

Lucy Lawless, aka Xena: Warrior Princess: interview

By Jo Monroe

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The lesbian icon talks to Time Out about Russell Crowe, 'cowboy' vs 'rock 'n' roll' chaps and her forthcoming capital gigs



Hell for leather: Lucy Lawless prepares to meet her London fans

If you're out on the scene this weekend and find yourself wondering where all the good lesbians have gone, this time there's actually an explanation: they're at the Carling Academy in Islington. On May 3 and 4 Lucy Lawless – star of 'Xena: Warrior Princess' and 'Battlestar Galactica' – will swap acting for singing and perform two intimate gigs. Let's face it, if you're a single lesbian, it's probably the best cruising opportunity of the year.

The former action star – still No 1 on www.lesbianation.com's list of lesbian icons – knows her market and will be taking to the stage in a pair of leather chaps to belt out songs by people including Patti Smith, Melissa Etheridge and Sophie B Hawkins.

'I gave away my first pair of chaps for a charity auction, but they felt so good I had to get another pair,' says Lawless on the phone from LA. 'But I could only find cowboy chaps. I wanted rock 'n' roll chaps, so I went to West Hollywood where there are all these leather bars and tailors and found a very lovely Russian woman who's making them for me.'

The image of Lawless – originally a country girl from New Zealand – cruising for chaps in the darker parts of LA is quite a picture, but she likes it when things work out randomly.

'There are some people who like to know what they'll be doing for the next two years, but not me. I can't fit more than three days' schedule in my head, and I can't remember more than two days ago. I live in a five-day bubble, so I always find myself somewhere I didn't expect to be. I love the days when everything changes with a phone call.'

A recent chance encounter saw her land a part in the new Adam Sandler movie, which she is currently filming, and she will soon be seen in 'Battlestar' on Sky One, when her character, the cylon Number Three, is 'unboxed' so she can tell everyone how they can end the final series. Leaving things to chance seems to be a pretty good strategy. 'I turned 40 the other week and I've figured out what works for me. Taking life five days at a time means I'm constantly surprised.'

Her LA life isn't all premieres and Winnebagos, though. 'Yesterday I pin-curled my hair and put a net over my head. I caught myself in the mirror and thought: Christ! It's Xena Sharples!'

It was a joke lost on her American husband. Despite her Kiwi's affinity for British culture, Lawless says she has never really got to grips with London. 'I've done London with no money, when I was younger, and I've done London with money since, and I still can't figure it out! I won't get a chance to explore this time, either, because I've got to get straight on a plane and get back on set.'

Lawless is also attending this weekend's Xena Convention at the Hilton Metropole Hotel on Edgware Road. It's been seven years since the series ended, and this is the first time Lawless has joined fans, cast and crew outside the US to remember the good old days when Xena wandered round Ancient Greece with her girlfriend kicking butt and slaying gods. 'I keep forgetting that's even on. I'm just thinking about the gigs.'

So what happens at a convention? 'We just yak. I never prepare anything – I just go along, answer the fans' questions, or do a silly little song.'

But aren't conventions a bit, well, American? All that dressing up as characters and gushing about how much they love the show. Aren't Brits a bit too uptight to do conventions well?

'You'd be surprised. You lot aren't as prissy as you make out. When Xena first started, I got a lot of mail from older British men – judges and lawyers mostly – asking me to walk all over them in my big leather boots!'

So many of the convention attendees are going to the gigs that there will be minibuses to take them between venues. Lawless says performing in front of a crowd is one of the hardest things she's ever done, but also one of the most thrilling. So how does she calm down after a gig? 'Usually I just bite the head off a budgie and smash up my hotel room. That's my routine and I don't see any reason to change it now. I just ask myself: "What would Russell Crowe do?" and take the Russell route.'

[Lucy Lawless](#) is at the Carling Academy Islington on May 3 & 4, tickets start at £42 on the door, or in advance from www.creationent.com where you can also find details for the Xena Convention and book day passes.

<http://www.timeout.com/london/gay/features/print/4679.html>