Joel Gordon, "Entry on: Hercules: The Legendary Journeys (Series, S03E01–22) by Sam Raimi, Robert Tapert, Christian Williams ", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1010. Entry version as of November 21, 2026.

Sam Raimi , Robert Tapert , Christian Williams

Hercules: The Legendary Journeys (Series, S03E01–22)

USA/New Zealand (1996)

TAGS: Aphrodite Ares Atlantis Cupid Daedalus Echidna Gods Hera Heracles Hercules Hero(es) Icarus Iolaus Jason





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General information	
Title of the work	Hercules: The Legendary Journeys (Series, S03E01–22)
Studio/Production Company	MCA Television, Renaissance Pictures
Country of the First Edition	New Zealand, United States of America
Country/countries of popularity	United States of America, New Zealand, Australia
Original Language	English
First Edition Date	1996
First Edition Details	S03E01. “Mercenary”. Directed by Michael Hurst; Written by Robert Bielak. USA, Syndicated (MCA); September 30, 1996. 44 min. – S03E22. “Atlantis”. Directed by Gus Trikonis; Written by Roberto Orci & Alex Kurtzman. USA, Syndicated (MCA); May 12, 1997. 44 min.
Running time	44 min each episode
Format	TV; subsequently VHS, DVD and digital streaming
Date of the First DVD or VHS	VHS January 8, 1999; DVD March 23, 2004
Awards	1998 – *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* (Joseph LoDuca) won “Top TV Series” in “ASCAP Film and Television Music Awards”.
Genre	Action and adventure fiction, B films, Mythological fiction, Television series
Target Audience	Crossover

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Creators



Sam Raimi by Gage Skidmore. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CCBY-SA 2.0 (accessed: December 30, 2021).

Sam Raimi , b. 1959
(Producer)

Sam Raimi is an American filmmaker, actor and producer. He was born in Michigan (USA), to a conservative Jewish family, and attended Michigan State University. His career has been closely linked with that of Robert Tapert. Although Raimi intended to major in English, he chose to put his studies on hold in order to work on the feature film *The Evil Dead* (1981), after the success of his first co-operative production with Robert Tapert, *The Happy Valley Kid* (1977). Raimi is a co-founder of both Renaissance Pictures and Ghost House Pictures (see above). His solo-directorial work (distinct from productions with Tapert) include the original *Spider-man* trilogy (2002–2007) starring Tobey Macquire, and, most recently, *Oz the Great and Powerful* (2013). His most recent solo-producer role was for the crime-thriller, *Don't Breathe* (2016). As an actor, Raimi has appeared in many of his own films as minor characters – such as his cameo appearances in *The Evil Dead* and its sequels. Raimi turned to television during the 1990's, working together with Tapert as a producer for the franchises *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*, *Xena: Warrior Princess*, *Young Hercules* and *Spartacus.*

Bio prepared by Joel Gordon, University of Otago, joel_gordon@hotmail.co.nz



Robert Tapert by Cooltv. Retrieved from Wikipedia, licensed

Robert Tapert , b. 1955
(Author, Producer)

Robert Tapert is an American actor, producer and writer. Born in Royal Oak, Michigan (USA), he attended Michigan State University where he first began experimenting with filmmaking under the influence of Sam Raimi. During this time, they both worked on the film *The Happy Valley Kid* (1977) in which Tapert also starred in the

