It started out with a bang. Literally, as a nuke went off in the first few hours, jarring Jack out of his funk. But it ends barely limping to the finish line, a series as badly in need of a reboot as the Batman movies were prior to "Batman Begins". Still, it's been fun watching Mitch poking fun at the obvious, and he goes out the way he came in; with snarky comments a-blazing. *"If everyone on 24 followed Jack Bauer's instructions, it would be called 12"...*

"12" might have actually been a lot better than "24" this year. How such a great show could start out so well...and then turn out so lame, is still a mystery to me.

Be that as it may, I sit here at my keyboard doing The Last Recap (sounds of applause from the audience, recalling the times Johnny Carson as Carnack the Magnificent would announce his last envelope to a large ovation).

"May a crazed baggage handler find a secret compartment on your sister."

Recap

4 - 5 AM

Josh is still trying to figure out what's going on, and why Uncle Jack isn't on the helicopter with them. Doyle tells him about having to take him to his grandfather, a little detail that doesn't exactly thrill the teenager. Doyle vows to rescue him, and inserts another one of those tricky tracking devices into the boy's arm. Yeah, that worked out so well for Gredenko, didn't it?

I can see Phil drinking a Bud Light and revving up his chainsaw right now.

At the White House, Daniels is doing some serious ass kissing of Suvarov, trying anything to get him to call off the attack on the military base in Central Asia which couldn't possibly exist. T his just doesn't work for me.

Powers Boothe should only be groveling when he's playing a sinister villain and staring down the barrel of Wyatt Earp's gun.

Fortunately, we are spared more of the embarrassment as Karen Hayes gets a call during the middle of it, and the cameras follow her out of the room, where we find out it's Jack on the phone.

He begs for her help, knowing that his father has no real intention of turning over the component to Daniels.

Karen is inclined to agree with him (putting her in the minority of the Washington Wonks who normally hate Jack), and tells him that she will contact Bill Buchanan for his help.

She also asks Lennox to circumvent Daniels and help her out, but he's wary of attempting that tactic after all his other shenanigans, but he does tell her that he'll be looking the other way while she does whatever she feels in necessary. So she calls up her husband, who is in the middle of an important fight, protecting the family photo album from idiotic FBI agents searching his house. Karen pleads with him to help out, which he finally agrees to. Hey, what are they going to do?

Fire him a second time?

Doyle and Josh go to the rendezvous point, where Doyle receives a call from Phil, telling him to send the helicopter away...and to tell CTU to kill their satellite coverage. It seems that Phil has hacked into CTU, and can see exactly what they are seeing.

Another security breach at CTU?

I.

Am.

So.

Shocked.

Phillip wants to talk to Josh, and Doyle tells the boy to "not say anything that will make him mad."

Josh responds by once again telling his grandfather how much he sucks and how much he hates him.

Heh...good kid.

Doyle lets Nadia know that he'll attempt to re-take Josh after he gets the component. Nadia has other problems at the moment, as Marilyn is in the process of wigging out once again about her son, threatening legal action.

So they do what any jackbooted Gestapo agent would do when a mother is concerned about her child; they place her under arrest.

This fact really pisses off Chloe, who bitches to Morris about the unfairness of it all.

Morris disagrees with her, and even calls Doyle to let him know HE thinks he is doing the right thing by sacrificing the kid.

Doyle's response? "Morris, the next time I want your opinion, I'll ask for it."

Bee-yotch Slapped!

Morris has officially become the official "24" piñata.

Karen has called Nadia to get the information regarding Jack's location, which she feeds to Bill.

And then for perhaps the fiftieth time in the history of this series, a CTU vehicle transporting someone is ran off the road, and an escape is made.

At least this time it was Bill orchestrating the escape, and they're off to track down Doyle and Josh...who are probably only about three minutes away from them.

Back at CTU, Milo's brother shows up to collect his stuff, and to add to Nadia's Guilt Trip From Hell by telling her that Milo sacrificed himself because he was in love with Nadia. Paging Dr. Melfi! I think you'll have a new client to work with after Tony Soprano gets bumped off or arrested in a couple of weeks.

So far tonight, we've only had the usual moments of moderately impossible plot twists and circumstances...and that won't do. We need something really implausible to keep up the averages. And it comes in the form of FBI agents barging into Karen's office to arrest her for helping Bill.
Huh?

CTU doesn't even know what's happened yet, as the two men in the SUV were knocked out by Jack, but we're expected to believe the FBI knows everything that's going on?

In any case, she's soon being questioned by Daniels, who asks her about any involvement from Lennox.

Karen denies it, and accepts all the blame herself.

