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VOL. 2 ISSUE 1
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20

**BOLD &
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← **6** TALENTS
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They Must Be Giants!

IN LOVE

From 'Party' girl to 'Ghost Whisperer,'
JENNIFER LOVE HEWITT shines
in a role that's out of this world



THE
new
GIANTS

They are the forces behind television's newest crop of hits, the producers who are helping set the standard for what we ultimately see on the small screen. Spanning almost every genre, they labor most often unseen, stretching TV's boundaries into daring new places or putting new twists on old favorites. These are the creative minds shaping broadcast television.

BY JIM COLUCCI & BETH FELDMAN

Comedy | Daytime | Reality | Drama

the GIANTS
REALITY

MARK
BURNETT

Photo by Monty Brinton

How one man created a TV and pop culture phenomenon

As a former member of the Parachute Regiment in the armed forces of his native Britain, *Survivor* creator and executive producer Mark Burnett is no stranger to danger. Almost two decades after earning medals for his service in campaigns in Northern Ireland and the Falkland Islands, Burnett brought a paratrooper's penchant for peril to prime time when he adapted a modestly popular Swedish game show called *Expedition: Robinson* into American TV's first reality megahit.

From its first bug-eating, torch-snuffing moments in January 2000, *Survivor* was more than just a contest of strength and agility; it became a phenomenon that immediately popularized a whole new genre—"reality TV"—in the 50-plus-year-old TV landscape.

After bringing an increasingly fragmented America together in front of the television for its tense first-season live finale, Burnett's brainchild began season two on Thursday nights. It continued its reign as "must-see TV"—to borrow a phrase from the network whose once-popular fare *Survivor* was now beating in the ratings.

Even its creator was surprised. "I had thought that *Survivor* would create great water cooler talk, much like [ABC's 1990-91 drama series] *Twin Peaks* had done," Burnett remembers. "I thought it would be a cult hit—but that it would not be that high in the ratings. We ended up getting both."

THE STATS

TV SHOW:
Survivor

SEASONS: 13

CONCEPT:
Survival. Average Americans are placed in the wild terrain of different, exotic locations where they create their own world, compete in challenges and vote each other out to claim the title of Sole Survivor and the \$1 million prize.

HIGHEST NUMBER OF VIEWERS:
52 million

AWARDS:
Two Emmys



"I thought it would be a cult hit, but that it would not be that high in the ratings," says *Survivor* creator Mark Burnett. Season 13's *Survivor: Cook Islands* featured Rarotonga tribemates Nathan Gonzalez and Adam Gentry.



Physical and emotional danger—*Survivor: Cook Islands*' Jonathan Penner and Parvati Shallow prove the reality show isn't all fun and games.

Making His Mark

Now in its 13th semiannual season on CBS, *Survivor* has changed the look of much of what we now see on TV, with production values such as high-quality editing and camera work that have raised the bar for all other series. "It is shot beautifully, with all the care and attention of a major motion picture," Burnett says proudly.

But the true legacy is the effect the show—and Burnett—have had on American pop culture. The reality genre spawned by the *Survivor* juggernaut has proved true Andy Warhol's earlier tongue-in-cheek prediction that we all have 15 minutes of fame. *Survivor* alone has made stars not just out of its host, Jeff Probst, but also out of such ordinary folks as Colby Donaldson and Elisabeth Hasselbeck, who now co-hosts *The View*.

And our common vocabulary will never be the same. Across the USA, even a nonviewer can't help but know what it means to be "voted off the island," now that "the tribe has spoken."

A Magic Ingredient?

As *Survivor* invented many of the mainstays we now find in other reality shows (e.g., the weekly competitor elimination and the concepts of "immunity" and "alliances"), its competition became a test of cunning and guile, of mental as well as physical stamina—and Burnett thinks that's the key to its success.

"The most important dangerous feeling for the show is emotional danger," he explains. "There's definitely physical jeopardy to the show because there are dangerous snakes in the jungle. But then you overlay that with the raw, visceral emotion you feel as you play the game, knowing each week you may be sent home. The greater jeopardy is the feeling that you're not wanted, that you don't belong. If you look back in your life, the worst feeling is always that someone doesn't want you. That's a much more powerful feeling than the fear of being bitten by a snake."

In fact, a few years earlier, Burnett had already mined his own background as an outdoorsman to create physical feats for the competitors on his earlier series, *Eco-Challenge*. But, he notes, "I also learned about storytelling there." And so, he insists, when it comes down to the secret of his success in creating unscripted programming like *Survivor* and his subsequent hits, "It's simple, emotional storytelling. Are the characters compelling, and am I taken on a vicarious emotional journey?"

