If Jack Bauer was a Spartan in the movie "300", it would have been called "1"

Welcome back!

No 20 month break this time due to a writers' strike, so just a mere seven months after Jack was facing an almost certain death due to a bio-weapon, with only a slight chance of survival due to a completely experimental and untested procedure...Jack. Is. Back.

And so is my weekly recap.

Swerb and I were pleasantly shocked last year with how this column exploded in readership,

stretching far beyond our normal target audience of Cleveland sports fans. So for them...this year I promise to TRY to make a few less obscure references that mean nothing to anyone who doesn't live (or used to live) in Northeast Ohio.

Note that I said "try".

Just like the writers on the show will try not to re-use various plot devices from seasons past.

As before, the format here is as simple as the writer. You get my snarky version of a recap, my thoughts and stupid predictions of episodes yet to come, and then the Famous Jack Bauer Body Count. As the season goes on, a "Who is the Mole" rundown will certainly occur, along with a "24 Milk Carton" section starting at the midpoint, where we ask what the hell happened to certain people who were important early in the season, but have since dropped off the face of the earth.

My apologies to everyone...the Sarcasmectomy performed during the Summer didn't take. So spare me the inevitable emails later on wondering why I'm always making smart-assed comments.

It's what I do.

Everyone needs a talent.

That's mine.

Stay tuned tomorrow for the recap of Monday's 6 PM - 8PM show.

Recap

4 PM - 5 PM

There will be a bit of a theme in the early recaps, while we're starting to get up to speed with the plot and characters. As any fan of "24" knows, there are certain "Things" that tend to be re-visited almost every stinking year. In honor of a certain group of perfor

mance artists
I referenced in the past by humorously connecting their name to the shadowy conspiracy of corporate interests, I bring you...

How to Be a '24' Writer:

To become a '24' writer, you must become familiar with certain tricks of the trade. By following the simple Plot Device Movements, you can make up for such deficiencies in your writing skills such as logic, character development, clarity, or adherence to any of the laws of physics.

Ready? Go.

Welcome to New York...the land of no traffic, which will make Jack's need to get all around the city sooo much easier than it was in Los Angeles or Washington DC.

Plot Device Movement #2: Starting Off with Mayhem. Less than a minute into the show, we have our first dead body. Followed immediately by the second dead body.

And some scumbucket running out of a flop house like he was Tiger Woods running away from a four-iron wielding Swede (I'm really going to try to put a cap on my Tiger Woods references this year to no more than one per article...but it may be hard to hold to that promise...sorta like when I promise my wife I'll do better at cleaning up after myself).

Scumbucket escapes, but is wounded.

Flash over to a snoozing Jack being woke up by an adorable three year old. "Call me Grandpa", Jack says.

Or should it be "Grandma" after his appearance on the
David Letterman Show last week
?

Hey...I'm not going to bitch about that.

Kiefer was manning up to his bet against some cretin who actually WANTED the Baltimore Ratbirds to win the game against the Patroits.

Even so, that was extremely uncomfortable.

Jack Bauer doesn't wear dresses.

Kim calls, and we get a quick update of Jack's medical condition...which when we left off last season was pretty grim. Surprise! He's all better! I would have never guessed that would happen. Then again, I was shocked, SHOCKED, when Mark McGwire said that he took steroids.

Kim and her husband Stephen want Jack to move back to Los Angeles...and Jack agrees, saying he'll fly out with them tonight.

Let me know how that works out for you, Jack.

Plot Device Movement #39: Inventing a Country So As to Not Piss Off Any Real Country. Read y? Go. President Taylor and President Omar Hassan from Kamistan are negotiating an agreement for Iran...er...Kamistan to give up their nuclear weapons program.

Hassan is played by Anil Kapoor who was the slimy game show host in "Slumdog Millionaire", which means I can't see him without thinking

about his line, "Who wants to be a Mill-un-air".

Some blonde bimbette named Meredith with revoked press credentials calls Hassan directly. M ethinks the Prez has been getting him some tail on the side while in town...nothing wrong with that...just ask John Edwards.

