

can't live with
'em; can't
hain 'em in a
yard!"
Joxer, *Animal
Attraction*

Bottom: Amarice is disgusted by Xena's eating habits in *Animal Attraction*.

Bottom right: Despite her burden, Xena can still wield a sword better than the rest of them.

reaction are fairly simple matters, and mortality is as flexible as the plot demands.

The following episode, *Chakram*, serves as an effective reintroduction to the series for the unversed. We follow an amnesiac Xena who has to be reminded of life as both a warrior and a reformed killer. Hardly startling (although the fusing of the two chakrams of light and dark is undeniably a great moment), *Chakram* is a neat character piece, and one which sets the scene for the early part of the season.

Succession is an enjoyable, traditional episode that could have featured in any preceding season – in many ways an old-fashioned Xena vs Ares story with the same stakes as always. The next instalment, *Animal Attraction*, is a decent stab at producing a Western without moving from Greece (well, New Zealand disguised as Greece) that also makes a single great contribution to the *Xena* mythos – the discovery of our heroine's pregnancy. The food cravings that result from it (raspberry jam and raw fish?) are stomach-churningly funny, and there are also some great Joxer scenes.

It's *Them Bones, Them Bones* that really makes clear this season's intent to wipe the slate clean. Alti, villainess of the fourth season, and a relatively recent addition to the *Xenaverse*, is revived in order that her story arc can be resolved. In keeping with this, as we progress through the season, Eli (also a season four addition) will return and die, and the long-running Brutus/Roman subplot will be concluded. In *Them Bones, Them Bones*, Alti plans to possess the body of Xena's unborn child, and the thought of

that child will achieve on her own.

Unfinished business also rears its thematic head over the next couple of episodes, *Purity* and *Back in the Bottle*, which together form a neat chunk of episodes concludes the Chin plot threads raised in the third season's *The Debt* two-parter.

There's nothing particularly new about the bodyswap antics of *Little Problems*, but it's a good, solid, entertaining episode, which, in keeping with the 'Greatest Hits' theme, echoes *Intimate Stranger* and *Ten Little Warlords*.

Seeds of Faith is the first of three vital episodes on which this season pivots. Ares' murder of Eli, Gabrielle's disillusionment and the seeming placing of Callisto's soul into the body of Xena's unborn baby will all have repercussions throughout the remainder of the year. Combine this with the episode's final confirmation of the justice of the cause of the 'One God' and its clear illustration of the populace's willingness to risk the idea of a life without the Olympian Gods, and it becomes clear how *Seeds of Faith* brings season five's three main narrative strands together. Eli's martyrdom lays the foundations for the cult in his name that we'll see at the very end of this season.

However, before we delve wholeheartedly into the darkness of the ongoing storyline, there's time for another noteworthy episode. Following the unequivocal success of season three's *The Bitter Suite*, there had been much talk about the obvious lack of a musical follow-up in season four. *Lyre, Lyre, Hearts on Fire* finally silenced those of us bemoaning the lack of sing-a-longs in the 1998/1999 run of *Xena*. The episode centres around a music competition, held to decide who should gain possession of a mystical lyre.

The pre-credits sequence is shot as a parody of the series it's a part of: a blood red sky lights a brooding scene: Draco's men and a group of Amazons prepare to fight over the lyre, recently

