

New Memoir Reflects Origins of Xena: Warrior Princess on its 25th Anniversary

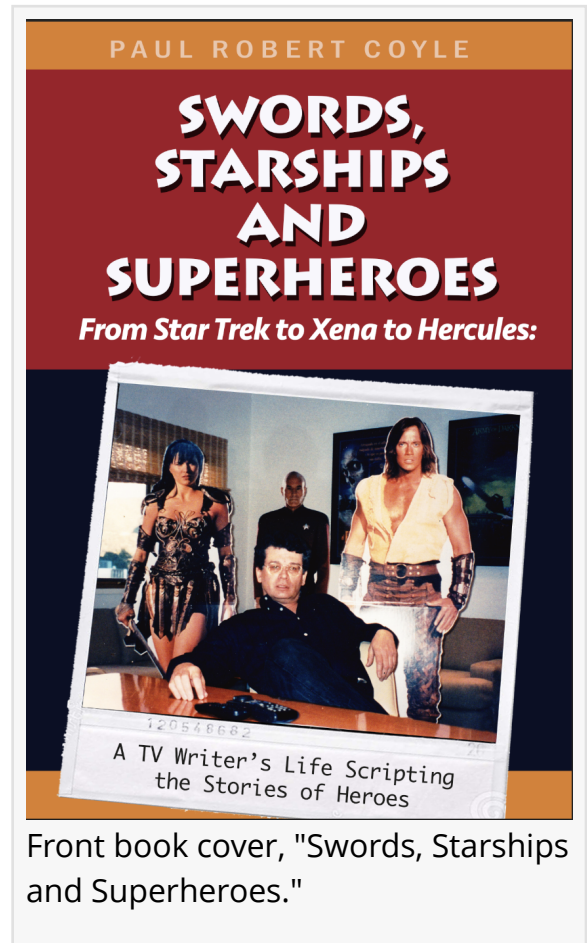
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, USA, October 27, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Twenty-five years ago, Xena: Warrior Princess was birthed from TV's Hercules: The Legendary Journeys for her own six-year adventure. In conjunction with the 25th anniversary, the SyFy Channel has been airing Xena marathons, and, in his new book, *Swords, Starships and Superheroes: From Star Trek to Xena to Hercules*, writer/producer Paul Robert Coyle narrates the conflicts and achievements of his career, including his journeys with "The Warrior Princess."

Xena first appeared in a three-episode arc on Hercules. New Zealand actress Lucy Lawless was a last-minute choice when British actress Vanessa Angel, originally cast, fell ill. Intended for an on-screen death, Xena caught on so strongly that instead she earned her own spin-off series.

"It became a genuine, worldwide pop-culture phenomenon," Coyle says. "The female action-lead in a TV series was still a rarity, and it's largely what helped set Xena apart. But the Xena series somehow accidentally tapped into an under-served audience segment – the growing LGBTQ community. They loved the friendship between Xena and her sidekick/BFF Gabrielle, and writers of fan fiction got carried away speculating on the 'true nature' of that friendship. I suppose we writers on the show may have gotten a little carried away, too."

Coyle describes his introduction to the Hercules/Xena world in *Swords, Starships and Superheroes*: "I stumbled into it. Xena wasn't on the air yet. At first, I turned it down, based strictly on the title. 'Thanks, but no thanks,' I said. Then I started watching the show. And I was liking it. Really liking it. I went crawling back a year later and, luckily for me, the door was still open."

After writing three freelance Xena scripts, Coyle moved to Hercules. "I handled all the Lucy-



Front book cover, "Swords, Starships and Superheroes."

crossover guest shots, plus I wrote several more Xenas. The behind-the-scenes adventures that I had for four years – both in Hollywood and in New Zealand, where both shows filmed – make for what I'm told are some entertaining chapters in my book, not only for Hercules and Xena fans but also for anyone embarking on a career in writing for television."

By its second season, Xena was the top-rated syndicated drama series on American television, and all six seasons were firmly planted in the Top Five. "At the height of Hercules and Xena's popularity, the fandom rivaled that of Star Trek," says Coyle. "Online Xena chat rooms were everywhere. There were conventions nearly every weekend across the country, with appearances by stars, writers, and producers alike."

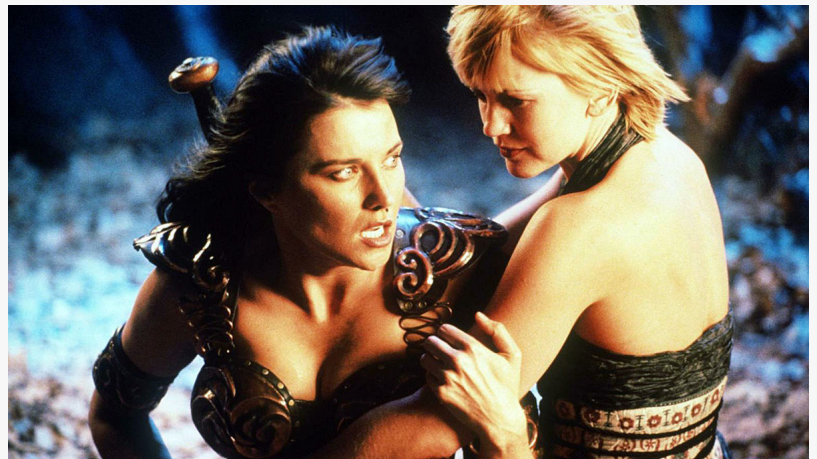
Coyle quickly learned that these encounters could become a no-man's land for a series writer. "I was always sitting on 'secrets' – things about upcoming episodes that I was professionally bound to not reveal. When I wrote a season-finale cliffhanger on Xena, I avoided the fans all summer, because I knew I couldn't answer their questions about the outcome, or withstand the torture that I was certain to be subjected to."

For instance, Xena traded bodies with another female warrior because Lucy Lawless was seriously hurt in a horseback-riding mishap. "I was forced into a last-minute rewrite," remembers Coyle, "replacing Xena with another actress. How? It was a body-swap scenario. Thanks to the fantasy world of swords-'n'-sorcery, it worked."

Xena: Warrior Princess has aired in more than 108 countries. It's twice been ranked in the Top Ten of TV Guide's "Top Cult Shows Ever." Coyle understands the show's continued popularity. "I



Lucy Lawless, as Xena, and Kevin Sorbo, as Hercules.



Lucy Lawless, as Xena, and Renée O'Connor, as Gabrielle.

came to Xena after years of writing cop shows, then sci-fi, including various Star Treks, but Xena was a departure for me. I loved doing all those other shows, but Xena was special. Not just the show itself; I'm talking about the producers, the people behind-the-scenes I worked with daily, and Lucy and co-star Renee O'Connor. Everyone was the best. I wish that everyone with a writing/producing career, or dreaming of one, can have such a rewarding experience."

Swords, Starships and Superheroes: From Star Trek to Xena to Hercules – A TV Writer's Life Scripting the Stories of Heroes, by Paul Robert Coyle, is published by Jacobs/Brown Press.

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