Ordinary people have panic attacks. Chuck Norris has Jack Bauer attacks.

There seems to be a consensus with the fans of "24" that I've ran into over the past three weeks.

And that is that this season is pretty damn lame so far.

The biggest problem seems to be with the subplots, in that the entire Dana/Jen/KevinBob bit is just so unbelievable as to be painfully, laughingly embarrassing to watch. The other problem is that most (including me) seem to think that Cherry Jones just isn't believable as President. Personally, I saw weakness in the character last year, but she had her moments when the White House was under attack. This year? Bleh.

Hopefully Charles Logan comes back as soon as possible to liven up the joint.

I'm thinking of running a poll on the boards for "Lamest President in Television and Film". Right now, the two top nominees would be Alison Taylor and Thomas Whitmore (Bill Pullman) from "Independence Day". Send me some more ideas, and we'll put this in place in the next week or so.

Recap

I always think that it's cool the one time a season when we are in "real time"...as in, it says that it's 9 PM on the "24" clock, and I look up, and it's 9 PM here.

Yes...simple things do amaze me...oh! There's a bunny!

OK...Ritalin has been taken...where were we?

Jack goes "off-com" to call up BubbaHastings to beg him to take Renee off the case because, as I described with such clinical precision last week; she's batshit crazy. Bubba refuses as she is "the Best Chance" to solve the crisis. Jack counters that they should arrest Valdimir, and then Jack "will make him talk". Bubba informs Jack that the Pulp Fiction Memorial Blowtorch and Pipewrench Division has been permanently closed (bummer). Jack sneers, "then you people do what you do well...offer him immunity or something". Heh. Jack still suffers bureaucratic fools with the same level of civility as Browns fans suffer prima donna wide receivers from the University of Michigan. Since Bubba won't give in, Jack says he will find a way to make himself the "inside man" in this, and get Renee out of it. Let me know how that plan works out for ya', Jack.

While this whole conversation is going on, I noticed that in the smallest of the screen split into three views, Vlad's goons load Ziya's body in a rowboat, take it approximately 10 feet away from the dock, and then dump his body into the water. Why? Do they think getting a body just a few feet away from a huge blood trail (resulting from two bullets into the heart) would erase all traces of their activity? I must stop the DVR for a moment, run over to my "library", and crack open a little Dostoyevsky to (a) prove to myself that all Russians aren't friggin' morons and (b) hope that buy reading a few pages of it, my IQ might regain the three points it just lost watching this opening scene. It doesn't work, so I crack open a little Smirnoff instead. Za vashe zdorov'ye!

Bubba tells Dana to start forwarding status reports to the nuclear response team, but she's a little too busy searching for an easy score for the KevinBobsie Twins. She tells them about an NYPD evidence lockup containing $120,000 in confiscated drug money. She tells him that it's just a warehouse, and that "most" of the security is automated. And he believes it. I bet he also believes that she never faked it with him.

Arlo stops over and undresses Dana with his eyes in a way that would make Andy Dick say "Dude, you are creeping me out". He also makes even more comments that would be considered sexual harassment at any Vegas brothel. The only reason I mention this little bit is because of the look Chloe gave when he walked away. We've all seen that look from her before...the one that says "you are such a complete and utter asshole that I should take an Uzi to you right where you stand." And we all love That Look.

Vlad gets the lowdown on the deal from Renee as she sets up Jack's cover as a German arms dealer looking for some smuggled Ukrainian weapons grade uranium...and they just "happened" to hear that there was some available. And if Vitaly Corleonovich believes in that coincidence, I believe he's just the "type" to make a bid on that swamp land I have in Idaho. Vlad asks for $5 million up front. Chump-Change, responds Renee. Really? Who knew that LeBron James was fronting CTU. DAMMIT!! That's more proof that he really does want to go play for the Knicks next year!

Renee and Vlad catch up on old times, with Vlad expressing remorse about him being such a woman beating coward. Jack grinds through a molar listening to this. Renee asks to take a shower, which, I think, is the second time in 8 seasons of "24" that anyone has ever used the bathroom for anything. Brilliant idea! (More about that other bathroom experience later).

Vlad goes to his goons, and tells them to meet with Jack, make sure $5 million is in the account, and then kill him. Renee will then stick around as Vlad's love slave. Good! Jack hasn't killed anyone for a couple of hours, and now we're guaranteed of a couple of dead Ruskies.

