



JWR 4.32

The Golden Age of Television

A lot of people (old people, mostly) tend to think the Golden Age of Television was a ten-year period right through the 1950's. The truth is, the Golden Age took place from the 2007-08 to the 2008-09 television seasons.

The Golden Age is over; there is no doubt about that. Frankly, I'm very disillusioned with TV and I think this is why I no longer have cable and why I've been reading more. But, to be fair, I still watch plenty of shows—I just don't get as attached to many of them because I've been hurt...hurt bad.

I've been told I'm pretty picky. I'm reluctant to rate a product five-stars (or one-star) whereas it seems most people can only love or hate something. It's almost like people can't be objective and enjoy certain aspects, be at odds with others, and ultimately decide that something is average or slightly below/above average; i.e., give it a two through four star rating. I mention the review thing so I could tell you a few months ago I received an invitation to join the Amazon Vine Program, whereby I can order up to two items from their list of available stuff per month and, in exchange for getting it for free, I write reviews on them. So, I've been ordering books because that's what they mostly offer, all the other cool stuff is already gone by the time I try to order them, and because I dig reading.

Of the seven books I read and reviewed so far one got 2 stars, two got 3 stars, three got 4 stars, and only one got 5 stars (I kind of think I went a little too easy on it now).

Obviously we each think we're right and when others' opinions do not match our own, it can be a source of conflict. I've been trying for a long time to remember to respect what others believe, as hard as it is with things like TV shows, movies and books, to say nothing for the real important things like music and food. The reason it's hard is because most people are fucking stupid.

And because most people are fucking stupid, the Golden Age of Televisions only lasted two TV seasons (the first season was shortened due to a writers' strike). I watched

TV blogs for weeks with increasing anger in April and May of 2009 as, one by one, more and more of the shows I watched were cancelled. It's no joke when I tell you that almost fifty percent of the shows I watched on the major five networks were cancelled throughout the 2008-09 season, most right at the end. Granted I watched way too much TV back then, and a few of those shows I didn't really care for, but there were three shows, each on a different network, that I still, to this day, have very bitter feelings about being cancelled.



Reaper is the simple tale of a young man whose soul was sold to the devil by his parents. On his 21st birthday, Sam (Bret Harrison) receives a visit from the devil (Ray Wise) who tells him that he has to find escaped souls, capture them with a vessel provided by the devil, and return them to hell via a portal at the local DMV.

Problem is, Sam is a slacker, as are his friends, and he's not really into doing what the devil orders him to do. Also, the devil delights in screwing with Sam by giving him pathetic vessels (Dirt Devil, snow globe, 8-track tape) with which to capture the escaped souls and only giving Sam half the story behind the soul of interest.

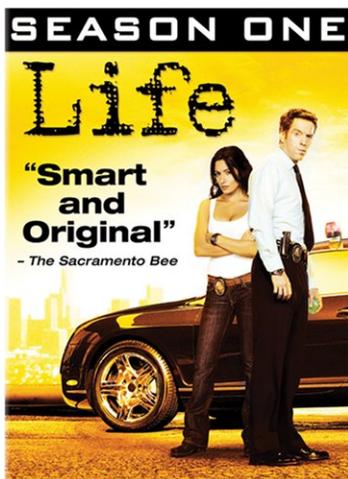
Most of the soul-trapping episodes were pretty formulaic: Sam would get the vessel and the mission from the devil; he'd go out and try to capture the soul only to fail miserably and barely escape; he'd lick his wounds over a few pints of beer with his friends and come up with a better plan; he'd successfully capture the soul and deliver it to the portal.

Reaper slowly began developing a mythology that gave it a storylines that arced throughout the series (something I seem to really be drawn to in TV shows). It was not the Greatest Show Ever, but it was absolutely entertaining, thanks in no small part to Sam's best friend Sock (Tyler Labine) and a few other great characters like the devil.

Reaper's first season was 18 episodes, the second was thirteen. It aired on the CW and its cancellation was a real surprise since its ratings were pretty steady, on par or even better than some other CW shows. Perhaps it cost too much to produce given its

ratings, or perhaps the CW wanted different programming that fit better with their key demographic of viewers.