"There's no secret sauce here," Burnett adds.

So how is a poor *Survivor* supposed to wash down all those bugs?

the **GIANTS**
DRAMA

**ANTHONY
E. ZUIKER**

Photo by Robert Veets

Forensics and TV will never be the same

Ironically, one of TV's most popular franchises in history may owe its life to a flaw in its creator's vocabulary. When *CSI* mastermind Anthony E. Zuiker signed up for an elective in forensics at Las Vegas' Chaparral High School, he thought he would be making like Quincy, TV's then-popular medical examiner. Instead, Zuiker had inadvertently joined the forensic debate team, thus accidentally discovering a love of writing and speech.

During high school and college, Zuiker advanced through the national circuit of forensic debate, mostly writing his own material to perform at championship matches. When a friend, future *CSI* scribe Dustin Abraham, gained attention in Los Angeles while performing one of Zuiker's competition monologues about a mentally retarded man watching his wife give birth, a William Morris agent tracked down the story's author and offered Zuiker the chance to write for the silver screen, launching the one-time tram operator's new career in Hollywood.

The Genesis

A few years later, Zuiker again found unintended inspiration when his wife and high school sweetheart, Jennifer, urged him to sit with her to watch the Discovery Channel forensic science show *The New Detectives*. Zuiker obeyed and ended up reconnecting with his childhood love of forensics—forensic science, that is.

"Once I sat down and watched the show with her, I was hooked," he says. "At one point they pulled this long, blond hair follicle out of the driver's seat and explained that there was a tag cell attached, which means that the hair was yanked out in a struggle. And I said to myself, 'You can really realize all that just by one hair follicle?' From that point on, I was very intrigued by how forensic science could provide a whole different spin for a cop show."

Shortly thereafter, another of Zuiker's screenplays caught the attention of Jonathan Littman, and Zuiker

THE STATS

SHOW: *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*

SEASONS: 7

CONCEPT: Detectives from the Las Vegas Police Department's Crime Scene Investigation unit solve crimes using technical methods and scientific analysis.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF VIEWERS: 25 million

SPINOFFS: *CSI: Miami*; *CSI: NY*

GOING GLOBAL: *CSI* airs in more than 200 countries



CSI's William Petersen (Gil Grissom) and Jorja Fox (Sara Sidle) regularly show how the science of crime solving can be as dramatic and compelling as the actual crime.



"I was just creating what I thought would be cool for the viewer," says *CSI* creator Anthony E. Zuiker, who also serves as executive producer for *CSI: NY*, which stars Melina Kanakaredes and Gary Sinise.

pitched the Bruckheimer Television exec his concept of a show about forensic science detectives in his hometown. "I chose Las Vegas because I know it, and because I wanted the show to be about the graveyard shift," he explains. "When I researched actual CSIs there—in real life called Field Services—they were riding around at three in the morning, getting lobster bisque at Caesar's Palace for their lunch break and getting calls about missing hookers."

That first pitch presented to ABC also included the visual effects that have become a hallmark of the *CSI* franchise: those close-ups on bullet-firing, fluid-spattering and fiber-tweezing that give the series their visual edge. "We wanted to make sure we showed the minutiae of the science that was so compelling as to put people away, at such a point of view that you go, 'Wow!'"

Finding a Home

Zuiker, inexperienced in TV at the time, remembers that as the pair ultimately pitched the series to CBS President of Entertainment Nina Tassler, "I shook her hand, shut my eyes, and just said, 'The show is called *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*.' When I was done, I opened my eyes, fully expecting her to be gone. But she said, 'I love it. Start writing.'" In the resulting script, which he completed in just three days, the film buff paid homage to his influences, drawing upon the flashback and point-of-view-shifting techniques used in *Pulp Fiction* and *Run Lola Run*.

"I was just creating what I thought would be cool for the viewer," he says. "It was ignorance-is-bliss type thinking. Because the prevailing wisdom was that flashbacks and point-of-view versions are crutches in television—that they never work. Now *CSI* does them, and they're a staple of television. Going against all the things that are a recipe for success is what made the show a success."

As that success has grown to include two spinoffs, set in Miami and New York, Zuiker and his team are now spread across three *CSI* shows. Yet Zuiker is confident that there will be great shows for years to come. "We just have to stick with the timeless formula that was created in the pilot," he says. "That really big teaser that grabs you, the red herrings, and a great mystery with twists and turns, really championing your city—all with the Bruckheimer 'feature television' cinematic look and feel."