At the White House, President Taylor, Weiss, and Ethan are watching a YouTube video of Hassan's security forces going all Rodney King on a dissident. Evidently, the British, Germans, and Egyptians have also seen the video, and are pulling out of the Peace Accords. In other words, the diplomats involved are about as stupid as everyone else we've met so far. Alison wants to meet up with all 12 delegates (without Hassan). I smell another attack on "unguarded" Important People coming up. Or maybe that was just the remnants of last night's chili...the aroma is quite similar.

Hassan looks over the report he's given after his forces have rounded up the usual suspects back in Kami-Iranstralia, and notices that one of the arrestees has a cousin in his inner circle with him there in New York...so he orders him arrested. Oops...Hassan looks like he might be losing it a bit. Later on, his chief of security Tarin arrests the aid...right in front of a British delegate to the conference. Tarin doesn't seem too happy about all of this, so he calls...Hassan's daughter Kayla. Hmmm, any possibility that THIS little soap opera subplot will be more interesting than Dana and KevinBob? Of course, being more interesting than Dana/KevinBob is about as difficult as it is to be taller than a jockey.

Wow! We go from one bathrooms in eight years to two references in thirty minutes, as Dana uses the excuse "I'm going to the bathroom" to get away from Arlo so she can plot KevinBob's

Great Warehouse Robbery. Again, there would be no reason to mention Arlo, except that Chloe gets the best slam of the year, ragging on him for drooling over Dana. Arlo accuses her of jealousy. So she responds,

"Oh, yeah. I'm jealous. Please...won't you stare at my ass as I walk away."

BAM! Chloe goes yard! And remains my hero. Cute that they did actually show Arlo staring at her ass as she walked away...and it's not really that bad of an ass to look at...not that I normally stare at women's asses, mind you (OK...will someone PLEASE stop me before I dig myself in any deeper?).

Now I am certain that CTU, being a very important government facility, would allow itself to be set up so that some redneck's POS van could park literally 50 feet from the front (glass) doors. It's unbelievable that the wri...ah, screw it...I give up. The plot device has now went Plaid , and I just don't see the need to keep beating this dead, redundant, ridiculous plot line. Time to move one...but only after I relate another excellent point from Gary Benz...

"I'd say it's the dumbest subplot ever, but then again these writers gave us Kim Bauer taking a shower in an underground bunker manned by Kevin Dillon because a cougar was on the prowl. Which reminds me, that cougar subplot could have gotten off the dumb list permanently if they had used it ironically. For example, it would have been far better if the underground bunker was manned by some nerdy but hunky high schooler that Kim then had to bang, cougar style. Another opportunity missed".

(Note: You don't have to be a demented sicko to write for TheClevelandFan...but it definitely helps...another example coming later).

Renee steps out of the shower (woo-hoo!), and in true stalker style, there's Vlad hoping for a peek. Vlad tries to force Renee to exchange sex for having the deal go through, and Renee is resigned to her fate, flushing her com device down the drain, along with the remaining shards of her self-esteem.

I've ignored the previous Josef and Oleg Go to the Doctor scene, because there wasn't much to see. But in the second scene, there is, as the doctor tells Josef that they can treat Oleg with drugs for several days to see if he's any better (I wonder that if they treat the writers with drugs for several days, will the scripts get any better?). The doc hears a knock at the door, and is greeted by a bullet to the head. Daddy tracked them down and had them kill everyone, of course. Because they are BAD people, and that's what bad people do.

Jack goes to his meet with a pair of Clark Kent glasses to disguise himself (Jack Bauer and Superman once arm wrestled with the loser having to agree to wear his underwear on the outside)...and no German accent...but when questioned in German, he answered flawlessly...albeit still with an American accent, that he tried to bluff his way out of. Not that it really blew that much of his cover anyway, since they were already planning to kill him, but I wonder if it will matter later "just in case he doesn't get killed in the next five minutes". Jack insists on talking to Vlad before showing them the money...which gets Vlad out of bed where he's just pulled a 5 minute special with Renee. Damn! That's just WRONG. Someone is going to pay for this. BTW, Renee looks about as thrilled as any woman would after a five minute roll in the sack with someone she really doesn't care that much about (note that Mitch is finally learning how to engage the Brain-to-Keyboard Filter, and isn't writing another word on this subject).

I now strike the earlier prediction that Jack kills Vlad. Renee is going to do it, and do it in a very, very nasty way. Just a little something to look forward to.

Vlad lets Renee in on the plan to bump off her contact once the money is confirmed. She tries to talk him out of it, but it doesn't work. So she thinks Jack is a goner.

Yeah...right. The money is transferred, and as the goons take out their guns, Cole takes out the goons from a rooftop across the street. OK, I now officially am in the Pro-Cole Camp. He deserves much better than trailer trash CTU analysts. In any case, Jack gets the phone from the last living goon, and calls Vlad...and it was one of the best scenes of the year listening to Jack just destroy the shocked Vlad, as he now has no real choice but to go through with the deal.

