Joel Gordon, "Entry on: Hercules: The Legendary Journeys (Series, S00E01): Hercules and the Amazon Women by Sam Raimi, Robert Tapert, Christian Williams ", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Elzbieta Olechowska. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2019). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/751. Entry version as of October 17, 2026.

Sam Raimi , Robert Tapert , Christian Williams

# Hercules: The Legendary Journeys (Series, S00E01): Hercules and the Amazon Women

*United States (1994)*

TAGS: Alcmene Amazons Hera Hercules Hippolyta Hydra Iolaus Twelve Labours of Heracles Zeus

*We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.*

| General information | |
|---|---|
| *Title of the work* | Hercules: The Legendary Journeys (Series, S00E01): Hercules and the Amazon Women |
| *Studio/Production Company* | MCA Television, Renaissance Pictures |
| *Country of the First Edition* | New Zealand, United States of America |
| *Country/countries of popularity* | USA, New Zealand, Australia |
| *Original Language* | English |
| *First Edition Date* | 1994 |
| *First Edition Details* | *Hercules and the Amazon Women.* Directed by Bill Norton; written by Andrew Dettmann, Jule Selbo, and Daniel Truly. USA, *(Universal) Action Pack* Weds 8-10pm (syndicated television); 25 April 1994. 91 mins. |
| *Running time* | 91 mins |
| *Format* | TV; also VHS, DVD and digital streaming (Amazon) |
| *Date of the First DVD or VHS* | VHS June 17, 1997; DVD June 24, 2003 |
| *Genre* | Action and adventure fiction, B films, Mythological fiction, Television series |
| *Target Audience* | Crossover |
| *Author of the Entry* | Joel Gordon, University of Otago, joel_gordon@hotmail.co.nz |



This Project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme under grant agreement No 681202, *Our Mythical Childhood… The Reception of Classical Antiquity in Children's and Young Adults' Culture in Response to Regional and Global Challenges*, ERC Consolidator Grant (2016–2021), led by Prof. Katarzyna Marciniak, Faculty of "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw.

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| *Peer-reviewer of the Entry* | Elizabeth Hale, University of New England, ehale@une.edu.au<br>Elzbieta Olechowska, University of Warsaw, elzbieta.olechowska@gmail.com |



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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

**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



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*The Happy Valley Kid* (1977) in which Tapert also starred in the 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 , 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



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Christian Williams by Pacunagonz. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0 (accessed: December 30, 2021).

insight into the film/television industry, serving as the editor on a behind-the-scenes exclusive when Robert Redford used the *Post*'s 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.

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



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## Additional information

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| Casting | Hercules: Kevin Sorbo,<br><br>Zeus: Anthony Quinn,<br><br>Iolaus: Michael Hurst,<br><br>Hippolyta: Roma Downey,<br><br>Lysia: Lucy Lawless. |
| Adaptations | Cf. overall series entry.<br><br>Novel series:<br><br>John Whitman (1998) *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*. San Francisco: CA: Chronicle Books. (see entry)<br><br>[*Hercules and the Amazon Women*; *Hercules and the Circle of Fire*; and "The Wrong Path" – S1E1] |
| Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs | Cf. overall series entry. |
| Summary | The narrative of *Hercules and the Amazon Women* is loosely based on Hercules' labour to get the belt of the Amazon Queen Hippolyta. The film opens with Hercules and his companion Iolaus walking through the woods where they encounter a young girl who then transforms into the Hydra. In adherence with general mythological tradition, the pair defeat the beast by using fire to burn the stumps of the monster's head(s), preventing new ones from sprouting. Once the Hydra is slain, a peacock feather appears on the ground – revealing the girl's transformation to be a scheme of Hera as the peacock feather is a common symbol for the goddess which appears throughout the franchise). Later that night, as Hercules and Iolaus celebrate Iolaus' |



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engagement, a man arrives begging Hercules to help his village which is under attack.

Upon arriving at the man's village, it becomes clear that it contains no women – they have all been stolen by the "creatures" in the forest who have been attacking the village. Hercules and Iolaus set off to rescue the women and are attacked by the creatures. During the ensuing fight, Iolaus is fatally wounded but not before discovering that the creatures are in fact all women (later revealed to be the women they are searching for). As Iolaus dies in Hercules' arms, the hero is surrounded by the women and taken prisoner.

Hercules is led to the women's camp where he is taunted and belittled by the Amazons. Their Queen, Hippolyta, interrogates Hercules and claims that he is only there to subdue them. Although Hercules denies this charge, the Queen sparks off a series of flashbacks from Hercules' youth (focusing on times when he was taught how to behave towards women) via a vision from a magical candle. Hercules realises that Hippolyta is right and his perspective on women is wrong. Nevertheless, Hippolyta announces that all men are the same and cannot change and so, after consulting with Hera, prepares to attack the village of men.

But Hercules escapes and warns the village, preparing the men for the impending attack; however, when the women arrive, it is revealed that they are only there for sex. Further, the Amazons and the men are at war only because the women refused to adhere to the "typical" roles expected of wives/mothers. During the women's "siege", Hippolyta succumbs to her desire for Hercules and acknowledges that the Amazons are willing to give up their rebellion and return to a more equal life. An enraged Hera possesses Hippolyta and orders a renewed attack on the men. Hercules duels with Hippolyta-Hera and, although having bested her, cannot bring himself to slay the Queen. Upon pronouncing his love for her, Hercules is forced to watch as Hera throws Hippolyta's body off the edge of a waterfall, killing her. Heartbroken, Hercules returns to the Amazon's camp and convinces Zeus to use the magical candle and turn back time. Back in the past, at the dinner celebrating Iolaus' engagement, Hercules 'wakes'. When the man appears asking for his help, the hero explains that the men need to treat women with respect and all will be well.