In the seven seasons since its debut, "*CSI* has definitely changed the face of television," Zuiker says. "It killed a lot of older shows—and TV can never go back and be any other way ever again."

the GIANTS
COMEDY

CHUCK
LORRE

Photo by Cliff Lippson

The man behind *Two and a Half Men*

He co-created television's current top-rated comedy, but *Two and a Half Men's* executive producer, Chuck Lorre, originally didn't even set out to be a writer. The New Yorker had come to Los Angeles to make it as a singer and songwriter, "a guitar version of Randy Newman," Lorre says. "I was going to die with a Stratocaster in my hands." Instead, he just may be, as Hollywood buzzes lately, saving the sitcom.

Although Lorre had found limited song-writing success, life as a journeyman musician in bar mitzvah bands and on cruise ships eventually became too unstable for a then-father of two in his mid-30s.

So when his day job—selling FM radios door to door—led him prophetically to offices of the DIC animation studios, Lorre switched from writing songs to writing stories about a certain wiseacre cat. His persistence in pitching the DIC executives led to script assignments for *Heathcliff*, where "my first writing credit for animation was an episode called 'An Officer and an Alleycat,' of which I was very proud. I got \$500, and I thought I'd died and gone to heaven," Lorre recalls. "But animation writing is nonunion, and so it's an unsupervised, Wild West world. It was really punishing work."

Ready for Prime Time

Seeking union health benefits for his kids, Lorre set his sights on prime time and landed his first big break on the writing staff of the hit ABC sitcom *Roseanne*. "Going into the show's third season, the whole writing staff had been fired, and no one wanted to be on *Roseanne*," he says. But, figuring that life on TV's No. 1 comedy would be better than "selling crap door to door on Ventura Boulevard," Lorre leaped in.

"Whatever else you might say about *Roseanne* and her eccentricities," he says, "she was really trying

THE STATS

SHOW:

Two and a Half Men

SEASONS:

4

CONCEPT:

Charlie Sheen plays Charlie Harper, a wealthy yet lazy bachelor surrounded by women, money and a Malibu beach house. But things get shaken up when Charlie's brother, Alan, and his son move in.

CREATOR:

Dharma & Greg (1997-2002), *Cybill* (1995-1998), *Grace Under Fire* (1993-1998)

MUSICIAN:

Wrote Debbie Harry's 1986 solo hit, "French Kissin' in the USA," and theme song for the cartoon series *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*



Charlie Sheen stars on Chuck Lorre's most recent—and biggest—comedic hit, *Two and a Half Men*.



TV brothers Alan (Jon Cryer) and Charlie (Charlie Sheen) do their best to raise their "half man," Jake (Angus T. Jones).

to burn out all of the show's glibness and mediocrity and tell a real story. It was a defining part of my career, because I learned that you can do an ensemble half-hour, four-camera comedy and make it about something."

The Hitmaker

After a failed sitcom called *Franny's Turn*, Lorre toured Illinois, researching the complicated lives of single mothers and was inspired, both by the women's "heroism," as he words it, and by the sitcom format's opportunity to portray that. His next project, ABC's *Grace Under Fire*, became his first hit.

In his next two shows, CBS' *Cybill* and ABC's *Dharma & Greg*, Lorre then began to tinker with the half-hour format, busting some scenes out of the proscenium, multicamera stages he was starting to find too confining. Instead, he wrote quicker, more movie-like moments; *Cybill's* pilot opened with a very expensive traffic jam, filmed on a not-yet-completed stretch of freeway.

"Ultimately," he says, "I learned that my feelings about the sitcom genre shouldn't get in the way of accepting the genre for what it is: a great vehicle to explore the small elements in our lives. Not the big hijinks and great big romps, not events, but relationships and character."

Inspired by "the great glory and power of comedy on a small scale," Lorre brought a renewed appreciation for the sitcom to *Two and a Half Men*. "The series is about Charlie and Alan and Jake, and how these three men are affecting each other's lives. And that can happen on the couch ... it really can."

As other networks try and fail to launch any kind of successful comedy—never mind the traditional, multicamera kind some TV critics pompously deride as outdated—*Men*, like its youngest star, just keeps growing. Lorre credits the show's currently unparalleled success to many factors—most notably a staff of a half-dozen writers whom he calls "experienced and brilliant"—but thinks that the future remains bright for other comedies on network television.

"We can't be an anomaly," he says. "This is probably the same conversation that people were having 23 years ago, just before *The Cosby Show* came along. I see TV today as a tremendous opportunity. The fact that everybody's saying the sitcom is dead—well, that only invigorates me. Run and develop rich, wonderful comedies about characters and relationships and families of all kinds." Because, as Lorre has learned, that's the type of sweet music TV audiences long to hear.

