

All The World's A Stage

Continuing our behind-the-scenes coverage of the final episodes of *Xena's* fifth season, **KATE BARKER** brings us a special report on the pivotal episode *Livia*, in which Xena's daughter takes centre stage in the Roman arena...

LET THE GAMES

By the sound of the dialogue, Augustus has made a startling revelation and Xena is furious. In this scene, tempers are flaring, and so is the heat.

Xena and Gabrielle are back in Rome; Octavius Augustus is Emperor; the poet Virgil is writing epic tales of the slain prophet Eli; and the powerful and striking Livia is the greatest champion that Rome has ever known. But there's something a little familiar to our heroes about these Romans, especially Livia, who is in fact Xena's daughter Eve, groomed by the empire's finest to be a ruthless and formidable warrior. It's a lot for Xena to deal with, and she wastes no time in telling Octavius so. After all, 25 years have passed...

It's a very, very hot and sunny day on the outdoor set of *Livia*. Up three flights of stairs, atop the stony battlements of a Roman fortification, even the cameras are sheltered by sun umbrellas. It's possible to ignore the heat, however, by maintaining focus on your surroundings, and from this vantage point on the battlements, the view is astounding.

Behind the battlements is the gladiatorial arena, covered in sand that is constantly being wetted down when not in use, to control the dust levels. This set has been used for many different episodes, and over the years has been turned into castles, villages and markets. For *Livia*, however, the arena set is exactly that, hosting a dramatic gladiatorial confrontation in the climax of the episode.

Looking forward past the tops of the battlements gives a clear view of the versatile 'Indian Village', used for *Xena* episodes such as *Between The Lines*, *Devi* and *The Way*. To the right is a fishing village/ship set, previously used for *Hercules* and *Xena*, and more recently altered and updated for the newer series *Jack Of*

All Trades. To the left, past the expanses of field and scrub, stand the strong, proud totems of an Amazon village.

The scenery behind the infinitely flexible castle is just as impressive. Amidst the greenery of bush-laden forest stand a middle-eastern village, a small huddle of wild-west style dwellings and a bunch of thatched rooves, all of which look uncannily like they've just been covered in snow.

The set of current focus, however, is a dark, cramped and very hot 'royal box'; an enclosed balcony from which Emperor Augustus (Colin Moy) and Xena observe Livia's (Adrienne Wilkinson) victory parade. Positioned inside the claustrophobic space are Moy, Lucy Lawless, director Rick Jacobson, the camera and sound crew and their equipment, not to mention the constant heat of the lights, reflected solar rays and a three-pronged flaming torch. By the sound of the dialogue, Augustus has made a startling revelation and Xena is furious. In this scene, tempers are flaring, and so is the heat.