Renee finally shows something close to a human emotion as she hears that Jack is still alive. As stated many times before, these two are made for each other.

Oh, and then Corleonovich plugs his own son Oleg, just to show what a bad-ass he is. I wonder what the odds are that this will cause Josef to rat out his old man? I also wonder what the odds are that someone will ask a stupid question on media day during Super Bowl week?

Final Thoughts

I'm being woefully weak in my predictions so far, as there just isn't that much unique happening to offer conjecture on. Or should I substitute "interesting" for "unique"?

No Fredo Hassan this week, so he's been at least an hour going at the SkankHos from last episode. I hope Vitaly keeps a good supply of Keflex around...right next to the Viagara.

I already had my Clark Kent comment made about Jack's glasses, but Dave, one of the frequent contributors to the TCF boards brought up the fact that Jack looked "like Peter "Ralphie" Billingsley in ‘A Christmas Story'" Good point.

I love that I get responses from other writers from TheClevelandFan about the 24 recaps. Jerry Roche, a great freelance writer/editor who now graces us with excellent columns here, came up with an excellent potential ending for this year's show, that I simply must share.

Day 8, 3:59 p.m.

Jack Bauer, astride a Harley, flips open his cell phone.

Bauer: "YES, KIM, I WAS DELAYED. BUT WE'RE ON OUR WAY NOW. SEE YOU IN A COUPLE DAYS."

Bauer closes the phone and turns to Agent Renee Walker.

Bauer: "HOP ON, YOU CRAZY BITCH".

She does so, putting her arms firmly around Bauer¹s waist. The two ride off into the sunset.

Agent Cole Ortiz waves good-bye and turns to Chloe O'Brien.

Ortiz: "WHO WAS THAT MASKED MAN?"

Fade to black.

What's really sad is that Jerry's probably five times the writer than the idiots on the work-release program that Fox is currently using to write the KevinBob subplot. (and if that's how the show actually does end, Jerry and I will be splitting the money from the lawsuit).

Bauer Body Count

Stays at three for this week as well. Sadly disappointed the Jack didn't pop at least one of the goons.

Expiration Dates / Chances of Survival

Some updates for this list, plus a recap of the Recently Departed.

Anticipated Time of Remaining Life for Key 24 Characters, and the odds that they will survive the "day".

Escorted Feet-First off the Island: Dr. Levine. And here I said he had a 50-50 chance of being dead by midnight. That was the equivalent of a huge golf swing with a driver that results in a semi-topped ball that rolls 125 yards forward in the fairway. It didn't totally suck, but not quite what I was aiming for.

Escorted Feet-First off the Island: Oleg. Last week I predicted 0% chance of survival, and dead by 12 AM. A well struck drive that landed in the fairway, but a few feet off the rough.

KevinBob's Hilljack Friend JimRay - Dead by 11 PM. Chances of survival: 0%

KevinBob - Also Dead by 11 PM. Dana will find some way to get them into some place for "a big score", but will also set it up that they are ambushed, and killed before they can talk. Chances of survival: 0%

Fredo Hassan - Dead by 12 AM. Either fornicates himself to death, or else is shot by Vitaly as he decides to go with Jack's winning bid for the uranium. Then again, he may still escape by Bic-ing Vitaly in the neck, and running away to cause even more mischief. Chances of survival: 10%.

Vitaly Corleonovich - Dead by 1 AM. This is the time that the exchange of the nuclear rods is supposed to go down. Chances of survival: 5%

Vladimir - Dead by 4 AM. I think that the Marsellus Washington, alluded to earlier in this recap, would be kinder in dispatching Vlad than what Renee (or Jack) will be. Chances of survival: 0%

Josef - Dead by 8 AM. Was 1 AM, it's now pushed back as I think he'll eventually turn on his father. Chances of survival: 25%

Ethan Kanin - Dead by 8 AM. Last week I was talking about the heart problems. I think now he'll just die of boredom being around President Taylor. Chances of survival: 20%

BubbaHastings - Dead by 3 PM. He's the head of CTU. It's a requirement. Chances of survival: 75% (just to piss me off, they'll probably keep him).

Dana Starbuck - Dead by 4 PM. Her plans unravel, and she gets to be the Suicide of the Season for this year. Chances of survival: 50%

Renee Walker - Dead by 4 PM. Just when she's decided that she's OK with living...she gets Teri Bauered at the end. Chances of survival: 25% (down from 30% last week).