



loves that too. It's not enough to make them feel like idiots, but they do think, 'Wow!'

"The reason I think audiences like that kind of trickery is that if they go back and look at it again, they realise that every clue was there for them, but they were misled. It was just a magic trick. I'm doing everything with this hand, but really I'm doing it with that hand. It was all there. I love writing a script and getting to what I call the, 'Ooh, ya' moment, when the audience goes, 'Ooh, ya'. I want to lead them in a certain way so that they think they know what's coming. They're still finding it interesting, they know what's around the corner, but then 'Boom!' That's not what happens.

And when they look back they realise that I gave them all the information all along, but they simply weren't looking for it."

Sears also feels it's a mistake in television to overcomplicate a plot with too many references to previous episodes, as this can confuse the casual viewer. "You have to give the audience enough information that they come back because they care about these people," he explains. "But at the same time when someone new tunes in, and one

can understand where that other character fits into the story. They don't necessarily have to have seen the episode about that character. So it's a little bit of flavour that hearkens back, but it doesn't stop the show and beg a question."

Sears feels that this is a trap Xena fell into in later episodes. "The characters and the shows became so serialised that you couldn't watch one episode without knowing what had happened through the entire season, and it was really difficult for the casual viewer to just tune in," he remarks. "About three or four months ago I was having dinner with Ted Raimi, who plays Joxer, and I hadn't seen an episode of Xena for about a year. I'd just been way too busy. I asked Ted, 'How's Joxer doing?' And he said, 'He's dead!' I said, 'Oh, he's dead.' 'No,' Ted replied very seriously, 'He's dead dead!'"

Sears eventually realised that Raimi meant Joxer really was permanently deceased. "So I said, 'How did that happen?' 'Oh, Xena's daughter killed me,' he said. 'Xena's daughter killed you? She's just a little girl!' 'No, that was 25 years later - they're in suspended animation...' So he was telling me what had been going on, and I was just sitting there dumbstruck..."

Having been on the outside of the series, Sears can therefore now sympathise with viewers who were confused by some of his episodes. "I know there were people who tuned in to see the last part of *Sacrifice* at the end of the third season who were just totally lost. It had become very complicated."

Sears admits that this is an area in which he and colleagues Rob Tapert and R.J. Stewart often

Xena offered opportunity to create a completely new world."

Above: "Call yourself a writer?" Joxer is disgusted by Sears' latest script submission.

Below (left to right): Sears believes eye candy can strengthen an episode; Eve's sudden jump to adulthood proved a shock for the writer; and Amarice, a character Sears wrote an interesting backstory for.