I miss *Reaper*, although both season's DVDs sit on my shelf. There was a scene in an episode late in the second season where the whole gang was hanging out at the bar that I felt had had a great sense of closure. I thought that would have been a better way to end the series than how they chose, but the way they ended the showed was fine, not on a big cliffhanger or anything.



A lot of times it seems like all scripted TV has to offer are cop shows, lawyer shows and doctor shows. *Life* was certainly a cop show, but like any good series about something as frequently revisited as law enforcement, it had a hook.

Detective Charlie Crews (Damien Lewis) has just been released from prison after serving twelve years for triple murder, a crime he actually did not commit. Upon his release, he won a \$50 million settlement against the city of LA and got his job back (at his request). He follows Zen with the help of meditation tapes, loves fresh fruit and is determined to find out who set him up.

His new partner Dani Reese (Sarah Shahi), and just about every other cop, hates him as they believe he's guilty. She's a former undercover who is a recovering drug addict, and it seems her father, a retired cop, had something to do with Crews getting sent to jail.

One of my favorite actors, Garret Dillahunt, showed up in three episodes as a very bad Russian mobster.

Life's first season was cut short to eleven episodes due to the writer's strike and although it received a 21-episode second season order, ratings dropped pretty significantly and it was cancelled after the end of the second season. I hoped TNT or one of the other cable stations would pick it up (like what happened with *Southland*, another NBC cop show cancelled in 2009 that is now going into its fourth season), but that did not happen.

There was so much potential for this show and I think if it had gone on a little longer, it may have become my favorite cop show (a title held by *The Shield*). I still get heartache when I think about it.

I actually began watching *Life* very late in its first season when a couple friends recommended it. I did catch up on what I missed through Netflix and now the first season is on my shelf, with the second to follow soon. Now *Life* was not the Greatest Show Ever, but it was excellent.

I'm deeply disappointed that *Life* was cancelled, but I really like the final episode. For me, I really got a strong sense of closure by the ending even though it didn't resolve any major story lines as the conspiracy went. But I have no doubts about Crews' character. I still get shivers when I think about the last shot of Crews just standing there and all the things that he went through in those last few episodes and I knew that he would continue to doggedly pursue the truth and would watch out for his partner and his friends and nothing would get in his way, much like a Terminator.



Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles. This is the one that sets me into a fit of rage when I think about it. Listen, if you're not familiar with the *Terminator* universe, then I don't have the inclination to explain all that to you, but the show takes place between *T2* and *T3*. John and Sarah Connor are trying to live a low-key life but a Terminator picks up on their trail. Just as it is about to terminate John, a hot unknown Terminator model saves his life and is all like, "Come with me if you want to live."

The three of them travel forward in time a few years to truly elude the bad Terminator...or do they?

I loved the casting: Lena Headey is gorgeous as Sarah Connor, and Summer Glau makes Lena look like a pile of puke as the mysterious Terminator. Brian Austin Green joined the cast during the first season as John's uncle and was actually a bad ass. No fake! Garret Dillahunt also guest starred in four first season episodes and joined the cast for the second season.

I watched every episode when they were aired (first on Mondays, and then it was moved to Fridays during the second season) and I bought the DVD sets when it was announced the show had been cancelled. I let them sit for quite a while because I was so bitter about it. When I finally popped in my DVDs and watched the series, I was actually surprised. I remembered the show being good, but not as good as what I was watching. There was not a bad episode in the bunch, and the majority of them were fantastic.

I know they shot an ending to the series that was supposed to give it a sort of closure, but it was really a cliff hanger, setting up the next season...which looked like it had so much potential.

The real bitch of it all is that *Terminator: TSSC* may very well have been the Greatest Show Ever.

Listing of TV Series I Own

Aqua Teen Hunger Force

Justified

Arrested Development

Life

Babylon 5

Millennium

Band of Brothers

Mr. Bean

The Boondocks

The Office

Bullshit (AKA: Penn & Teller's Bullshit)

The Prisoner (1968)

Chappelle's Show

The Shield

Community

The Simpsons

Dead Like Me

Spaced

Farscape

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine

Family Guy

Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles

Firefly

The Unusuals

It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia

Wonderfalls

-John