

Jack Is BACK

Written by {ga=mitch}

Friday, January 12 2007 7:00 PM -

Tomorrow is the dream day for all of us couch potatoes out there. Seahawks/Bears, Patriots/Chargers, the two hour season premiere of "24", and then the season premiere of "Rome" on HBO. Lock the doors, draw the drapes, bribe the wife, take the phone of the hook, and order in. In addition to "24" and "Rome" ... "Heroes", "Lost", "Jericho", "House", and "Studio 60 On The Sunset Strip" also kick back into gear this week. And Mitch is here to preview/update us on all of these series.



After several weeks of nothing to watch on TV other than sports, the networks are about to jump feet first back into the swing of things. While technically, the "good" shows started back up on Tuesday with the resumption of "House", things really start cooking this Sunday. And what a great day of television it will be! Seahawks vs Bears start it off (OK...maybe that one won't be that great, other than seeing if Rex Grossman pulls another meltdown...in which case it will be the NFL equivalent of watching a train wreck. Sickening, but you can't keep your eyes off from it), then things REALLY start getting good. Patriots vs Chargers, and then over to Fox for two hours of JACK as "24" kicks off its new season, followed at 10 PM on HBO by the return of the splendid historical soap opera/gore fest "Rome".

So where did we leave off, and were are we (maybe) going in regards to what I think are the best seven series on television (sorry to all you "Grey's Anatomy" fans...it's an alright series, but it's just never been anything close to "Must Tivo TV")

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24 (Fox, 8 PM Sunday night 2 hour premier, followed by another 2 hour show on Monday).

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This has been one of the best and most innovated shows since its inception, and it keeps getting better each year. What's also been great is that its popularity has grown as well, and it is now at near cult status.

No problem. I've been there from Day One, and there is plenty of room on the bandwagon. And Jack Bauer can pull it no matter how many millions are on it.

When we left off...Day Five ended with Jack once again saving the country from terrorists and President Weasel. And since no good deed goes unpunished, he ended up in a slow boat to China as his reward, captured due to his involvement in the shoot-em-up at the Chinese Embassy on Day Four.

Where we are going...Lot's of speculation on Day Six, but I'll stick mostly to what I know. Jack's been tortured in China for some time, but new president Wayne Palmer (David's brother) makes a trade for him so that Jack can sacrifice himself. Rumors are that the plotline will take up AFTER there have been numerous terrorist attacks on US soil, and Jack is, of course, the only man that can stop it.

New additions to the cast will be Peter MacNicol as the obligatory sleezy advisor to the president, who will surely die a nasty, deserved death at some point, Alexander Siddig (Dr. Bashir in "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine"), James Cromwell as Jack's estranged father, Chad Lowe as a White House political operative, Powers Boothe as the Vice President, and Rick Schroder as a CTU operative (who I get the feeling will have a life expectancy something near that of a red-shirted security guy beamed down with Kirk, Spock, and McCoy). At some point, appearances will be made by former regulars Roger Cross as Curtis, Paul McCrane as Graham, Gregory Itzin and Jean Smart as the Logans, Kim Raver as Audrey Rains, and William Devane as James Heller.

Still dead is half the cast from last year.

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Each week I'll be doing a column about the latest show, much in the same style of my columns last year for "The Sopranos". Look for recaps of the last hour (or two, in the case of Sunday and Monday), "expert" analysis, wild asssed guesses (to be ridiculed at length when I'm proven to be wrong), a life expectancy list of major and minor characters, and a Jack Bauer Body Count Tally.

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Heroes (NBC, Monday Nights)

When we left off...They saved the Cheerleader! And then Peter fell into a coma, after a dream in which HE was the one that blew up the world. Isaac met up with Hiro, Jessica put a bullet in D.L.'s shoulder, Mr. Bennett admitted the truth to Claire, but didn't realize that the Haitian has plans of his own (and can speak!), and doesn't wipe out Claire's memories. And Eden ends up with her brains splattered all over the wall when she confronts Sylar.

Where we are going...the new catch phrase is "are you on the list?", and it's obviously Mohinder's list of mutants. We still know that in one alternate future, a nuke goes off in New York. My early guess was that it was Ted, the radiation guy, but I'm now thinking, based on the dream, that it's Peter that duplicates Ted's power and can't seem to control it. Or else Sylar kills Ted and take his powers, and that only Claire can stop him as her regenerative powers will allow her to get near Sylar (or Peter, if that's the case) and live to tell about it.

There have been so many twists to this show that I have no idea what to really expect. That's been the joy of this series...the unexpected twists while still advancing the plot each week and letting you feel you're a little closer to the answers after every show (take a hint, "Lost" producers). I'm still unsure regarding who the "bad guys" really are. Jessica and Nathan come to mind in that regard, as their motives are still quite unclear. In any case, it should be a great second half of the season as the Heroes get together, and learn how to control their powers even more.

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Jericho (CBS, Wednesday Nights)

When we left off...Gray was voted out as mayor of Jericho, mostly based upon his handling of the situation with Jonah after the murder of Gracie. Jake, Eric, Hawkins, and the rest of the boys ward off an attack from mercenaries. The mystery of Hawkins grows deeper with cryptic messages from the home base, and just when Jake and Emily are about to do a big ol' lip lock, numerous refugees show up in Jericho, including Emily's fiancé.