But Hassan's little brother and flunky in chief isn't happy about it. Infidel!

I KEEEEL YOU!!!

Later on in this episode (yes, I'm skipping around a bit to make the constant jumps due to introductions a little less confusing), we'll meet Hassan's wife...and no wonder Hassan's getting

some on the side, as she is Sherry Palmer level B.A.D.

Victor Aruz was the guy who was shot, and he comes over to Jack's and lets him know that there is a hit going to go down on Hassan today. *Plot Device Movement #18: Jack Bauer Preventing an Important Person From Being Assassinated.*

Seems like Aruz was the guy who got the hitman into the country, and is the only person who can identify him...which puts his chance of survival at something near that of Carrie Prejean receiving a Rhodes Scholarship. (spare me your righteous indignity...I promise to pick on wacky liberals as well).

Plot Device Movement #5: Introducing the Band. Ready? Go.

Welcome to CTU-NY! Looks the same as CTU LA from season 1, right down to the glass enclosed upstairs office of the Director. Let's go down the lineup:

Freddie Prinze Jr is playing Cole Ortiz, this season's version of Tony Almeida (prior to going gonzo), Curtis Manning, Chase Edmunds, and Mike Doyle...IOW, the younger side-kick to Jack...normally a good hearted person who defers to The Master in all ways (and normally ends up dead or badly injured). Good luck, Cole. You're going to need it.

Katee Sackhoff as Dana Walsh, the new Chief Geek. And let me just say that the former Lt. Starbuck from Battlestar Galactica is a 1,000,000-fold improvement of the Chief Geek from last year, Janeane Garofalo's annoying Janis Gold.

Of course, that's like saying that Mike Holmgren as the HMFIC of the Cleveland Browns is an improvement over what they previously had.

Thank you, Captain Obvious.

John Boyd, whom I had never heard of, is playing perv-nerd Arlo Glass. All of Milo Pressman's geekiness...none of the charm.

I'm hoping he soon meets the same fate of Edgar.

At one point he asks, "who is Jack Bauer?"

Kill him now just on principle.

Mykelti Williamson as CTU Director Brian Hastings. I'm sorry...he's Bubba Blue from Forrest Gump...I don't care what you say. I wonder what the chances are of him being an obnoxious asshole who'll screw things up for our heroes, and then dying at some point?

Given the past history of CTU heads, I'd say 95% on the former, and 100% on the latter.

I knew Bill Buchanan.

Bill Buchanan was a friend of mine.

You, sir, are no Bill Buchanan.

At least Chloe is back...but she's now an incompetent who is just hanging onto her job because Milo was laid off, and they need the money? Yeah...I wonder how long that fallacy will last.

Introductions complete, let's get back to the story.

So the hit man is Russian. And he's played by the guy who was the pain-in-the-ass guard Percy in "The Green Mile"...so guess what he's going to be called during his estimated 3 - 5 hours of life on this show?

Time to catch up on the Taylors, and what's been happening over the past year to the First Dysfunctional Family. Henry and Allison are divorced...as the Scarecrow also known as the First Old Man didn't take kindly to the First Slut Olivia being sent away to prison for something so trivial as complicity to murder. I really, really hope that this means we aren't going to see him this year. One can only hope for small favors.

It looks like Ethan Kanin has transitioned from Chief of Staff to some kind of senior advisor. In his place is Rob Weiss...who is immediately the leader in the clubhouse as the probable winner of the White House Mole Contest.

Secondary introductions over, we find Aruz has convinced Jack of the plot against Hassan. Jac k contacts CTU, convinces BubbaHastings that there is a credible threat, and then takes off five blocks away to a place where CTU can land a helicopter.

Unfortunately, a "Good Samaritan" sees Jack tending to Aruz's wounds in an alley, and calls the cops.

Yeah...like someone in NYC would actually bother themselves with calling in something like that.

He must not have been a native New Yorker.

Plot Device Movement #911: Idiot Cops Showing Up At the Wrong Time and Making a Mess of Things.

