

that the sixth year is to be the show's last, this year's events in the Xenaiverse are all the more pertinent. **JIM SMITH** takes a look back at what the last year has brought us, as we ponder the future of Xena, Gabrielle and co...

TWILIGHT of the Gods

“How does it feel to smell your own mortality?”

Xena to Athena, Motherhood

It's been an extraordinary year for fans of *Xena: Warrior Princess*. *Xena's* parent show, *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*, ended; a new comic book featuring characters from the series came and went; and the series' attraction at Universal Studios Florida closed down after several years of loyal service. *Xena's* fifth season has changed the programme almost beyond recognition. The show's status quo has been

shaken up and none of the pieces are where they were 12 months ago – the result of Pacific Renaissance's determination to keep the franchise fresh and involving, and us, the viewers, on our collective toes.

Three significant threads run throughout the whole of this season of *Xena*. Firstly, we have the clear intent to conclude every major loose end, finish off every storyline and provide resolution to every major character left over from both *Xena* and *Hercules*. Secondly, there is Xena's pregnancy and the repercussions of that. And thirdly and finally, we have the fall of Olympus. At least one of these themes underpins almost every episode of the show's fifth year.

A result of this is that the season has felt at times like 'Xena's Greatest Hits'. An inevitable feeling of familiarity grows as we re-encounter nearly every surviving major character, re-visit every major location, and acquaint ourselves with

every kind of episode *Xena* has previously done. From farce to drama, the whole gamut of the show's stylistic diversity is run through over and over again. Fortunately, this all adds up to an impressive collection of episodes which, as a result, contain something for everyone. More importantly, it builds upon, concludes and then dismisses that which has gone before.

But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Fallen Angel is an impressive start to the fifth season. Visually radically different from anything that has gone before in the series, it takes the show into the realms of Christian mythology and sets up many ideas for the season. Xena's redemption of Callisto, the aerial battles and the demon Xena cackling are just three of the dozen or so images from the episode that stay with us long after the closing credits. The sheer amount of magic and mysticism inherent in this episode's plot also means that its undoing of the ending of *Ides of March* seems

This spread: A few of the high points from the season (clockwise from top right): Gabby dresses up in *Them Bones, Them Bones*; Lucy Lawless as Joxer's wife Meg in *Livia*; Gabrielle in *Chakram*; welcoming the new baby in *God Fearing Child*; Xena becomes a *Fallen Angel*; and returning to Chin in *Back in the Bottle*.