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Analysis

On this film introducing a new characterisation of Hercules and filming in New Zealand, see overallentry.

*Hercules and the Amazon Women* is loosely based on the mythological narrative of Hercules' labour to get the belt (or girdle) of Queen Hippolyta. As one of Hercules' famous 12 labours, this myth was well known in antiquity and appears in a variety of ancient sources. The way in which the film builds upon this mythic material sets the tone for how *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys* (as a franchise) considers itself both a continuation of the myths of antiquity, but also is not afraid to update this material if and when required. This interplay of continuity and contrast is particularly evident in the way in which the film depicts and interacts with the concept of the Amazon women.

In the ancient world, the Amazons were fierce warriors, equal to their male counterparts with regards to their fighting skills. Yet the largest threat posed by the Amazons was their 'attack' on the norms of society: having separated themselves off from cities and culture, the Amazons were fiercely hostile towards men and actively upended traditional gender roles and stereotypes. On the one hand, this general presentation of the Amazons continues in *Hercules and the Amazon Women*: they are separate from society, they are fierce warriors (besting even Hercules – initially, at least), and they do not hold to expected gender roles. These (modern) Amazons are also depicted as threatening: the messenger from the village describes them as "ferocious beasts" – a description which muddies Hercules and Iolaus' understanding of what their quest entails. Even the Amazons' fighting style (preferring a martial arts form of combat and guerrilla style warfare) is presented as a contrast to the what should be expected as 'normal'. But it is the way in which Hercules interacts with the Amazons which demonstrates the dissimilarity between these Amazons and their ancient counterparts. This is largely to do with the film's feminist subtext; however, we must question how lasting the film's engagement with feminism actually is.

Upon encountering Hercules, the Amazons – Hippolyta in particular – make it their goal to 'convert' him to a new way of thinking regarding his treatment of women. As to be expected of our modern hero, Hercules is receptive to the presented paradigm-shift, acknowledging that he is particularly guilty of behaving poorly towards women and



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making a deliberate decision to better himself in this regard. Further, the film concludes with a reiteration of the need for men to change how they treat women – this time a challenge found on the very lips of Hercules himself, now a 'leader' in this new movement. This presents, to borrow Blondell's phrasing, a radical revision of the traditional motifs surrounding the labour of stealing the queen's girdle for, in antiquity, this was associated with the military and sexual conquest of Hercules over the Amazons. While this mentality is missing from the film, closer inspection reveals that feminism may not have been as influential as first thought. To begin, the amazons are entirely open to a reconciliation with their menfolk which (it is presumed) is achieved at the close of the film with their re-domestication. Thus, while the women may be treated slightly better than before by their husbands, they readily resume their 'traditional' position as household figures in service to males. Further, as Hera is the primary antagonist (both of the franchise as a whole and this film in particular by controlling the Amazons as her tool), there is an undertone of Hercules-the-male vs. Hera-the-female. Thus, Hercules' victory – both against the Amazons, and more broadly against Hera – is itself a reinforcement of the patriarchy. Although open to feminist ideals, it remains for a man to rescue and save the women from Hera and from themselves. In light of our contemporary context, it is difficult not to view Hercules' challenge at the close of the film as a form of "mansplaining". Thus, it would not be until *Xena* that feminism would be fully embraced on its own terms, perhaps made possible because of the shift in tone with Xena-the-female pitted against a new antagonist, Ares-the-male.

On the whole, this interaction with feminism (including both its successes and failures) is to be understood as a comment on the (modern) characterisation of Hercules in two regards: (1) like the Hercules of myth, this hero is a civilizing force and thus it falls to him to not only slay monsters such as the Hydra but also, in our modern context as a 'righter of social wrongs', to bring together the disparate tribes of men and women; and yet, (2) unlike the Hercules of myth, this hero is willing to be challenged by the Amazons perspective and reconsider his masculinity in light of their provocation (although, only to a certain degree), because he is a 'modern' hero for all ages.

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| Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, | Alcmene Amazons Hera Hercules Hippolyta Hydra Iolaus Twelve Labours of Heracles Zeus |



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| Characters, and Concepts | |
| Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture | Good vs evil Morality Parents (and children) Violence |
| Further Reading | Baker, E., “Harlots and Harlots: A Comparison of the Amazon Tribes Shown in *Hercules and the Amazon Women* and *Xena: Warrior Princess*”, *Whoosh!* 12 (1997), (*IAXS* Research Project #327) www.whoosh.org (accessed January 25, 2018).<br><br>Blondell, R., “How to kill an Amazon.” *Helios*, 32.2 (2005): 183–213.<br><br>Blondell, R., “Hercules Psychotherapist” In W. Haslem, A. Ndalianis, C. J. Mackie, eds., *Super/Heroes: from Hercules to Superman,* New Academia Publishing, 2007, 239–249. |
| Addenda | Directors: Bill Norton, Harley Cokeliss, Doug Lefler, and Josh Becker.<br><br>Writers: Andrew Dettmann, Daniel Truly, Barry Pullman and Jule Selbo. |



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