Ready? Go.

Of course the cops show up. Of course they get killed. Of course Jack is now on the run up the stairs being chase by guys with sub machine guns.

But Jack has an axe, which he uses to go all Jack Torrance on a bad guy's chest cavity ("Heeerrrreee's Jack!"), while simultaneously knocking the other bad guy off the stairs to his death. And the Bauer Body Count gets its 2010 cherry popped.

Better yet, now Jack has a machine gun.

Ho-Ho-Ho.

Uh-oh, a totally disposable CTU agent has just taken the totally disposable informant to the

totally disposable helicopter, leaving Jack and Cole to have a few moments for some uber-male bonding...just enough time so they aren't hit by the RPG that no one saw coming (except for every single person who has regularly watched this show).

Plot Device Movement #9: Informant Croaking Just Before He Gives Up Critical Information About a Highly Placed Insider Working for the Bad Guys. Ready? Die. Good-bye Victor Aruz.

We've forgotten you already.

5 PM - 6 PM

Why did they do a "previously on 24" for the second part? Do they really think we're so brain dead as to need this re-cap?

Oh, wait. This is the country that makes Jersey Shore a hit...so maybe they have a point.

Cole is complaining to BubbaHastings about not having adequate backup to prevent the attack on the helicopter which immediately brings up the prospect of *Plot Device Movement #4: The CTU Mole* . Cole and Bubba end their pissing contest, and then Bubba guilts Jack into sticking around awhile longer to help track down the insider.

Using all of their *Super Kewl Constitution? We Don't Need No Stinkin' Constitution! Technology* ™
, CTU determines that the reporter Meredith Lewinski is part of the plot, and set out to arrest her.

Plot Device Movement #41: The Red Herring So Obvious That Ray Charles Could See It Coming.

As we go into the commercial break, ponder this: Whose social skills are better: Chloe's or Eric Mangini's? Discuss.

With Meredith in custody, Brother Hassan recommends that President Hassan takes the Bill Clinton route regarding the affair...and then gets on the phone with the Russian hit man? Color me confused, but that's what I love about "24"...as predictable as it often is, they always throw lots of WTF Curveballs at you.

Looks like Brother Hassan's new name is Fredo.

Plot Device Movement #ZZZ: The Boring Subplot Only Used To Kill Time So Jack Can Get Across Town.

Ready? Snooze.

So Dana Starbuck has a secret past, and a scummy ex-con ex-boyfriend threatening her. My first impression?

She's pulling a Don Draper here, and was some trashy little hellion in high school who got out of her Podunk town and re-invented herself with a new name.

And watching paint dry is more riveting.

Jack is still wanting to take off, but Chloe guilts him into hanging around and helping, as she's convinced that Meredith Lewinski is just being set up. At least Chloe tries to, as Jack nearly tears up and goes back to his family. And now KIM guilts Jack into staying.

Jack needs to get his Mojo going in a hurry...I can't believe how easily he's getting manipulated by females.

He gets any worse, and he'll have to change his name to Mitch Cyrus.

Sufficiently brow-beaten, Jack gets Chloe to override the security in the armory and he stocks up on some weapons.

And then gets busted by Bubba.

But the situation is quickly defused as Jack blackmails Bubba into letting him chase down the

lead.

Meanwhile, Percy is using his spot-on American accent as he goes into his cover personality as a NY Police Officer. Once again, doesn't the ability of government agencies to properly vet its employees make you want to go live in a cave somewhere and hide?

Percy is talking to Maggie, the wife of his NYPD partner, and then slips back into his Ruskie accent. *Plot Device Movement #52: Showing Off Your Badass Skills By Torturing Innocent Women.* Ready? Shoot. Got Maggie right in the leg. And we thought he was a bastard for killing Mr. Jingles .

Final Thoughts.

So where the hell is Renee?

No sense in putting many other "final thoughts" here, as I already know what's going to happen over the next two hours.

Bauer Body Count - 2. Excellent start, especially compared to last season.