

Why Were They Cancelled?

1st ed.



**By
John J. Joex**

**The Plight of Science
Fiction and Fantasy
Television in the Face
of the Unforgiving
Nielsen and Networks**

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Forward

(October, 2012)

This book is compiled from my internet **Cancellation Watch** column that I have been writing over the past four plus years (currently running on CancelledSciFi.com) that tracks the success, or lack thereof, of sci fi shows in the Nielsen ratings. My goal for the book is to deliver a basic understanding of how the Niensens—the standard system designed to measure what shows people watch—work and how they factor into the network decisions on whether to cancel or renew a series. It is also my hope to answer some of the questions about this whole process that have regularly come my way. Most of what I have written here I have previously covered in my regular ongoing column, though maybe not in as much detail. And I have pulled most of my information on the ratings and how they impact network decision making from various industry sources like *The Hollywood Reporter*, *Variety*, *Deadline Hollywood*, *TV by the Numbers* and more. For the cancelled shows that I have tracked in the second half of the book, I have pulled that research from some of the same sources mentioned above as well as other locations like Wikipedia and IMDb as well as various books and websites covering television shows.

The goal is for you to walk away from this read with a good understanding of the basics of how the ratings work and how they affect the shows you watch, and more specifically arm you with some additional knowledge of why past television shows ended up getting cancelled. But consider this just Round One.

I'm already hard at work on the next pass in which I hope to take a *deeper* dive into the workings of the Niensens and the decision making of the network executives. I actually contacted the Nielsen company while working on this current book hoping to get full ratings charts as well as some more in-depth information, but after an initial exchange of Emails, they just ignored my requests (*there's* some fodder for those sure that the Niensens and the networks are part of a massive conspiracy against all sci fi shows). I'm still digging, and I am also in the process of contacting individuals who work or have worked for the networks and/or have been involved in the production of various sci fi TV series. I'd like to tap into an insider look at this whole process the next time around to expand on the information that I already have here.

To be fair, I realize that I likely have not answered *all* of the questions you have here and I've certainly not covered every sci fi series, but feel free to write to me (cancelledscifi@gmail.com) and I will try to cover all these additional questions in my **Cancellation Watch** column and future editions of this book. Or, if you work in the industry or have been closely connected with a sci fi television series, please contact me so that I can add as much insider information to upcoming editions as well.

So enjoy what I have so far and know that more is coming and that hopefully we can make this an interactive experience going forward with fans and industry insiders working together to help us all understand why our favorite science fiction and fantasy shows were cancelled before their time.

--John J. Joex

Update (November, 2025): The story of this book is pretty much over. When it was first published back in 2012, that was right at the very beginning of the Peak TV era (and before that term was coined), and scripted originals aired primarily on the broadcast networks and cable channels at that time. This book focuses on the Nielsen ratings and how they influenced, for many years, whether or not sci fi and fantasy television shows would be cancelled. That is a fascinating tale of the initial sixty-plus years of television, but the fact is that the paradigm in which the Niensens had such control over which shows survived has gone through a dramatic shift, and it is no longer fully accurate for the current television landscape.

The Niensens still exist and probably will not be going away anytime soon. But they no longer have as much influence over what you watch on television (though that company may argue differently). The fact is that with the arrival of Peak TV, which includes the rise of the streaming services, the industry has gone through a major upheaval. Many of the content providers, particularly the digital platforms, have no need for the numbers gathered through Nielsen's sampling process as they have their own viewership data to guide their decision-making. The old-school providers—the broadcast networks and basic cable channels—still rely on the Nielsen stats, but they are rapidly moving away from scripted programming, especially sci fi and fantasy entries. And the old way of measuring viewership is slipping increasingly into the past.

But for those who want to know why shows like *Star Trek*, *Space: 1999*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Max Headroom*, *Farscape*, *Firefly*, and more were cancelled, this book will provide those answers. It offers a look back at television history, starting in the early 1950s and then going up through the first decade of the 21st Century, covering many of the major cancellations from that time while also shedding light on the thinking of network execs during those years. This book is still relevant, but its story caps off right about the time it was originally published.