But maybe Jack is wrong...the guys Phil sent in a small Zodiac boat seem to be fine upstanding citizens. The one politely hands the component to Doyle...and then it blows up, and they take Josh away as Doyle screams in pain. Jack and Bill pull onto the beach, but Jack can't get a shot off without risking hitting Josh. But that's OK...they still have that tracking device.

What?

Phillip's smarter than the entire CTU staff and has a device on the boat to neutralize it?

(of course you must remember that being told that you're smarter than the CTU staff is like being told you are more attractive than Quasimodo).

Jack gets on the phone with Nadia, and how he resisted screaming "I TOLD YOU SO, YOU STUPID BITCH!!!!", I have no idea. He could also say the same thing to Daniels, who has been told of the deception, and is waste deep in mea culpas to Lennox.

He admits that Karen was right, and that he had been wrong about a lot of things, especially about Wayne Palmer...who could be dead for all we know.

"Until you sit in this chair, you don't know anything."

Nah, Noah...we're pretty sure you still don't know anything.

The medical team arrives, and Dr. Jack relays to Nadia that Doyle will be blind in at least one eye...I guess that means when Rick Schroder makes his guest appearance next year, he'll have on this really cool pirate's patch. Jack also deduces that the Zodiac would be going towards an off shore oil platform, since there are several in the area that are owned by his father's company. And of course Jack is right, as we next see Phil on an oil platform talking it up with Cheng. Phil isn't happy with That Chinese Bastard!!!®, but it's not like he can cash out all his Chinese bonds and set up shop in Dubai, so naturally he's still going to give him the component.

Chloe is trying to zero in on which oil platform is owned by one of Phil's shadow companies when her vision gets blurry (or maybe it's just that last shot of Patron that's kicked in). She walks back towards Morris, and then collapses.

Not to give anything away, but my local Fox station went straight to that Coors Light commercial where they guy is happier about the bottle turning blue than his wife's pregnancy test.

Blue...to match the soon-to-be color of his balls as he's cut off for the next ten months or so.

5 - 6 AM

Josh has another happy reunion with Phil, and the kid doesn't mince words in telling the old coot how much he sucks. No matter; Cheng informs them that a sub will be there in thirty minutes to pick them up. A quick mathematical exercise indicates that this means they'll be twenty minutes after it's all over for a wrap-up.

Maybe we'll get to see what happened to all the people on the Milk Cartons?

Chloe is lying on a bed in the infirmary. I was waiting for the doctor to come out and say "gee...someone who has been awake and under heavy stress for over 23 hours passes out?!?! Impossible, I say!" But no, all we get is him refusing to tell Morris what her problem is, but he does let him know that she'll be fine.

Yeah, right.

Given the genetics involved with the parents, I'm half expecting the little bugger to explode out of her chest by the end of the show.

But I guess that during one of the twenty commercial breaks we've had, Morris and Nadia were able to put aside their major concerns, and found the oil platform. They relay the information to Daniels, who immediately orders an air strike to blow the entire thing to hell.

And why not?

They've already "borrowed" heavily from "Die Hard", so now let's just steal some plot devices from "The Rock".

As Doyle apologizes to Jack for not trusting him (a common theme), Nadia informs them of the impending air strike, and orders them back to CTU, saying there is nothing she can do (another common theme). But there is something Jack and Bill can do, and that's to commandeer a helicopter and fly out the ten miles to the oil platform, kill all the bad guys, and rescue Josh.

Oops...I'm sorry...did I just ruin it for everyone?

I don't get it. Jack can get to anywhere in the Los Angeles area within five minutes, but it will take F-18 jet fighters flying at nearly the speed of sound 22 minutes to get there?
Where was the nearest base?

Seattle?

In any case, this will play out like a Playstation 3 game as the White House has uploaded the live feeds to the Russians, and Nadia has consented to helping Bill, and is sending the thermal scan feeds to Jack's superpowered PDA.

Phil's getting ready, and as he's lecturing Josh about something or another, he's telling him how important it is to "pay attention"...and then they show Josh paying attention to where Phillip is stashing his gun. Tim Couch could not have telegraphed a pass any worse than that.

Phil starts taking Josh down to the boat as they know Jack is coming (kind of hard to sneak up on a platform in the middle of the ocean with a helicopter). Bill swings it around so that Jack can start shooting TCB!!!® even before he gets off the chopper, and then he quickly realizes that it will be even faster if he shoots some fuel barrels and just fries them all to death.

Except for Cheng, who is badly burned on his face ("Payback!" yells Doyle), but gloating to Jack that it's too late, stupidly telling him that Phil's down near the boat.