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leading role. Following the success of this venture, the pair began work on their first feature film, *The Evil Dead* (1981) – directed by Sam Raimi and starring Bruce Campbell – and, in order to assist with its production, Tapert, Raimi and Campbell (along with Irvin Shapiro) co-founded Renaissance Pictures in 1979. This trio have since worked together on numerous successful films – particularly in the horror genre – including: *Crimewave* (1985), *Easy Wheels* (1989), *Darkman* (1990), *Lunatics: A Love Story* (1991), *Timecop (*1994), *30 Days of Night* (2007) and *The Gift* (2015). In 2002 Tapert and Raimi co-founded Ghost House Pictures known for, among others, the film franchises *The Grudge* (2004, 2006, 2009) and *Bogeyman* (2005, 2007, 2008). Tapert's involvement in television began during the 1990's with his most notable productions being the franchises of *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* (1995-1999), *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995–2001) and *Young Hercules* (1998–1999) – all of which included both direct-to-television movies and television serials spanning several seasons. It was during this period – in 1998 – that Tapert married New Zealand actress Lucy Lawless (the star of *Xena*), with whom he has since had two children. More recently, his interest in antiquity and television has returned with the serials *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* (2010), *Spartacus: Gods of the Arena* (2011), *Spartacus: Vengeance* (2012) and *Spartacus: War of the Damned* (2013) and plans for a Xena reboot for NBC. (see further, his official website, accessed: August 16, 2019).

Bio prepared by Joel Gordon, University of Otago, joel_gordon@hotmail.co.nz



Christian Williams by Pacunagonz. Retrieved

Christian Williams , b. 1943
(Author, Producer)

Christian Williams is an American journalist and television writer from Brooklyn, New York. His career in the news industry began in 1972 as an assistant editor (Style Section) for *The Washington Post.* It was during his early years at the *Post* that Williams was given a unique insight into the film/television industry, serving as the editor on a behind-the-scenes exclusive when Robert Redford used the *Post*'s

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newsroom to research his film *All the President's Men* (1976). In 1984 Williams became a reporter in Bob Woodward's investigative team which led to his second interaction with the film/television industry: in 1986 Woodward's team (Woodward, Williams and co-journalist Richard Harwood) wrote and featured in an ABC movie, *Under Siege*, which was based upon the group's reporting on domestic terrorism. Williams then continued to dabble in the television industry, co-writing (alongside Woodward) an episode of the television drama series *Hill Street Blues* (1981–1987), before formally leaving journalism for a career as a television writer – specializing in one-hour drama television shows. He went on to co-create (alongside David Milch) the drama *Capital News* (1990) before assisting in the creation of *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* franchise (which began with the five direct-to-television films). Unlike Tapert and Raimi, however, Williams was not directly involved in the production of the *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* serial beyond the pilot films. Williams went on to continue writing for television, for example as the co-executive producer of the drama *Six Feet Under* (2001–2005), until he retired in 2010. He has since turned his interests to authoring books and sailing.

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Additional information

Casting	**Main Cast:** Hercules: Kevin Sorbo, Iolaus: Michael Hurst. **Supporting Cast:** Alcmene: Liddy Holloway, Aphrodite: Alexandra Tydings, Autolycus: Bruce Campbell, Cassandra: Claudia Black, Deianeira: Tawny Kitaen, Falafel: Paul Norell, Hades: Erik Thomson, Iphicles: Kevin Smith, Jason: Jeffrey Thomas, Salmoneus: Robert Trebor, Strife: Joel Tobeck, Xena: Lucy Lawless.
Adaptations	See entry: "Hercules: The Legendary Journeys TV Series: Season 1".
Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs	See entry: "Hercules: The Legendary Journeys TV Series: Season 1".

