

## Edited for Television

# Prime-time TV much improved in the '80s

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In comparison to the '70s, the past decade has been quite good for television. I'm talking quality, not quantity, as in viewers, since that has declined for the major networks. But the prime-time product has gotten better as the '80s have progressed.

With the following Top 10 comes the worry that I have no memory. Yes, I do remember "WKRP" and "Remington Steele," but as I perused back issues of TV Guide, I realized that everything got better and better. Would you believe that "Laverne and Shirley" was still on ABC's schedule for the 1982-83 season? "T.J. Hooker" was, too, and "Archie Bunker's Place" was on CBS.

Looking at the best, though, brings me to some I feel I should mention. Even though they were short lived, there was some quality in them. In the fall of 1985, NBC premiered "Amazing Stories." Steven Spielberg produced and the likes of Eastwood and Scorsese directed episodes. The anthology excelled over CBS's new "Twilight Zone" and over a Hitchcock anthology. However, the criticism was that the stories weren't that amazing, but they still managed to surprise.

Also, there is "Newhart." The early shows had two different main characters and no Larry, Darryl or Darryl. Although very funny, the show doesn't seem to have picked up on the new '80s sitcom style, and that is to have a continuing storyline to ensure the viewer returns week after week. At least one part should be serialized, and only now are they beginning to do that with the relationship of Stephanie and Michael.

Also worthy of mention are "China Beach," for the way it examines the Vietnam experience away from combat through the

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eyes of nurses; "Hill Street Blues," for beginning a new genre of an ensemble cast and a serialized, but not soapy, storyline; and "Growing Pains," for not innovating but perfecting the family sitcom.

So without further ado, these are my Top 10 television shows of the '80s:

**10. CHiPs** Not since the days of "Gunsmoke" has a drama so successfully combined the elements of classical television production reflecting American democratic society while standing as an analogy for the modern nuclear arms race, while at the same time... WHAT? Sorry about that. By bringing up such a program as "CHiPs," I hope to draw your attention to how bad television can be, so you can better appreciate each of the following entries.

**10. The Cosby Show (NBC)** A very amiable show, which seems to perfect the family sitcom, but instead sacrifices story in favor of acting out Bill Cosby stand-up routines, or cutesy, unrealistic skits. The show is nevertheless hilarious at times, and the cast has seemed to stop patting itself on the back for being so funny. But they are often as funny as they think they are, and while childish, Cosby is not insulting to the intelligence as "Who's the Boss?" can be.

**9. Night Court (NBC)** The show stays away from realistic situations. Sure, someone would hold the original copy of the Constitu-

tion hostage in a New York courtroom, or Bull would really keep his job. But the natural boyish charm and comedic talent of Harry Anderson has managed to keep the show on since 1984 through many cast changes, while John Larroquette has managed to snag three or four Emmys. Just watch out, though, "Night Court" will have you rolling for 20 minutes, then becomes serious and character developing for five more before the big finale.

**8. Simon and Simon (CBS)** Rick and A.J. Simon solved some of the most interesting and original cases for more than five years in San Diego. In the meantime, their mother joined the cast and so did Tim Reid ("Frank's Place") before the show finally left the air last season. But it hasn't been canceled and CBS still has the option of calling it back. With a good time slot, Jameson Parker and Gerald McRaney could conceivably go a few more years, but chances are they are tired of it by now. Don't expect to see any new episodes.

**7. Moonlighting (ABC)** A few years ago this show would be rated near the top of this list, but it has not treated its audience well. But the show has been innovated. It never has taken its genre seriously, with David announcing, "This is the car chase" or wondering what happened to his copy of the script. This self-reflexive attitude is what makes the show such fun, along with a certain serialization of the relationship.

But the five-part miniseries at the end of the 1986-87 season turned the show into a soap opera and even spots of genius like the prison yard musical scene weren't enough to keep the viewers through the reruns of the following season, or through Cybill Shepherd's absence, or Maddie's marriage. But now they are back on track and Maddie and David are fun again. The stories are interesting, the repartee quick, the acting excellent and the ratings lower than "21 Jump Street."

**6. Late Night with David Letterman (NBC)** I had not planned on looking outside of prime time, but Dave deserves it. I hated this show early on, but once you get comfortable with this former weatherman, he can really make you laugh — even when doing stupid things. His running jokes with Phil Donahue, "The Today Show" cast, or Connie Chung and Maury Povich are great. Viewer mail usually works, and the Top 10 has become very consistent. A John Gotti Tax Tip: Three words to the IRS agent: "How's your family?"

**5. M\*A\*S\*H (CBS)** I know you're thinking '70s and that although the 4077th went into the '80s, it did so without Trapper, Henry, Frank or Radar. But the final two-and-a-half-hour episode airing Feb. 23, 1983, was the highest rated program of all time. The show was still funny but running out of steam, and the fact the producers noticed this is reason enough to put them among the '80s best.