I have continued the tale, though, in the second edition of *Why Were They Cancelled?* That one recaps some of what is covered here, but it also picks up with the changes that came with the arrival of Peak TV while looking ahead to what we can expect in the coming years. That edition is currently available, and if you enjoy this book, you will likely want to keep reading to understand why sci fi TV shows continue to get cancelled even though Nielsen has much less influence over their fates these days.

***Why Were They Cancelled?* (2nd Ed.) *The Plight of Science Fiction and Fantasy Television Against Unforgiving Ratings and Network Cancellations* (2025) [Print](#) | [eBook](#)**

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***Cancelled Sci Fi TV: 1949 to 2015: The Ultimate Guide to Cancelled Science Fiction and Fantasy TV Shows* (2016) [eBook](#)**

***Sci Fi Genre Gems: Forgotten magic and hidden treasures from the worlds of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror* (2014) [eBook](#)**

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I have also put out two fiction works with more on the way:

The Space-Time Chronicles Vol 1: Time Enough for Living (2025) [Print](#) | [eBook](#)

Road Rage (2024) [Print](#) | [eBook](#)

Also, be sure to follow me at my websites CancelledSciFi.com and Cult-SciFi.com.

Table of Contents

Part 1

[Why Were Our Favorite TV Shows Cancelled?](#)

[Why Am I So Fascinated With the Ratings?](#)

[Just What Are the Nielsens?](#)

[Why Do the Networks Rely on the Nielsens and how do They Dictate a Show's Fate?](#)

[A Brief Look at the Life Cycle of a Television Show](#)

[Does it Really Come Down to Tyrannical Ratings and Cold Hard Cash to Keep a Series Going?](#)

[But What About Internet, DVR Viewing, and Episode Downloads? Those are Measures of a Show's Popularity as Well](#)

[Why Do They Keep Stupid Stuff like the Bachelor and American Idol on TV Instead of Good Shows like Firefly and Jericho?](#)

[Why Do the Networks and the Nielsens Hate Sci Fi Shows?](#)

[Why Do Sci Fi Shows Get Cancelled More Often Than Others?](#)

[Which Sci Fi Series have Managed to Top the Ratings?](#)

[Is There a Better Way of Measuring the Success of Sci Fi Shows?](#)

[Are There Other Viable Options for Episodic Sci Fi?](#)

[Do "Save My Show" Campaigns Really Work?](#)

[Is There a Better Way to Convince the Networks to Save a Show?](#)

[Will Netflix be the Savior of All Cancelled Sci Fi Shows?](#)

[Why Do Some Shows with Lower Ratings Get Renewed and Others with Higher Ratings Get Cancelled?](#)

[Do All the Networks Treat Sci Fi Shows the Same?](#)

[How Much Longer Will We Have to Put Up With the Nielsens?](#)

Part 2

Cancelled Sci Fi TV Series

Some Case Studies in Sci Fi TV Show Cancellations

Star Trek

Battlestar: Galactica

Mork & Mindy

Twin Peaks

Firefly

Jericho

Fringe

Cancelled (and Not Cancelled) Shows from Past Two Seasons

Why Did These Shows, Which Struggled in the Ratings, Survive?

Why Were These Shows Cancelled?

More Cancelled Shows from Throughout the Years

Appendix – Sci Fi Shows in the Nielsen Top 30 Over the Years

Part 1

Why Were Our Favorite Sci Fi TV Shows Cancelled?

Every year it's the same story. A new set of television shows bow on the broadcast or cable networks, and there's always a few offerings in the science fiction and fantasy genres (more and more these days, as a matter of fact). Maybe you get attached to one or two (or more) of these, but then, after the season ends, or perhaps even by mid-season, the show (or shows) you have been following—and become quite attached to—disappear never to be seen again. And just as the series was really getting good and the story was developing into one of the best sci fi shows *ever!*

So what happened? Where did it go? Why were no more episodes of this monumental show ever produced?

The short answer: it got cancelled. And it got cancelled because the Nielsen ratings were low.

But why, you ask? Why were the ratings low? Who decides when the ratings are too low and what criteria do they use? Why do some shows with lower ratings survive while others with higher numbers get the axe? Why do certain types of shows, especially sci fi, seem to get cancelled more often than others? And just what are these ratings in the first place, and who makes them up?