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Summary

Season three of *HTLJ*, consisting of twenty-two episodes, maintains the successful format of the prior two seasons: a series of self-contained narrative episodes that derive inspiration from tropes associated with both the ancient world and fantasy genres. Examples of the former include episode 2 (*Doomsday*) in which Hercules assists the inventor Daedalus with his grief over the death of his son Icarus (who famously died when the pair tried to escape Crete – see, e.g., Ovid *Met.* 8); episode 5 (*Not fade away*) which includes a catabasis to retrieve the ghost of Iolaus from the underworld; episode 13 (*Encounter*) with the Golden Hind of Artemis (commonly known in antiquity as the Ceryneian Hind and famously depicted as one of Hercules' labours); and episode 22 (*Atlantis*) in which Hercules finds himself on the island of Atlantis (although a significantly different version to that found in Plato's *Timaeus* and *Critias*). More fantastically driven episodes include episode 4 (*Mummy dearest*) with Hercules battling a cursed Egyptian mummy and episode 10 (*The lady and the dragon*) with Hercules battling a dragon. The narrative arc of the season as a whole sees Ares, identified both as the god of war and Hercules' half-brother, replace Hera as the show's primary antagonist with Hera remaining the antagonist for the first half of the season (e.g., ep. 5 *Not fade away*, ep. 8 *Prince Hercules*) and Ares' beginning to replace her from episode 13 (*Encounter*) onwards (on the reasons for this shift, see analysis). This said, there is very little overarching narrative to unite the individual episodes with this season being more disjointed than previous seasons. This can be attributed to, not only the shift in villain, but the increasing popularity of the other spin-offs and the various attempts to develop the show into a multi-series franchise, rather than simply a standalone narrative (on this broadening of the franchise, see analysis).

Analysis

Despite the increasing reliance upon figures and tropes that derive from material outside of ancient sources for the narratives of individual episodes, the continued characterisation of Hercules as a (positive) civilizing force -- which, from a modern perspective, extends to include his depiction as a champion of the people -- ensures that there is a degree of continuance with ancient depictions of Hercules (Hercules' labours, in particular, are a prime example of this role as a civilizing force in antiquity). Furthermore, the ability of Hercules'

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character to adapt to such a wide range of 'fictional' circumstances (ancient or modern alike), while maintaining continuity with this overarching heroic portrayal, is a large part of his appeal and success within popular culture – and, historically, this has always been the case. This flexibility echoes Hercules' on-screen presentation during the mid-20th century with the *peplum* genre (i.e., the Italian sword-and-sandal films of the 50s-60s). This genre of film played a prominent role in (re-) introducing the figure Hercules to modern audiences, firmly cementing his popularity within pop culture, while also successfully transplanting Hercules into contexts far removed from the ancient sources – for example, *Hercules against the Moon-Men* (1964) or *Hercules, Samson and Ulysses* (1963). Thus, this season walks a fine balance in drawing upon both ancient and modern depictions of Hercules-the-hero.

As in its earlier seasons, season 3 of *HTLJ* commonly presents figures and/or mythological narratives derived from antiquity in an anachronistic fashion, appropriating ancient source material into settings that better suit modern sensibilities and characterisations (i.e., rationalization). Consider the following two examples as case in point. The story of Daedalus and Icarus received multiple ancient treatments during antiquity (including, Ovid *Met.* 8, Hyg. *Fab.* 40, Apollod. *Epit.* 1.12–13, and multiple vase painting exemplars). Episode two, *Doomsday*, draws upon the ancient tropes of Daedalus as a renowned inventor (in this episode, for example, he is creating siege weapons) and the death of his son Icarus. Hercules' 'quest' is to resolve Daedalus of his guilt over Icarus' death which, while the intervention of Hercules is an entirely novel element, finds a degree of ancient precedent in that Daedalus' grief is a recurrent ancient trope (e.g., Verg *Aen.* 6.47–50, Sil. Ital., 12.99–101). Yet, this episode also takes several liberties: it is not set in Crete (nor, even the related setting of Athens), but Euboa (perhaps intended to be Euboea?); Minos and Pasiphae are notably absent with Daedalus instead under the 'patronage' of an evil king named Nikolas; and there is no inclusion of the Labyrinth, minotaur and Theseus who are mainstays in the Daedalus/Icarus myth. This said, the rationalizing of Daedalus' narrative as occurs in this episode is an act with a strong pedigree in the ancient world: writers such as Palaephatus and Diodorus, for example, replaced Daedalus and Icarus' wax wings with the more 'realistic' oars of a boat by which they seemed to soar across the ocean waves. A similar appropriation and use of anachronisms can be demonstrated in episode 7, *Not fade away*. This catabatic episode

