

The appointed hour finally arrived, and Renee O'Connor appeared on the stage to cheering, clapping and, not surprisingly, a standing ovation. The applause went on for at least two full minutes before O'Connor could make herself heard above the noise, even through a microphone. After a few brief exchanges with Creation's Sharon Delaney, the subject of O'Connor's frequent claims that she can't sing was raised. Following a little prompting from Delaney and the audience (and some coincidentally-cued music), the actress agreed to a short burst of song and began singing the first few bars of Donna Summer's 'Last Dance'. Halfway through the first verse, however, another voice joined in from behind the stage and Lucy Lawless soon stepped out from behind the curtain, eliciting a staggering roar of applause from the audience. After the song (through which the clapping never ceased), it was time for some questions, which had been gathered from fans in advance by Sharon Delaney.

Over the next two hours, the audience was treated to comments and anecdotes from Lawless and O'Connor which covered a wide variety of subjects. One of particular interest to the actresses and the audience alike was the many different costumes they'd worn during their time on the show. O'Connor revealed that her outfit in "the Cinderella episode" was her favourite, while Lawless admitted that hers was O'Connor's double's go-go outfit from *Lyre, Lyre*, which she was seen dancing in during the episode's closing credits despite being eight months pregnant!

Still on the subject of costumes, O'Connor commented good-humouredly on the gradual change of her costumes over the series' run to reveal more and more of her figure. She assured the crowd that it was really just to give her more freedom to move, while Lucy put it a little more succinctly, pointing out that, "Renee has abs of steel..."

O'Connor made the surprise revelation that she had a middle name, something she had previously kept a secret. She told the audience that her middle name was, in fact, Renee; her first name being Evelyn, but that she had adopted Renee as her first name as she preferred it. Both women admitted that a great deal had happened to them over the past six years, including meeting their future partners.

Other highlights included Lucy's impersonation of singer Stevie Nicks, as well as a brief discussion about the show's ever-present subtext, which the actresses addressed in a non-committal but satisfactory way.

At the time of the convention, the final episode of *Xena* had yet to be screened, and Lawless and O'Connor were therefore unable to give away any details about the episode. However, both actresses assured the audience that they were more than satisfied with the show's conclusion. "There were truly some beautiful, heart-wrenching moments," said Lawless. "I felt a real sense of closure. A friend of mine watched the rough version and just cried

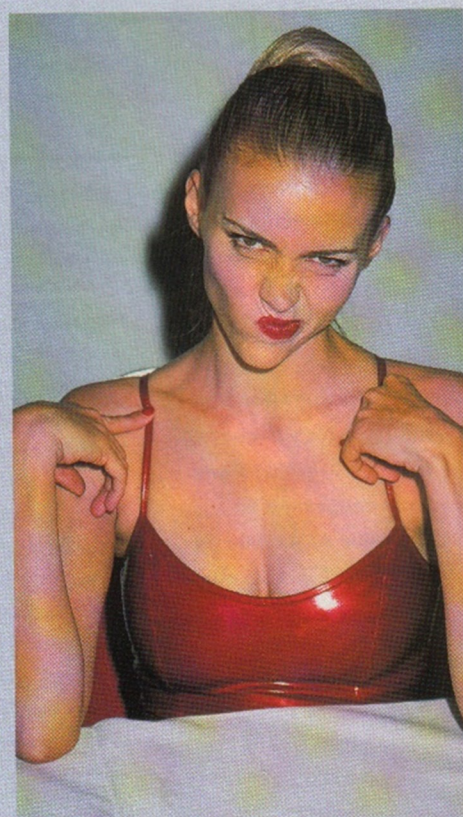


through all of it."

"I cried too," Renee admitted. "It was just heart and soul."

As their time on stage came to an end, both Lawless and O'Connor thanked the audience and fans everywhere for "being a force for good," and revealed how grateful and gratified they were to know that they had made some small difference out there in the "real" world. Much to the crowd's applause, they launched into a reprise of 'Last Dance', joined at the end by *Xena* creator and Lawless' husband Rob Tapert and all the other convention guests.

As the *Xena* actors and crew members said their final goodbyes, the auditorium was filled with cheers, tears and wild applause for the people who had obviously made a difference to so many people's lives. ■●



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Top: Tsianina Joelson gets first real glimpse of *Xena* fandom.

Left: Hudson Leick is a bit marked that all the cake's already gone...