**4. L.A. Law (NBC)** This would be the newest show in my rankings and also the most serious. "L.A. Law" has been able to perfect the style of "Hill Street" and "St. Elsewhere" and has given us just enough soap opera and humor to keep it from depressing us. And the characters are diverse enough to attract all kinds. If you hate

Kuzak, you have Arnie. If you hate Douglas, there's Sifuentes.

**3. Family Ties (NBC)** It began in 1982, and its gimmick was that the generation gap had reversed its poles. Now the parents were liberal, hippie types and the children were as right wing as Ronald Reagan. Michael J. Fox makes the show but the others play off him perfectly, especially Michael Gross (Steven). But recently, "Family Ties" has become more and more a caricature of itself. Mallory is a joke and Jennifer is too philosophical. But as Alex graduates from college, "Family Ties" is still able to reach your heart and grab your mind as he prepares for a "real world" far away from the one he has known. Seniors can empathize.

**2. Magnum, P.I. (CBS)** One of the first attempts television took to look at the world through the eyes of a Vietnam veteran exploded into an excellent drama which was able to change from the classic crime-drama style of the '70s to the emphasis on character common to the '80s. Over eight seasons we came to know Thomas, T.C., and Rick. We were introduced to recurring characters Mac, Col. Green, D.A. Carol, Icepick, Lt. Tanaka and Thomas' wife, Michelle. Some died, others maybe should have. And we saw the strict Jonathan Quayle Higgins become a loving father figure for Magnum and Co. as well as a good friend. The final episode closed the series on the theme of the gang leaving the adolescence they had so enjoyed since the war. Magnum returned to the adulthood he had so long avoided as a private investigator, and as a Navy commander and father, we last saw Magnum at Rick's wedding. Meanwhile T.C. was assuming the responsibilities of a father and husband also, and Higgins was still denying that he is Robin Masters.

Next week, No. 1.

## Get through exams with Frisbees, football and food

By BRYAN BURNS  
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This weekend, nighttime activities should be no problem. Between the Violent Femmes and R.E.M. concerts, along with the usual clubs, parties and movies, there are plenty of choices for nocturnal delight. And hey, it's Senior Week too! But with only a week of classes left, our time together is running out; we must frolic and be happy, festive spring people.

Spring. How wonderful... how simple, you think. Well, it's not as easy as you think.

First, you have to lie in the sun. It doesn't matter where — just do it. A road trip to the beach is great, but hardly necessary. People strip

down all over campus: on the quad, by the dorms, on top of the dorms, basking like the gods of Olympus in the warmth and light of the sun. But the great thing is that not only are we exposing ourselves to radiation, we're letting every member of the opposite sex on campus ogle us. You know that everyone does it, so accept it and feel free to scope out other sunbathers.

Of course, there's a lot more to spring than a tan. We can express our appreciation of spring by just spending time outdoors. Throwing a Frisbee, football, or any nonliving object back and forth is always fun. And if you're lucky, you might accidentally hit someone on the head or at least get in their way.

But wait, there's more spring-time activity; you can participate in team sports. Intramurals are OK, but why be so organized? Just get out there and play. Of course, baseball and softball are the traditional choices for April fun, but don't feel limited. Really, almost anything is acceptable: volleyball, flag football, basketball, synchronized swimming (you can ogle more in this one), etc.

Spring also provides the perfect atmosphere for parties, picnics and barbecues. Of course, as we learned from Springfest, these events should be planned — weather permitting. Don't be pessimistic, though. A little rain won't ruin a cookout, but a torrential spring downpour can sort

of put a damper on things. At these events, not only can you partake of the most delicious classes of outdoor food, maybe even burgers, but you can also participate in many of the spring activities we've discussed. As for that old-fashioned idea that a picnic of wine and cheese is the way to go for that special someone, forget it. Be original — serve Doritos and guacamole or mayonnaise sandwiches. And this menu is not as expensive as you would think.

Spring is definitely the time to rekindle that relationship with nature, too. When you have a lot of studying to do, take your books outside and get to know an insect while you learn about the Socratic

method. Or go somewhere and plant a tree, forming that special bond between man and bark. Or just go on a walk, smell the flowers, listen to the birds and tread on some grass. There are so many options, I feel almost overwhelmed.

We are truly blessed with all these spring weather possibilities; take advantage of them. Save bowling and Trivial Pursuit for the rainy days. And remember in these last weeks, Frisbee, tanning, tree planting, picnics: they're all great ways to relieve the stress of final exams. After all, we need to relax and enjoy spring before the hardships of summer come striking down upon us.