

Axed television shows find new life on disc sets



Firefly, a Western Sci-fi show finds a home in DVD land.

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unfinished season led to a happy ending.

The program, about a hardscrabble space crew 500 years in the future, lost its bid for survival on the U.S. Fox broadcast network's fall 2002 schedule after 11 episodes, with three more finished but unaired. Whedon and crew wanted their work on those episodes shown somewhere, anywhere — and fans wanted

that, too.

But Whedon resisted the idea of burning off those installments as summer filler.

"Fox still owned the property and could maybe fill a summer slot or something," Whedon said. "But then it became an advantage. If they never aired these, then we could put them on the DVD as something that made it more exciting."

There were three unaired

episodes — one about a madman bounty hunter named Jubal Early (played by Richard Brooks) another about a dead body who returns to life and a third involving the crew's heist of an antique laser-gun. The four-disc set including all 14 episodes was released in stores last month.

Whedon currently is writing the script for Universal Pictures to turn the "Firefly" story line into a feature film. Successful sales of the DVD could help spur that project.

But overall, summer exposure is better than nothing. In some cases, it can even rejuvenate a program teetering on cancellation.

"Seinfeld" — originally titled "The Seinfeld Chronicles" — was a low-rated pilot in summer 1989. NBC held onto the remaining four installments for another year before dumping them in the summer. But — surprise! — they became hits and the series evolved into one of the most successful sitcoms in history.

ABC is hoping for similar luck with "Karen Sisco," its comedic-thriller starring

Carla Gugino as a sexy federal marshal. The show was placed on hiatus recently with three episodes still unaired.

The network plans to air those shows in March in a new time slot, and its producers supported the idea of banking the unseen installments until then; it was better than letting the show continue to languish.

"We were going to be off the air sooner or later and what we are presented with now is a shot at having a life, and it was pretty obvious from the (debut) numbers that that wasn't going to happen," said John Landgraf, an executive producer of "Karen Sisco." "But no one is saying, 'Gee, we like the show and just hope they get it right.' There's pretty much a sense that there's a great show here."

Even when a show is canceled outright, the unaired episodes are rarely destroyed. In some rare cases, that dead TV show can become valuable again years later.

The Trio cable channel has had success showcasing

these kinds of shows on its "Brilliant But Canceled" series, which highlights well-regarded programs that never found a major audience, like the recent "Andy Richter Controls the Universe" and the 1970s occult series "Kolchak: The Night Stalker."

But cult-fan demand isn't always enough to loosen a network or studio's grip.

ABC's "Miracles" starred Skeet Ulrich as a priest who investigates supernatural mysteries that may be messages from God ...or the devil.

The show was canceled last spring. Only six of the 13 episodes made it to the air, and a fervent group of angry "Miracles" junkies have lobbied unsuccessfully for the DVD release of the other seven.

The show's creator, Richard Hatem, said he doesn't expect any miracles. The touchy subject matter of the series — a blend of horror and religious iconography — made executives nervous at ABC's parent, the Walt Disney Co.

But the more a network

buries such unaired shows, the more some fans want to see them.

"For them to simply not air the episodes came across to us as malicious," said Angela Mitchell, a 36-year-old publicist in Hollywood, Florida, who helped organize the "Save 'Miracles'" campaign. "I felt like someone wanted to kill the show."

Many fans have taken to bootlegging the lost installments, making copies from foreign-market broadcasts and sharing tapes through the mail.

And for once, piracy has the support of a producer.

"Since there aren't aggressive efforts to make a profit from the show, the loss is pretty minor," Hatem said. "I'm never going to see another dime off 'Miracles,' but if people are watching and enjoying it, I'm more than happy."

On the Net:
"Miracles" fans: <http://www.savemiracles.com/>
"Karen Sisco" site: <http://abc.go.com/primetime/karensisco/>
"Firefly" site: <http://www2.fox-home.com/firefly/>

Jackson's lawyer said the singer was in 'full control' of his affairs

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staff and son-in-law of the Nation of Islam's founder, Louis Farrakhan, set up Jackson's recent interview on the CBS 60 Minutes program and was working out of Geragos' office.

In addition, Muhammad could be seen standing behind Geragos at a news conference the attorney called to respond to the charges. But the Nation of Islam has said it has "no official business or professional relationship" with Jackson.

Spokesman quits over 'strategic differences'

Another statement from Jackson's camp Sunday disputed the explanation issued by former Jackson spokesman Stuart Backerman for his resignation last week.

Backerman said he quit because of "strategic differences" with Jackson's advisers.

"I resigned and in no way was I fired," Backerman said. "I resigned because I

lost confidence in the way things were going. However, my resignation has not changed my tremendous support and love for Michael Jackson. I believe he is innocent of these molestation charges and that will be proved."

But current Jackson publicist Kevin McLin said Backerman was dismissed after making an unauthorized statement to reporters outside a December 20 party for family and friends at Jackson's Neverland ranch.

"Both Mr. Backerman and I agreed not to make any statements to the press without authorization by Mr. Geragos," said McLin, who was present at the time Backerman made those comments. "Mr. Backerman spoke to the press without that authorization and was terminated for refusing to acknowledge that agreement."

CNN Correspondent Miguel Marquez contributed to this report.

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Pediatrician
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Our articulate "Student of the Month" **Aleyah Andrews**, has maintained honor roll status since kindergarten. She enjoys visiting the library, and likes being challenged with difficult work at school. With her long list of aspirations, we can watch an entrepreneur in progress. Aleyah wants her mall to be designed for children and teenagers only, with much of the merchandise free.

Her mom tags her with a drama queen title, and Aleyah lives up to it with starring role performances. Her favorite past times are singing, dancing, swimming and spending time on the computer. Additionally, she loves reading, especially the Bible, learning to speak Spanish and learning sign-language.

Other favorites that Aleyah claims are eating macaroni and cheese, visiting Disney World, New York City and area parks, playing with Barbie dolls, watching "Winnie the Pooh," and says red is her perfect color. The only thing that tops this list is spending time with her grandmother, Betty Potts Holloway and her cousins.

Aleyah is the daughter of Bridget Potts and Teddy Andrews. She has a loving older sister, Shatavia Barnett. Aleyah is a member of Greater Salem Church, where she is very active in children's ministries. She loves her pastors, Dr. Anthony L. Jinwright and Minister Harriet Porter-Jinwright, who she affectionately calls "grand-daddy" and "grandma-Co."

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