These are questions that *all* fans of sci fi TV have asked at some point, so don't feel alone, and these questions and more are what this book is here to answer. It seems like all too many times a sci fi series has ended way too soon, and fans across the globe find themselves enraged and wanting to understand what happened to their favorite show. Unfortunately, the answers are quite varied and sometimes there's just no easy way to get to the bottom of why a particular show was cancelled. But we can at least get an idea or basic understanding to help give us a glimpse at how the network executives think (don't look *too* hard, though, you know that old warning about beholding the face of Medusa).

In this book, I will take a look at the Nielsen ratings system, how it originated, and why it became so vital to the survival of television shows (*all* of them, not just sci fi). I will also try to shed some light on the nuts and bolts of how the numbers work and what networks are looking for to determine if a show is successful. Also, I will look at some of the crazy fan campaigns that arose to save cancelled sci fi shows and whether in general these really work. And in the second section of the book, I will cover an extensive sampling of cancelled genre shows, including some of the most notorious, and I'll also look at a few that survived against the odds.

So prepare yourself for a journey into the netherworld that is the Nielsen ratings and the networks that rely upon them. I may not deliver *all* the answers you're looking for, especially if you're seeking specific info on one or more *select* cancellations (write to me if I don't, though), but I hope to at least shed *some* light on what drives those cancellations. Hopefully some of what I cover here will be informative even if I know more of it will enrage many sci fi fans rather than enlighten them. But know that change is in the air. Hopefully within the next decade or so the sci fi genre will not suffer quite as much from the tyranny of the Nielsen ratings. Whether that means they will get *cancelled* less remains to be seen.

Why Am I So Fascinated With the Ratings?

As a sci fi fan growing up in the pre-*Star Wars* era of the 70's, there was not much in the way genre offerings on Prime Time television. The Golden Age of science fiction from the 1960's (the age of *The Twilight Zone*, *Star Trek*, *The Outer Limits*, *The Prisoner*, etc.) had passed, and the networks offered only a few paltry genre selections throughout much of the 70's. Sure, the classics like *Trek* and *Twilight Zone* ran regularly in syndication on the UHF stations (younger readers should feel free to look that term up Wikipedia), but nothing much was on in the evenings apart from the quasi-super hero shows like *The Man From Atlantis* and *The Six Million Dollar Man* that would come and go and a few other short-lived entries like *The Planet of the Apes* and *The Invisible Man*.

And after having seen the same episodes of *Star Trek*, *The Twilight Zone*, *The Outer Limits* (and, well, *Gilligan's Island*) over and over (and over and over) again in reruns, I wondered when we would finally get some *new* episodes. But then something happened right about the middle of that decade that led to me understanding a whole lot more about how television works. And it involved a new television series that debuted in the Fall of 1975.

I believe that I first read about *Space: 1999* in an issue of *TV Guide* or maybe it was in the TV section of my local paper (*Starlog* was still more than a year away from its initial launch). Wherever I heard about it, my interest was definitely piqued and I could not wait for this show to hit the airwaves. It had a look similar to *2001: A Space Odyssey* and it was going to deliver an action-packed, sfx-heavy, sci fi adventure *each week!* And when it arrived, it lived up to all of my expectations (which weren't particularly high at that young age). I found myself in awe of what I considered the *best* science fiction television show up to that point in time. Sure, in retrospect it doesn't stand up well to the test of time because of its poor science and its misguided reaches at profundity, but for a pre-adolescent boy living in that era, it was pretty darn cool! I even liked the ersatz second season that pretty much dispensed with any attempt to tell a story in favor of having some bizarre creature run amok each week on the moonbase wreaking havoc.

But then that fateful day came in early 1977 when I picked up a copy of *Starlog* #6 and saw these horrifying words on the cover: "*Space: 1999* Cancellation!!!" I was in shock and could not believe it. I quickly leafed through the issue to find the article, hoping surely that it was some sort of misprint. (It was supposed to read "*Space: 1999* Avoids Cancellation!!!", right?) But there it was on the printed page, the declaration that my favorite sci fi series of that day would never live to see a third season.