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finds precedent in Hercules' two well-known underworld visits: first, to capture Cerberus (and the simultaneous rescuing of Theseus); and, second to rescue Alcmene on Admetus' behalf (depicted in Eur. *Alc.*) – it is notable that this is not the only catabasis that Hercules embarks upon within the *HTLJ* series (cf. S0, E4 *Hercules in the Underworld*; S2, E8 *The other side*; S2, E11 *Highway to Hades*). This said, the exact details of and reason for the catabasis shares much more in common with catabasis of another mythical hero, Orpheus (e.g., Eur. *Alc.* 357–362, Ovid *Met.* 10), since Hercules makes a deal with Persephone in order to restore a loved-one who has died (here, Hercules' companion Iolaus, rather than Eurydice, Orpheus' wife). The reason for Iolaus' death is due to the *HTLJ* narrative arc exploring the Hera-Hercules animosity, of which he is an 'innocent' casualty.

It is notable that season three also displays an acknowledgement by the creators of the growing popularity of the *HTLJ* franchise beyond this particular serial. Several characters appear in this season who would recur in, or indeed found their origins within, the wider Hercules-Xena-verse (i.e., the spin-off serials *Xena: Warrior Princess* and *Young Hercules*). For example, the Golden Hind appears here in episode 13 (*Encounter*) and would then make a tie-in appearance in *Young Hercules* episode 36 (*Hind Sight*) the following year. More significantly, however, season three is notable for introducing Kevin Smith as the god of war, Ares, a foe who would replace Hera as the primary antagonist in later seasons (as well as adopting this role for the *Young Hercules* spin-off). Smith's Ares had risen to popularity in the *Xena* serial spin-off and, since *Xena* is widely acknowledged as being the more popular of the two serials, this adoption of Ares is indicative of such prevalence and a clear interest in tying together the *HTLJ* and *Xena* narratives (i.e., *HTLJ* s. 3, 1996, with *Xena* s. 2, 1996–1997, and so forth). Indeed, from this season onward, the narratives of *HTLJ* and *Xena* would begin to intertwine and feature more cross-over material.

Season three also contains a unique episode entitled *Les Contemptibles* (ep. 17). This episode is not set during antiquity but rather during the French Revolution (in particular, the year 1789) with the characters of the serial re-cast as figures appropriate to this period of history (i.e., Hercules and Iolaus are Robin-Hood-esque highway robbers). This said, continuity with the narrative's story-arc is maintained via flashbacks of Hercules' exploits from earlier in the season (perhaps as much as a third of this particular episode is made up of clips from prior episodes). This style of 'clip episode' was first

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	introduced in the season 2 episode *The cave of echoes* – although this earlier version remained set in antiquity rather than transplanted into a new milieu. These 'clip episodes' were common during this period of television production and were viewed as a way for companies to save money while still producing 'new' material for consumers. *Les Contemptibles* also presents an interesting example of the popularity of this franchise with teenage viewers: the character of Jean-Pierre (i.e., Iolaus) names the group of outlaws "the powerful rangers" – a nod to the popular *Power Ranger* series which was also made in New Zealand throughout its production history (a total of 12 out of the 22 seasons) and in which both Michael Hurst (Iolaus) and Rose McIver (Ilea) had also appeared.
Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Aphrodite Ares Atlantis Cupid Daedalus Echidna Gods Hera Heracles Hercules Hero(es) Icarus Iolaus Jason
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Adversity Character traits Conflict Death Desires Emotions Fairy tale references Family Friendship Future Ghosts Good deeds Good vs evil Heroism Historical figures History Identity Innocence Integrity Invention Journeys Life Loss Love Magic Magic powers Other literary figures, texts and writers Pop culture references Relationships Religious beliefs Revenge Supernatural creatures (non-classical) Transformation Violence
Further Reading	See entry: "Hercules: The Legendary Journeys TV Series: Season 1".

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