

Asterism: Hercules the Animated Series

Intro

Jordan: Hi, I'm Jordan.

Kit: And I'm Kit.

Jordan: Welcome to Starry Time

Kit: Asterisms Edition

Jordan: Where stars plus lines equal stories

Kit: with an asterisk.

Jordan: In these episodes, we'll explore ideas, concepts, or people that didn't make it into the Maenads show or just subjects we want to talk more about.

Kit: For today's episode, we did a lot of reflecting on what we should choose to do.

Jordan: We watched at least four trailers of different Hercules movies. We ranked them earlier. We debated whether we should just go back and rewatch the the Disney 1997 animated classic Hercules

Kit: Ah, my beloved.

Jordan: And in the end, we did decide to re enter that world of Hercules but with a twist.

Kit: So today we'll be discussing the pilot episode of Disney's Hercules the Animated Series. And the pilot is titled Hercules and the Apollo Mission.

Jordan: Zero to Hero.

Kit: Just like that.

Jordan: Similar to our asterism last month on the pilot episode of Gene Roddenberry's Andromeda, we'll give a little background on the show, recap the episode, and end with our reactions and overall thoughts.

Show Background

Kit: Absolutely. And I'll offer up BoP's thoughts as well. So Disney's Hercules the animated film came out in June 1997 to generally positive critical responses. But what I did not know was that in August 1998, Disney also premiered the Hercules animated series.

Jordan: The Hercules animated series had, in fact, two seasons. The first had 52 half hour episodes. Season two, however, was much shorter, with only 13 episodes.

Kit: Some kind of mid season cancellation, which honestly makes no sense because season two features a Hercules Aladdin crossover episode.

Pilot Recap

Jordan: Alright, so let's do our recap now. We begin with strong energy, with our favorite muses back and singing a, slightly adapted Zero to Hero cover.

Kit: Oh my gosh. This opens in and I am so excited.

Jordan: They brought the energy, they brought the verve, one of the best parts in the original movie and in the soundtrack. And they're here right away. We're on a great start. Then a generic narrator tries to start setting the stage and we see four constellations on the night sky.

Kit: We identified them as Scorpio, Taurus, canis major, and maybe Orion there is sort of we know that this, um, figure cannot be Hercules because he's currently in training, which the theme song tells us. And we also know that Hercules' constellation is kneeling based on our discussion of it in prior episodes.

Jordan: So, yeah, this generic narrator starts trying to start going, and very quickly we see that the muses are not having it. We learn that the narrator's name is Bob and that the muses are going to be the ones that will be running this show.

Kit: And I am in I already was excited by the theme song, but the muses just being like, what's your name? And he's like, bob. And they're like, okay, Bob no, we got this. And I was like, yes. Muses forever.

Jordan: It was very meta. Loved the way they kicked out Bob, reeled us right in. Perhaps the exact opposite of Gene Roddenberry's Andromeda.

Kit: Right.

Jordan: Scene opens. We find out that it is internship week for Hercules teen Hercules and his classmates. We find out, he has two best friends, Icarus and Cassandra, and they're all assigned jobs with Hercules being super excited to be working at gyro world. And we, the audience are also like, oh, this is very appropriate. But it is played for a laugh, as it is not, h e r o, Hero, as in heroic deeds, but a, gyro G y r o. Fast food restaurant. Hercules is behind the counter. His boss is nice, but there seem to be just so many rules.

Kit: So many rules. And the rules seem totally useless. They're like, lift with your legs, wear your oven mitts.

Jordan: Yeah, Herc doesn't seem to really love it. And then when his classmate Adonis shows up and heckles him and uses the pun I've lambasted, you get it? Cause of lambs. Hercules just straight up rage quits.

Kit: Which, I mean, at least the temper is accurate.

Jordan: Yep, they got that part right from the original myth. Then we see Hercules walking around the mall,

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Jordan: you know, the agora, wondering if he made a mistake and what Zeus would do if Zeus was in his position. And at that moment, a Zeus statue comes to life and says, Hercules you did the right thing. I would have never had that job.

Kit: I believe Zeus was like, you're darn tootin' I wouldn't take that kind of job. So, yeah.

Jordan: Anyways, Zeus holds a council of the gods to discuss what job Hercules should have. While Hera simply suggests maybe Hercules should just keep his job. Zeus instead gets Herc an internship with Apollo, the god of the sun, among other things. And Hades decides this spat of nepotism is just the right time to embarrass Zeus and get him kicked off his throne. So Hades sends Pain and Panic, his minions, to steal the sun from Hercules on his very first day interning for Apollo.

Kit: Pain and Panic, they ride in on harpies. The harpies look amazing. I, you know, I'm just like, okay, yeah.

Jordan: And eventually, Panic and Pain do steal the sun. And Hercules wipes out on Apollo's chariot. Turns out he is totally underqualified for this job. Couldn't even make it through one shift without losing the sun. And we close the scene seeing our villain Hades in the underworld getting a tan with the captured sun.

Kit: We get a break, you know, where a commercial would have been. Um, and we come back in with the muses, but Bob starts talking. Remember, Bob's the narrator. And the muses are like, excuse me, Bob, and I quote, "my girl is waxing tragic." And amazing. And then we get a blues song from the muses about the hill people attacking the mall or the agora in this new perpetual darkness.

Jordan: Yes, the sun is captured in Hades, and for some reason, the hill people are scottish, which, well, it's a choice, certainly.

Kit: It is definitely a choice. So the sun is gone, the hill people are attacking, and Zeus

is, you know, um, he's getting into some hot water here. And so Hades comes up to Olympus and starts pushing for a vote to overthrow Zeus pointing out, you know, this guy gets his son a job. The sun is missing. Where is the sun? We don't even know. And the, the voting commences.