I can't remember exactly, but I'm sure I understood *prior* to that about networks cancelling television shows. *Star Trek* was another of my favorites (just behind *Space: 1999*) and I had read a ton about the show, and I'm sure I knew all about NBC's attempt to cancel it after its second season and the infamous write-in campaign that saved it. But that was all *past history*, and seemed to have taken place in an unenlightened age where networks made poor decisions and suffered the consequences. Surely the write-in campaign that saved *Trek* had taught them their lesson and they would never make such a foolish move again, right?

But they *had*, and they cancelled the show that us diehard fans believed would one day enlighten us all and unlock the mysteries of the universe (heck, they paid a visit to *God* in the episode "The Black Hole" didn't they?).

Then it hit me . . . Television shows *got cancelled* and that was the reason that only a finite numbers of episodes existed. And the lives of television shows were dictated by this mysterious thing known as the Nielsen Ratings. Somewhere, at the top of a lofty tower sat these people cranking out numbers that could ruin people's lives by cancelling their favorite television shows. It was then, at that very moment, I knew I had to know *more* about these Niensens and where their numbers came from. I had to find out how I could be forewarned if another show I liked was in danger from their ironclad, heartless decisions.

I discovered that my local paper had a weekly column that tracked the ratings, usually just the Top 10-20 and maybe the bottom 5, but occasionally they would list *all* of the week's shows (there weren't nearly as many back then with only three broadcast networks). And I quickly became addicted to this data, watching for the piece each week to see which shows scored well and which ones sank to the bottom. And *then*, more new science fiction shows started to show up on television and I would watch their fates as dictated by these haughty, tyrannical Niensens.

The Fantastic Journey and ***Logan's Run*** TV series came and went, each within a matter of months. ***The Man from Atlantis*** sunk after only one season. The pre-***Robocop*** series ***Future Cop*** barely even registered. And even the surefire, big-budget TV blockbusters like ***Battlestar: Galactica*** and ***Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*** succumbed to the autocracy of the Niensens. These ratings seemed to present an insurmountable hurdle to *all* science fiction shows and certainly took much glee in breaking the hearts of genre fans indiscriminately and on a regular basis.

I watched the Nielsen numbers each week and I cursed them, all the while commiserating with other fans through fanzines and the convention network (the great-great granddaddies of the current social networks) as we were all certain that the Niensens lorded over a vast conspiracy against *everything* sci fi.

And to this day, many genre fans still believe that. My mission continues and I have followed the Niensens since that time in the late 70's when I first discovered that they existed. And I have been writing a column about them for the past four plus years, tracking the numbers and predicting which shows will survive and which ones will get the axe.

Through all of this, I have learned that there is actually not a grand conspiracy cooked up by the people at the Nielsen company or the networks with the expressed goal of seeing that all science fiction shows meet an untimely demise (no *really*, there isn't... Though maybe I'm *part* of the conspiracy, and *that's* exactly what you would *expect* me to say . . .). Yes, I understand your frustrations and have felt them many times myself. No matter how well we understand how the system works and why the networks make the decisions they do, we will continue to play arm-chair quarterback and deride them for their foolish decisions to cancel our favorite genre shows well before their time.

Just What Are the Niensens?

Arthur Nielsen started up his company back in the 1920's at first focused on market research and then in the 30's he began to measure the number of people tuning in to the various radio programs that offered nightly entertainment for the average American family back then (yes, they just *listened* to their shows, and without stereo or Dolby sound either). His quickly became the "go to" company for the entertainment industry, and when television started to take off in the 1950's, he shifted his firm's focus to where the growing audience was. The Nielsen company rapidly became the primary source for measuring what television audiences watched and has remained the undisputed leader since.

The Nielsen company uses two primary means of gathering data: viewer diaries and Set Meters. The former involves viewers manually recording what they watched for a week in a diary supplied by the company. The latter is a device that attaches to a television and records viewing activity on a minute by minute basis. The diaries are used to put together statistical models looking at viewing patterns and also play an important part in the "sweeps" months (the ones most closely monitored by the networks and advertisers for TV viewing). The Set Meters provide the more immediate numbers (the "Overnights") from the sample audience that are then extrapolated out to estimate the full audience among television viewers. These are the numbers that networks (and advertisers) are looking for to find out the next day how many people tuned in to watch a show.

