to it, but the Romans had deified the name by then. They were loathe to give it to him. But, over time, all the rulers who followed took the name Caesar if they had any of his blood in them.

**SD:** So you wanted to use Karl to play another Caesar?

**Rob:** We thought about it and then everyone talked me out of it. I should have gone with Karl. I like him. Others thought it would be too confusing.

**SD:** What would you like people or children to take away from watching this show?

**Rob:** I've made plenty of episodes that are far too violent for young children. But if there's any legacy I hope these shows have at the end, it's that they promote tolerance. It's okay to be black or Maori or white or gay or straight. That's really the only thing I care about.



GABRIELLE: "YOU READ MY SCROLLS?"

XENA: "I ALWAYS SAID I WOULD. I THINK THAT ANYONE WHO WRITES LIKE YOU CAN, WHO CAN FIND GRACE AND MEANING IN EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS, SHE'S SURE TO MAKE A WONDERFUL QUEEN. AND THAT'S WORTH STICKING AROUND TO SEE."  
(KINDRED SPIRITS)