On the boat dock, Josh has finally had enough of his gramp's crap, and he takes a wrench and goes upside his head. Then he grabs the gun and shoots him. Hoo-Rah! About damn time! Do it again!

But no, Jack comes down at that moment and tells Josh that he shouldn't do it, as the pain would just be too much for him.

Bleh...put one in between his beady eyeballs, Josh.

No dice...Josh listens to Jack, and quickly scampers up the stairs to join Bill and a handcuffed Cheng in the chopper. Jack refuses to finish the job on Phil, and is planning to take his wounded father along, but Phil tells him he'd never make it trying to carry him, so Jack leaves him to his fate. The F-18's are almost there, so Bill lowers the rope ladder, and flies off to the side so that Jack can perform a manly leap off an exploding something to save himself (another bit taken from "The Rock").

Adios, Phil.

Say hello to Graem in a minute or two when you meet him in Hell.

So the platform has been destroyed along with the component and the Dad, which makes the Russians very, very happy, and they stand down. Meanwhile, Jack decides that it's just not manly enough riding on a rope ladder of a helicopter traveling over 100 mph, so he jumps off into the sea, and swims to shore, waving buh-bye to Bill and Josh.

I wonder where he's going?

I wonder if it has anything to do with the fact that they listed William Devane and Kim Raver in the opening credits, which always means that they'll appear sometime in that hour?

Nah...couldn't be.

After another 10 minute commercial break, allowing me to keep track of the Cavaliers game, we're back at the White House, where Daniels decides to "leave the Chinese until another day". Lennox convinces Daniels to pardon Karen and Bill...due to the minor fact that they were right, and due to their actions a war was diverted. Big deal. Lennox also gives Daniels the tape recording.

He has one last conversation with Karen, giving her the good news, but reminding her that she's out of there.

"I THINK I'm going to miss you.

I'll answer that after you're gone."

Ahhh...what a softie.

At CTU, Morris tells Chloe to forget all about that "we're done" stuff from earlier in the day...just the sight of her passed out was enough to convince him that he loved her. Good

thing, because she tells him that she's pregnant.

"With a child?" asks Morris.

I laughed for a second...and then I realize that it was a damn good question.

Jack walks in on James Heller in his living room, pulls a gun on him, and demands to see Audrey. Jack then morphs into AJ Soprano, whining about this and that, and why didn't Heller try harder to get him out of China, and how he watched his Daddy die and felt nothing...enough...someone get him some fries with that WHAHmburger. Jack threatens to take Audrey away, disappear, and then kill anyone that comes after them.

"If you send someone after us, I'll kill them...and I'm pretty good at that".

Yes, we know...check the body count if you have any doubts.

However, Heller throws a heaping glass of Reality on him, telling him that "sooner or later, you'll get back into the game...and my daughter will pay the price just like your wife did". THAT'S going to leave a mark.

So Jack puts down his gun and goes into Audrey's room where she's unconscious (at least I think she was...hard to tell with her). He kisses her, tells her that he's at a crossroad, and then leaves, stopping at the top of the cliff to look out over the ocean and contemplate his next move.

Here's a suggestion...fire every single person that was responsible for any episode after the fourth one (but keep the guy that wrote the episode where Jack took out all five of Fayed's thugs, and then strangled him with a chain...as that was awesome).

Final Thoughts.

According to reports, next year "24" will NOT be centered around Los Angeles, and it will have an almost entirely new cast.

That's good, because this was the worst season yet, hands down.

Best Scene: There were none in the final two hours. The most predictable finale ever.

Jack Bauer Bad Guy Body Count: 48. It took several rewinds of Tivo to get this one figured out this week due to the low lighting and all the explosions.
But a pretty impressive figure, nonetheless.

What Ever Happened To?

The Ice Princess Slutlisa , Sandra Palmer, Wayne Palmer, Walid, Marilyn's discussion with Jack, Charles Logan, Martha Logan, Agent Pearce, Mark Bishop, Reed Pollock, the Blue Man Conspiracy Group, Mrs. Suvarov, Gredenko's severed arm, CTU Agent Johnson, the Denver Report, the CTU stuffed shirt investigating the security breach, Mandy, the Ambassador to Fayedrabia, General Habib of Fayedrabia, the town that got nuked, the First Responders that got near the drone that went down in San Francisco and leaked radiation, Morris's MadDog 20/20 bottle (I could use a swig about now), and last but not least, Kim Bauer. If there was ever a season that could have benefited from her being on camera 20 minutes an episode showing off her cleavage in the same tight T-Shirt, it was this one.

See ya' all in January.