

End



Xena: Warrior Princess nears the final stretch of its legendary journey, series star **LUCY LAWLESS** takes a break from racing on the set of *The God You Know* to offer her thoughts on the impending end... Interview by **KATE BARKER**.

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page (clockwise from centre): Xena in *The* if only they'd had hot water bottles in Ancient with daughter Eve in with rolling with the punches in *The Quill* is Mightier.

Talking to Lucy Lawless shortly before the Christmas 2000-2001 break, the final season of *Xena* is a little over halfway through filming, with just a handful of episodes left to shoot before the show wraps in late March.

While there's still plenty of work ahead for Lawless and the rest of the show's cast and crew, the season is progressing at a rapid pace, which prompts the question: how does Lawless feel about the imminent conclusion of *Xena*? "It's a very complex one" she responds. "I'm sad

but on a physical level, I'm kind of relieved. It's been a long, hard run, and it was never less than challenging, and always rewarding.

"Also, it hasn't really sunk in yet that it's the end," she admits, "because I've still got another nine episodes to shoot. So, for me, there's still a lot of hard work to go. I expect to feel stronger emotions later."

Lawless certainly anticipates that the final days on the set will be very emotional, and has already given some thought to what elements of the series and the work she will miss the most. "I'll miss working with my friends," she says. "I won't miss the hours, but I'll miss having such a tremendous role."

It's clear that Lawless has invested a great deal in the role of Xena. Can the actress imagine finding another character part as fulfilling and involving for her as an actress as Xena has been? "I think so, yes," she remarks, "because that's the way I work. I will always involve myself thoroughly.

"But I don't think there will ever be a role that offers me so much variety," she counters. "I don't ever expect to play another role with this much depth and scope. Every role is challenging, because

you choose to give it your all, but I don't expect to have a role this much fun ever again."

While many series stars enjoy having input into the development of their characters and spend time in discussion with the producers and writers suggesting possible scenarios and dialogue, Lawless admits that this isn't something she has ever felt the need to do in the case of Xena. And when asked if she has any specific ideas as to what kind of exit she would like her on screen alter ego to make, the actress jumps at the opportunity to explain to fans just why she doesn't want to become involved in her character's development.

"I always wondered why I didn't know what to say to that type of question - I always thought it was because I was slack or something!" she admits. "But it's actually because that's just not the way I operate.

"The way I work is that I just react to any given situation the same way I think Xena would," she explains. "That means that, just like life, I take it as it comes, and I'm not plotting and planning and trying to engineer my character into any situations. I accept what comes and I react appropriately. So I'm not somebody who analyses and keeps the big picture. I work from the inside out, not from the outside in.