The two primary measurements reported by the Niensens for television programs are rating and share. A rating point represents 1% of the estimated total number of households with televisions for a given season. For the 2012-13 season, Nielsen's estimate is 114.2 households (they re-evaluate this each season), so one ratings point would represent 1,142,000 households. The rating measures the total number of households that tuned in for a show at any given moment while the share measures the total households watching a show during its timeslot. These numbers are further honed based on demographics with the 18-49 group as the most important to the networks and their sponsors because these people have purchasing power and typically respond the best to advertising. In some cases a different or narrower demographic may be sought, like with children's programming or shows aimed at young adults, but typically the 18-49 rating tends to be the most important.

The Nielsen company's method of tracking viewership has been the target of much criticism and has been under fire for many years. The diaries are subjective and lack accuracy because they rely on people tracking their viewing habits without fudging the data (are you *really* going to admit in print that you watched ***Keeping Up With the Kardashians*** instead of committing just a little white lie and claiming you watched that biography on Abraham Lincoln over on the History channel?). They also do not qualify as a fully *random* sample because viewers have to *agree* to receive the diaries and take part in the survey. This latter criticism also pertains to the use of the set meters. In addition, the Nielsen company tends to target families mostly in a suburban setting with less attention given to rural areas, college dormitories, restaurants/bars, or other non-familial household locations where people might watch television. There are also claims that their sample of households is too small. And then the Niensens also do not factor in Internet viewing and/or purchases of episodes for download, both of which could represent a substantial part of the audience for a particular show (Joss Whedon's ***Dollhouse***, which had notoriously low ratings, regularly topped the iTunes TV downloads early in its run). Also, DVR viewing beyond same day is discounted in a large part because advertisers know that people will fast-forward through the commercials.

Despite all this, the Niensens still reign over the televising ratings and each season their numbers help determine which shows live and which ones will die. And science fiction fans regularly scream that the Niensens have a bias against genre shows that often leads to their untimely demise. They also claim that this outdated system does not track the *true* audience because a more technically savvy demographic typically watches these shows in a method and time apart from when they air live.

Why Do the Networks Rely on the Niensens and How do They Dictate a Show's Fate?

The simple answer? The Nielsen company got the ball rolling years ago and it is still barreling along today. The broadcast networks and cable channels *know* the Niensens and how they work, and even if they acknowledge the flaws in the system, they simply have nothing *better* to go with. Alternates to the Niensens have popped up from time to time, but nothing has stuck, leaving television execs still tied to the old stalwart when making cancellation and renewal decisions. And the fact is that the Nielsen company has acknowledged that they need to change to adapt to the way that television viewership has evolved. For several years they have been working on overhauling their system, though it still works today basically the same way it did ten, twenty, even thirty years in the past. Fundamentally, the networks need *some* form of measurement because that's what their advertisers demand to help them decide if they will lay out the cash to pay for commercial time.

The process itself is actually quite simple. The Niensens record the viewership and determine which are the most and least watched shows on television. Advertisers want their products seen, so they pay more money for shows that have higher viewership, based on the Nielsen measurements. For a new series with no historical ratings yet, the networks will give their sponsors estimates of the ratings they expect based on test audience responses and/or other statistical models (yes, a *dartboard* might factor in there someplace). If the show hits the promised threshold, then *great*. If not, then the network usually has to make up for that with free spots at another time or some other form of compensation. This also pertains to existing shows that start to slide in the ratings and fall below the numbers that a network promised to its sponsors.

In any case, if a show does well in the ratings, then advertisers want to buy commercial time and sometimes will even agree to pay a premium. If it does not do well, then they won't want to advertise their products there or will want a discounted rate. Since television shows cost money, they need advertisers to cover the cost of their production (with the exception of the pay channels like HBO and Showtime which make money based on subscribers). If the show cannot generate enough in the way of advertising costs to turn a profit, then it gets cancelled. The Niensens tell the networks how many people are tuning in for their shows. The advertisers pay for commercial time based on this data. Thus the Niensens directly dictate the fate of shows on commercial television (and influence the pay channels as well). There are a few other factors that might figure in as well (merchandising, DVD sales, the international audience), but those rarely make enough of a difference to change the basic process flow.

