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DVDs: TV's Dallas Calls For A Do-Over

Posted July 17, 2008 | 05:40 PM (EST)



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"Jumping the shark" is pop culture slang forever associated with *Happy Days*. But no show jumped that shark more shockingly and with more unbridled disdain for its audience than *Dallas*, the primetime soap opera that revitalized a genre and remains one of the most successful TV shows of all time. Just out on DVD is *Dallas: The Complete Ninth Season* (\$39.98; Warner Bros.). Forgive fans if they prefer to skip it, but they'd be missing the most memorable scene in

the show's history. Not everyone remembers who shot JR but we ALL know what the presumably dead Bobby Ewing (Patrick Duffy) was doing in Pam's shower at the very end of this season. After killing off Bobby, the show spent the entire year in the doldrums creatively. JR (Larry Hagman) always had the fun, but apparently straight-laced, do-gooder Bobby was essential to the storylines. After years of being #1 or #2, *Dallas* would end this dispiriting season at #6. But boy did they end it -- Bobby was lathering up in the shower because Bobby wasn't actually dead. As they explained in the first episode of season ten, Pam had dreamt the whole thing and fans had wasted the entire season nine watching events that never really happened. The show rebooted with Bobby firmly back in place and continued for five more years. But the bottom dropped out of the ratings: fans were already annoyed at the weak ninth season. Being told they'd *really* wasted their time and none of what happened actually happened was just too much, even for the forgiving fans of soaps who happily accept evil twins and secret pregnancies and miraculous reversible comas with aplomb. The show immediately fell from #6 to #11 and then #22, #29 and then out of the Top 30. Some might argue the show would never have lasted that long if they hadn't realized their mistake in killing Bobby and started all over again. But it poisoned the memory of the show for fans. A feature film version starring John Travolta as JR makes perfect sense. But maybe it's taking so long to get off the ground because of the lingering ill-will from one episode some 20 years ago that turned the show into a joke. And you can be darn certain if the movie's made that they won't show

Bobby Ewing in the shower: people would never stop laughing.

Also out this week: Jason Statham's *The Bank Job* (\$29.95; LionsGate), an enjoyable, unpretentious B movie; Holly Hunter's Emmy nominated turn as the exceptionally flawed hero of *Saving Grace Season One* (\$49.98; Fox); a Blu-Ray edition of the Keanu Reeves/Patrick Swayze cult favorite *Point Break* (\$39.98; Fox); the well-reviewed story of a boy caught up in Pele fever while his folks have disappeared in *The Year My Parents Went On Vacation* (\$26.98; City Lights); the cat-like Burt Reynolds (how many lives does he have, actually?) and his sitcom fluff *Evening Shade Season One* (\$39.99; Paramount); Jacques Tati's minor but still amusing *Traffic* (\$39.95; Criterion); *Swamp Thing: The Series Volume Two* (\$34.99; Shout), which has its fans though I can't help missing Adrienne Barbeau; Martin Lawrence and Raven-Symone's mild, self-explanatory *College Road Trip* (\$29.99; Disney) whose only pleasure is the possibility that parents will be looking for this and rent the raunchy, hilarious *Road Trip* instead; an ok biopic of the nattily dressed *Beau Brummell: This Charming Man* (\$24.99; Acorn); *A Throw Of Dice* (\$29.95; Kino), a 1929 silent film spectacle set in India that is great fun; *Stargate Atlantis Season Four* (\$49.98; MGM), in which -- unthinkable -- our heroes team up with the Wraiths to fend off the even more evil Replicators; the bare-bones but eye-opening documentary *Our Spirits Don't Speak English: Indian Boarding School* (\$29.95; Rich-Heape); *Tony N' Tina's Wedding* (\$24.95; Emerging Pictures), which fails to capitalize on the name value of the long-running Off Broadway hit it's based on; *Reno 911 Fifth Season* (\$39.98; Paramount), but this series long ago went from dumb/funny to just plain dumb; the Wong Kar Wai blessed 1993 martial arts spoof *Eagle Shooting Heroes* (\$24.95; Kino) and finally I'm waiting anxiously for new seasons of classic shows like *Hill Street Blues*, *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, *St. Elsewhere* and *I'll Fly Away* (to name a few) but an insta-flop like *Birds of Prey: The Complete Series* (\$39.98; Warner Bros.) is out in a well-packaged set? Oh the power of fan boys and a cast of hot women that know something about a well-packaged set.

So tell me, what's your most memorable TV jump-the-shark moment? I've been pretty distressed by the Friday Night Lights murder subplot and the revival (literally) of Buffy for two more season of Buffy The Vampire Slayer when the show was clearly over. What about you?

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Anyone remember this chestnut?
The already grating Mork and Mindy adding Jonathan Winters to the cast ,as the happy couple's infant son!(!?)

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Love the idea of a "Dallas" feature film, but please, enough John Travolta already. Cast Daniel Day-Lewis as J.R., tell him to pull out all the stops, and then get out of the way.

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"charmed" will repackage this fall with interactive premium edition content and theme packaging as a magical tome. october release. this will set the mark perhaps until the complete "smallville" around a year from now. interactive chat and board software will define premium editions if "charmed" does well for the holidays.

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Yep, some shows already out on DVD -- liked Charmed and The Man From U.N.C.L.E. -- get a deluxe re-packaging while some of my favorites still molder in studio vaults. But glad to hear it for fans of the show. Personally, I always preferred Buffy and really checked out when Shannen Doherty did.

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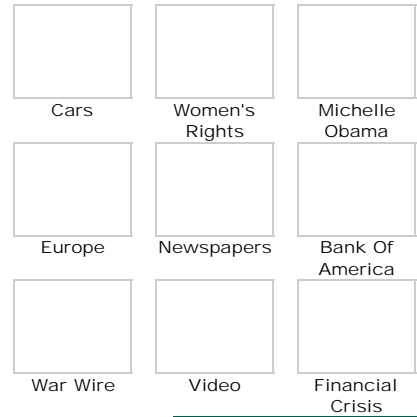
they're not holding out on much that's at all familiar any more- except some nominal failures that developed followings for their few episodes. "lookwell"[1] and "sledge hammer" are in that group. have you run across "titans", the rare spelling flop? or perhaps "fresno", the barry kemp[2] spoof of "dynasty" wherein the wonderful- and now gravely ill- terri garr burned down the set as spoiled daughter "talon"? [1] "lookwell", trying to come out of crime-fighting retirement, to desk officer at station: "of course you've never heard of me! my records were erased! i was given a new identity! like bat masterson!" desk officer: "who's bat masterson?" lookwell: "exactly!" [2] after the reagan landslide in 1980, people were straggling out of the hills in bell-bottoms and sideburns to surrender like bypassed japanese soldiers from ww ii. no one knew anybody who voted for the guy and he took about 49 states!?!thriftstore racks were full of designer bellbottoms: normandy rose, jordache, gloria vanderbilt... barry kemp struck back with "newhart", "taxi", and a remake of the visionary proto-reality sixties lightningbolt "love american style". he became our spiritual leader.

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