Where we are going...Another show where I don't have a clue what's about to happen. The biggest plot device is, of course, Robert Hawkins. Is he a good spy, or a bad spy? It would appear right now that he's supposed to be a bad spy, but he doesn't want to be, based upon him trying to duck out of his responsibilities...something he was unable to do as the guys behind the computer terminal chillingly sent him a satellite image of himself and his son in their yard. Like "Heroes", and "Lost", I expect we'll slowly get more answers as to the origins of the nuclear attacks and more word from the outside world. That news will probably be supplied later by Jonah, who is in exile, but will probably make a re-appearance "just in time" to save them all once again.

Now if they can avoid the soap operas, it would be better. The "Heather-Jake-Emily" and "Mary-Eric-April" triangles are really pretty boring.

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House (Fox, Tuesday Nights)

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When we left off...House was still the biggest pain in the ass on the planet, and the most interesting lead character in television history...and my personal hero. He's also near a breaking point, and was going to take the deal asshole extraordinaire Detective Tritter was going to give him to check into rehab and retain his medical license with no jail time. Oops, too late...and it's off to trial for House.

Where we are going...The episode this week shows why this is such a great series. The writers simply refuse to allow House to change (every now and then we get a small peek into his pain and his humanity...just enough to keep us rooting for him). Just when you think he's finally been beaten; House checking himself into rehab and basically begging Tritter to drop the charges, we find out at the end that House has simply been manipulating everyone once again. And it worked, as Cuddy falsified records and committed perjury to say that she had switched drugs, and House had actually just stolen placebos from a dead man...when he hadn't. Plus he had someone smuggling him Vicodin while he was "rehabbing".

I don't expect Tritter to go completely away...but for now it's back to normal with the strange medical mysteries encountered each week just filling in the blanks of an excellent character study of curmudgeon.

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Lost (ABC, Wednesday Nights)

When we left off...we were still totally confused about this show. Jack was being forced to operate on Ben's cancerous back, but then uses the opportunity to cut his kidney and force the Others to let Kate and Sawyer go in exchange for him not letting Ben die. Meanwhile, back at the ranch, Ecko has been killed by the smoke monster, telling Locke that "you're all next".

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Where we are going? Insane trying to figure this crap out. Never has a show been so intriguing and so aggravating at the same time. From the previews, Kate and Sawyer get a boat to try to go back to "their" island, but it's not certain if they make it. My guess is that they do, and the rest of this year is spent trying to get Jack back out. We've learned a bit more about the Dharma Project over the first part of the season, but it's still completely muddy as to how they got there, and what they are doing. And we still haven't seen anything remotely resembling a follow-up regarding Desmond's ex-fiancé and her contact with the people at the Antarctic (?) base following the detection of the station blowing up at the end of the second season.

I'm not holding my breath in anticipation of it all being clear at the end of this year.

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Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip (NBC, Monday Nights)

When we left off...Most of you don't care, as you're probably not watching this. For the few that are, it would take too long to recap all the recent soap operas. The quick and dirty version is that Danny has professed his affection towards the pregnant Jordan and Matt and Harriet are closer to getting back together

Where we are going...This show continues to infuriate me, but I can't give up on it yet. Aaron Sorkin is still the best writer in television, and when he is on, the series is fantastic. Case in point; the two part episode with John Goodman as a local judge in some podunkville in Nevada dealing with Tom's arrest. Where it fails is that Sorkin can't write comedy to save his life, and the sketches they show from the Saturday Night Live-esque show are about as lame as...the current Saturday Night Live sketches.

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Rome (HBO, Sunday Nights)

When we left off...On the historical aspect of it, Caesar has been assassinated, Octavian is in hiding, Mark Antony is pissed, and Brutus is having second thoughts about his part in it all (a little too late). On the fictional side, Pullo is still reveling in his newfound celebrity after the nastiest gladiator scene ever filmed and his new life as a husband, while Vorenus just learned the truth about the child he thought was his grandson; it was really the child of his wife Niobe, bore while she thought Vorenus to be dead. He wasn't, but she is now as she threw herself out the window when she knew that Vorenus had discovered the truth.

Where we are going...I'm really glad to have this show back for a final season, although like it's sister-piece "Deadwood", that will be tempered with the depressing thought that it will also be its last season. Like "Deadwood", this is a series for those with long attention spans, good memories, and a lot of patience, as it takes it's time to tell complicated stories with interweaving plot lines. And it doesn't shy away from the violence and depravity that existed at the fall of the Roman Empire.

For this second and last season, look for it to view the events of the period once again through the eyes of the Common Man, personified by Vorenus and Pullo. Although this time their roles are reversed. The stoic Vorenus' world has been shattered by the suicide of his wife, and it falls upon the now domesticated Pullo (who marries the slave girl he rescued) to help him. The true events depicted will probably be the destruction of Brutus and the conspirators from Octavian and Mark Antony, followed by Antony's involvement with Cleopatra, and his losing fight with Octavian (soon to be Augustus) for control of Rome.

And of course, we'll have the return of "The Sopranos" in April, for what now appears to be nine "final" episodes...the quotes are due to the potential of a movie later on. A new season of "Rescue Me" will also start up in the upcoming months, as will a new series on Showtime called "The Tudors", focusing on the young (and not fat) Henry VIII and the palace intrigue of the Anne Boleyn time frame. If it's half as good as the last new Showtime series, "Dexter", it will be well worth the it.

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Oh, and we also have reality shows picking back up. American Idol, The Apprentice, Armed & Famous, and Survivor Fiji. I'd try to tell you something about them, but you already know as much as you need to, and I am about completely over reality shows, and want them all to just go away.

But series television? It's in the best shape its ever been. Get the Tivo warmed up.