

The State of Science Fiction on Television

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Thursday, 10 April 2008

What's the state of science fiction on television? I'd have to say overall, just amazing.

Consider some of the shows we have available right now. Battlestar Galactica. Lost. Heroes. So many great shows that have captured the imaginations of people who once may have claimed to have no interest in science fiction.

Okay, so probably some of them still say that. People can be funny that way.

It's not all rosy, of course. I've never understood how the SciFi Channel can produce some of the best and some of the worst science fiction I've ever seen. And unfortunately I generally don't mean worst in the sense of "this is so bad it's funny." I mean just plain bad.

Then there are the could've been greats but some how never made it, such as Firefly. Sometimes it's just hard to see a show not take off quite well enough when it deserves to.

Even some of the great shows have been cancelled of late. Stargate SG-1 ended all too soon.

Then there are shows such as Jericho. Would've been cancelled at the end of its first season, but fans said nuts to that and got 7 more episodes. Too bad it never pulled the ratings, as it was a fascinating series.

Science fiction on television constantly has to fight its Nielsen ratings, which tend to be lower than what network executives like to see. High Niensens means more money for them, after all. Advertisers willing to pay more and all that.

So what science fiction television really needs is more fans.

That's a challenge. I've met plenty of people with irrational biases against science fiction. They picture the worst of what they've heard of it, and assume that ray guns and rockets that do U-turns are typical fare. It's often hard to convince people that science fiction can encapsulate every kind of drama they enjoy in other shows.

Even as they applaud "Lost".

While you can argue with non-fans all you like that some popular shows do actually include elements of science fiction, they aren't going to want to believe you if it's not obvious to them. It's hard to convince people that great shows such as Battlestar Galactica bear little resemblance to what they're thinking of.

But you can show them. Dare your friends to watch your favorite science fiction show every week for an entire season. In exchange, you watch their favorite show for the same amount of time. With any luck the suffering will be worth it and you'll hook your friend on science fiction in general.