



treated the audience to his self-penned harmonica tune 'Eli's Blues'.

The audience then got to see the latest *Xena* episode to air in the US, *The Last of the Centaurs*, featuring the son of Borias (also played by Marton Csokas) and Ephiny (Danielle Cormack) as a ghost.

After the episode screening, it was time for the day's charity auctions. The chief recipients of the money raised in these auctions were the James Ellis Foundation and Lucy Lawless' official cause, the Starship Foundation for the Starship Children's Hospital in her home town of Auckland.

Most of the items auctioned off were props actually used by the actors during the filming of *Xena*, most of which went for several thousand US dollars each. These ranged from a foam-rubber stunt prop of Hades' sword (which went for \$1,000), to a foam Callisto sword signed by Hudson Leick (a snip at \$4,500), to the call sheet for Lucy and Renee's last scene together in the final episode *A Friend in Need*, signed by Lucy and Renee, which was not to be given out to the buyer until after the episode had aired, which went for \$4,000.

However, the most amazing sale of the day was of one of the few metal chakrams used by Lucy Lawless during the filming of *Xena*, presented mounted in a glass case with the promise that Lawless would sign it later for authenticity. After an opening bid of \$500, the chakram eventually went on to sell for a staggering \$40,000, which was all to be donated to the Starship Foundation.

In show's like *Xena*, it's the villains who often get the most applause. Following a stunning video montage put to pumping dance music and featuring her evil alter-ego, Alti, Claire Stansfield took to the stage to a cacophony of cheers from the crowd. Stansfield told the audience she wasn't allowed to

parting words

KATE BARKER brings us highlights of LUCY LAWLESS and RENEE O'CONNOR'S historical appearance.

starting out

Renee O'Connor: The biggest surprise was the time schedule! That was the hardest, keeping the schedule and trying to keep your creativity as well.

Lucy Lawless: By the eighth episode, when we were getting all the subtext feedback, I think we really started knitting together.

The subtext

ROC: I have to say that the relationship between these two was amazing. It was all about love.

LL: We wanted it to be about love. It's never been grubby and we didn't want to present it that way. Whether you want to believe that they're gay or straight is irrelevant to the fact that these two love and care for each other.

acting styles

ROC: I think Lucy uses her instincts.

LL: Renee will work in a completely different way, and I don't really know what that is...

ROC: ...even after 6 years!

LL: In the fifth season she'd never let me run lines with her. I'm going, 'Let me help you', and she's going, 'no!'

The nature of acting is that you don't have a preconception of how the other person is going to act, and it was often like that.

practical jokes

LL: Renee tried to pull all these lame practical jokes on me.

ROC: But they never worked! It always happened to other people, like the time I put slime on Lucy's door handle and Rob got it...

LL: I wondered who did that...

summing up

ROC: I've grown up on the show completely. I'm so glad it was in my twenties because I've been

learning who I am.

LL: If we weren't making bold choices, it wouldn't be worth the last six years of blood, sweat and tears that all of us have put in. It was a magic and wonderful place in time and space, but we can never have that again, because we're not the people we were then.

It made me a better person and professional. I have nothing more to say – it was magic.

The future

LL: [I'd like to] make [people] experience something they never would have experienced in their lives, something really dramatic or sad, to make people laugh and cry.

I'm planning activities rather than projects. I don't feel a psychological need to distance myself from the role... but I am going back to my own hair colour!

swear on stage before coming out with a very strong expletive to describe just how much she really did, "love you guys!"

Questions put to Stansfield covered such topics as Alti's many deaths ("I think I've died about seven times now"), to what made Alti so formidable ("I felt that Alti's strongest power is her stare"), to showing more of Alti's history in the modern-day episode *Send in the Clones*. "It really fulfilled my fantasy of being a hard-ass leather mama!" she told the audience with obvious enthusiasm.

Asked how she developed Alti's husky, mesmerising voice, Stansfield revealed a rather unlikely source. "I basically stole the voice from the wicked witch in *The Wizard of Oz*," she admitted. "When I was little, she was the scariest person I knew." Told that Alti didn't necessarily come across as an evil hag, Claire replied jovially, "Remind me of that in 10 years, when I am an evil hag!" She then went on to talk about her sadness at not having the opportunity to work with Alexandra (Aphrodite) Tydings in the show, but encouraged the audience to watch out for her and Tydings later that day in the second of the convention's cabaret evenings. "We're really looking forward to entertaining you guys," she promised.



Top: Tim Omundson gets 'all shook up'.

Above: Claire Stansfield proves she's not really a bad-ass mama.

Highlights of the cabaret act included Raimi telling a hypnotised Campbell, "You are now a bad actor," to which Campbell predictably replied, "I am now Ted Raimi..."