GIANTS
the

DRAMA

DON
BELLISARIO

Photo by Cliff Lipson

Magnum's man is luring loyal and royal fans

For every hit like *Jericho* or *Heroes*—shows whose storylines and mysteries unfold over the course of an entire season—there is a *Vanished*, or a *Kidnapped*. Never heard of them? That's because they themselves vanished soon after debuting in the fall of 2006—canceled by Fox and NBC, respectively, because you were out at dinner one fall night. Well, you and millions of other people. That's the trouble with serialized shows: They require a big time commitment on the part of their fans. Miss an episode and you're literally *Lost*.

As the creator of the CBS hit *NCIS*, Don Bellisario isn't necessarily consciously bucking the current serialized fad. Each episode of his show just happens to have a fulfilling beginning, middle and end. And so rather than frustrate, *NCIS* satisfies. A prolific TV impresario, Bellisario concentrates on the fundamentals of storytelling and character, and he entertains his audience without leaving viewers dangling, disappointed or spending three months confusedly wondering just what the heck is down that darned hatch.

The Basics

Born in coal-mining country in Pennsylvania, Bellisario completed a tour in the U.S. Marines and a decade-plus-long career in advertising before getting his start in television at the age of 41. His first big break came when he mined his own military background to write an episode of the 1976–78 NBC drama *Baa Baa Black Sheep*. Only two years later, in 1980, his long-running detective series, *Magnum, P.I.*, for CBS turned Tom Selleck into a star.

After generating numerous other 1980s hits like *Quantum Leap* and CBS' *Airwolf*, in 1995 Bellisario gave NBC his latest creation, a little show about the

THE STATS

SHOW: *NCIS*

SEASONS: 4

CONCEPT: From murder and espionage to terrorism and stolen submarines, special agents travel the globe to investigate crimes with Navy or Marine Corps ties.

CREATOR: *JAG* (1995-2005), *Magnum, P.I.* (1980-1988), *Quantum Leap* (1989-1993), *Airwolf* (1984-1985)

ACTOR: Played a desk clerk at the Low Surf Hotel in one episode of *Magnum, P.I.*

THE REAL DEAL: Completed a tour in the U.S. Marines before beginning a career in advertising and TV.



"I get very positive feedback from the U.S. military," says Don Bellisario, creator of *NCIS*. The drama stars Michael Weatherly, Mark Harmon and Cote de Pablo.



Lauren Holly recently joined Sean Murray and Harmon on the military crime drama.

workings of the office of a judge advocate general—*JAG*. "I'm a little different from most people who create shows," Bellisario explains. "For me, it always comes down to the relationship with the head guy. When Brandon Tartikoff was at NBC, I pitched him *Quantum Leap*. He said, 'Literally, I don't understand it—and if anyone else pitched this, I'd say get out of here. But you, go make it.'" But with Tartikoff gone from NBC, no one was there to understand or appreciate *JAG*.

"At the end of the first season, we didn't even know we were being canceled by NBC. But then [CBS President] Les Moonves called and said to me, just like Brandon had, 'What's the show you want to make?'" Bellisario remembers. "I told Les the kind of show, and he said go make it, and that was the end of that."

It's About Relationships

After moving to CBS, *JAG* went on to become not only the extremely rare show to flourish after changing networks but also, ultimately running 10 seasons, one of the longest-running drama series in television history.

In 2003, Bellisario created a second show for the network, *NCIS*, which some fans initially thought of as a *JAG* spinoff—erroneously, as Bellisario emphasizes. "*NCIS* is a very different show," he explains. "It's more of an ensemble than *JAG* was. It has a stronger emphasis on relationships among its characters and has a lot more humor. All of my shows have elements of humor, but I really pushed it in this one."

It is this creative new take on the classic crime drama that makes *NCIS* so satisfying. In a TV landscape where a certain serialized Fox show takes months to show us its hero living out a single day—without bathroom breaks, no less—self-contained *NCIS* is a funny, character-based, military crime drama. In fact, it's almost not a military crime drama at all. It's more like a drama with a military setting where a crime happens to take place. And as such, it's working, attracting both big ratings and some impressively high-profile fans.

"I get very positive feedback from the U.S. military," says Bellisario, who as of 2007 has had one or more prime-time shows on the air continuously for the past 27 years. "And recently I got feedback from their British counterparts as well. They said, 'Let's just put it this way: God help anyone who doesn't record *NCIS* when a certain prince is out.' I don't know which prince they were referring to—it could be anyone from the Queen's husband, Prince Philip, right down to William or Harry. But of course, I loved hearing that."