Jordan: This vote of no confidence that Olympus has in the Hercules animated series, it's like British parliament. Incredible. Would have been an amazing addition to the original Greek myths. I really wish any god could come up and just vote of no confidence and try to vote out Zeus. Would have been

Kit: amazing.

Jordan: Much more interesting tales. So, yes, actually, this works out not at all how you would expect if you're paying attention to the mythology. But shockingly, Hera votes for Zeus reminding that in Disney's canon Hera and Zeus went to therapy. And perhaps if they've explored our podcast, extended canon therapist lo.

Kit: So, we're getting the votes rolling in. And, at this point, Hercules is like, I, you know, this, I feel a little responsible. And you're like, yeah, you should. You're 100% responsible for losing the sun. Oh, maybe Hades and Pain and Panic have something, but still. So Hercules decides, um, he's going to go to the underworld to figure out what's going on here. Um, his friend Icarus, who is indeed that Icarus, decides to go with him, and they bring the whole Gyro World set up down to the underworld. We don't know how they get down there. So that's. Don't worry about it.

Jordan: Don't think about it too hard.

Kit: Right. But then they get the minions, I mean, basically drunk on fig smoothies. And the minions, of course, spill the entire plan. They say, you know, we're gonna vote to overthrow Zeus, Hades planned up this whole thing, and Hercules is like, I cannot let that happen, you know, I can't. So Hercules in a, in a real twist here, uses each of the rules that we heard from his boss at Gyro World. He lifts the sun with his legs, wearing his oven mitts, gets the sun back into the sky just in time to prevent Apollo from casting the tie breaking vote to instate Hades as ruler of Olympus. At this juncture, with the sun back in the sky, a, comically small Hercules sits in the hand of a really large Zeus. I don't, I don't understand the proportions of people and gods in this show. And Zeus breaks his lightning bolt to be used in case of insurgency. Very good. And blasts Hades back to the underworld. Then the narrator takes us out, and the cast ends with the tagline of Gyro World, which is, make

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Kit: mine mutton.

Jordan: Make mine mutton.

Kit: Yep.

Jordan: There it is. Thank you. That was a great summary of the third act and that pretty much the whole pilot. So what do you think about this one, Kit?

Reactions

Kit: So I loved that they didn't skimp on the music. I love that the muses had a big role. I love bringing in Cassandra. There is, like a point where, you know, um, she's got some, like, funny little bits related to seeing the future and, like, speaking ominous things. That's fun. Not sure I'm a big fan of Icarus. I got questions about Icarus. Um, and I will say the animation is tough. It's not, not up to the release, the film release. But, yeah, I liked it. Um, in looking through the sort of list of episodes, it seems like they get really deep into Greek myth. Right. There's episodes featuring Circe and Typhon and, um, Hippolyta. And there's lots of sort of, yeah, they kind of get deep into the lore. So I think it sounded pretty promising. Enjoyed it more than I thought I would. But, how about you? What did you think about it?

Jordan: Better than I thought it would be. And I grew up watching these Disney spin off shows like Aladdin the show, and Little Mermaid, the show. Uh, Hercules is one I never caught. And, it was better than all the rest of them. I laughed a lot. Cassandra, like you said, her bits about predicting the future, she's very, laconic and droll. Thought she was a great character. Icarus character you were a little bit, um, skeptical of is described as a free spirit in the Wikipedia. That's accurate. Maybe he's a grower. He'll grow on us with more episodes. But, yeah, this, I thought was really fun. As you said, the animation wasn't up to the standards of the video release. But besides that, the writing was quick. Kind of had some of that like animaniac zing, some jokes for the parents to it.

Kit: And we did, it should be, truth be told, we did watch the Aladdin crossover because we, you know, you just had to, you see it and you're like, what's Aladdin doing here? And that was also pretty enjoyable. Nice, interesting seeing Jafar and Hades get to sort of like collab. And yeah, so definitely I feel like if I had seen this as like, when it came out, I would have been like, obsessed with this show. So I'm glad it exists. I'll also offer up, BoP's reaction. So I'll start off again saying that when I initially said to BoP, would

you like to watch this with us? Because we actually got to watch it in person together, BoP was like, no. And then BoP kind of like, you know, he wandered into the living room while it was on, settled in. And yeah, I think, you know, the first thing was, wow, this is better than I thought I went with going to be. Ultimately, BoP was a little more critical because he really, really wanted this episode and this show just to be like a slice of life. Like, didn't want any of the gods involved. Just wanted to like, see Hercules' life as a teen. I'm not sure like, anybody wants that, but BoP did and, yeah, so better, again, this sort of idea better than you expected. I think that's sort of like a good summary of it. I don't really have any notes. Um, I didn't really have anything that I was like, oh, I really want to retcon it. But are there any final thoughts that you have about the episode or the pilot?

Jordan: Well, the things that BoP didn't like were definitely some of the things I did, you know, the visit to the underworld or the gods. I really liked the extended universe and how silly I went with and the, disneyfied take on it. So, you know, one person's, junk is another person's treasure for sure. But I will agree with him that Teenager Hercules is a very good himbo protagonist. He is very likable, seems very insecure, clumsy. Yeah, it's a good age to hang out with Hercules as a misfit. And I understand why he would want to see more of that and less of just the, you know, extended universe mythology. Fan service.

Outro

Jordan: Thank you for joining us today for our asterism on the pilot episode of Hercules the animated series.

Kit: This has been Kit

Jordan: And Jordan.

Kit: Sisters. Lovers of stars and stories

Jordan: And we'll see you next time

Kit: On Starry Time. [music]

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