As I mentioned above, The Nielsen company is currently in the process of revising their system to offer a cross-platform measurement that will integrate television and Internet viewing and that may later expand to include other viewing platforms. This is a sign of improvement in their measurements and it is something that the networks and advertisers have been asking for. I've heard of no specific date for when this new system will be in place, nor is it completely clear how it will work, but at least it is a sign that the Nielsen company is trying to get in line with current technology and offer a more thorough set of measurements (yeah, I know they are several years behind the times, but large corporations rarely adjust quickly).

A Brief Look at the Life Cycle of a Television Show

Of course the Nielsen ratings are only one *part* of the overall puzzle. It makes some sense at this point to take a step back and look at that bigger picture of creating and producing a television series and determining how many seasons it will run. This is pretty much a fifty thousand foot view of the process but should give you a better understanding of the life cycle of a television series.

It begins with a pitch to a network of an idea for a series and if they like what they hear they will usually commission a *pilot*. This is an initial episode that introduces the characters, settings, premises, etc. The network usually fronts the money for the pilot and the creative team will put this together and come back and present it to the execs who will then make the decision on whether to move forward with this to series (what is referred to as the "pilot season" usually takes place in the Spring months). Dozens and dozens of pilots are produced each year and some of these are screened for test audiences and some are shown in venues such as the San Diego Comic Con to get feedback and/or generate buzz. Yet many of these simply disappear, never to be seen by more than a handful of people and never given the chance to blossom as a television series. But a few do get the greenlight and these move forward into production for a television season. Also, sometimes the network might ask for the pilot to be re-tooled and revised because they liked something about the premise but did not care for the execution (this happened with the original *Star Trek*).

Typically, when a network picks up a pilot to series these days, they will order an additional twelve episodes to have a full initial order of thirteen (considered a *half* season even though a full season rarely goes longer than twenty two episodes). In some cases, when the network has less faith in the series or may be reluctant to invest too much money because of high production costs, they may order fewer episodes. But thirteen hours is usually the target initial run for a series (if the pilot goes two hours, then typically *eleven* additional episodes will be ordered).

Then the show has its first broadcast and the Niensens render their harsh verdict. And the early numbers are often vital to the success of a show. More often than not, a series has its best numbers of the season with its first episodes and then the ratings tend to trend downward from there (sometimes slightly, sometimes dramatically). In some cases, a show may start lower and then build up an audience, but this is less common (though last season's *Person of Interest* did just that). And for some shows, especially those that like to end on a cliffhanger, the season finale can pull in a significant number of viewers as well, typically higher than the average episode.

If a show debuts with moderate to low numbers, then its days quickly become numbered. As I mentioned, sometimes a show manages to build up an audience, but more often the network makes a decision on its fate before it gets that chance. Usually, they will let a show air out its initial order of episodes. But in some cases, when the numbers are *really* low, they may pull the plug almost right away. Other times, they may shuffle the show off to low-viewership nights like Friday or Saturday to burn off the remaining episodes before cancelling it. Or they may run the episodes in the Summer months just to fulfill their obligation. If any of these scenarios emerge, then the show is almost certainly headed to cancellation.

If the new series pulls moderate to good (or dare I say *excellent*) ratings, or it does the unthinkable and *builds up* an audience, then typically the network will pick up what is referred to as the "back nine" episodes. This will give the show a full season of twenty two episodes (down from the twenty four we typically saw ten to twenty years ago and the twenty six plus we saw before that). Sometimes a

network will not have a whole lot of faith in a show but still order more episodes to fill up the schedule because it is cheaper than starting up a whole new series (or they simply don't have anything else waiting in the pipeline ready to replace it). Sometimes they see some promise in a show (and at least passable ratings) and they give it that back nine hoping the show will build up some steam (FOX did that with ***Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles*** in the show's second season).

As the season draws to an end, then the network has to decide which shows to renew and which to cancel. Again, network execs turn to the Nielsen numbers to decide whether to keep a show running. Once a show has a good share of its season under its belt, then execs look less at the overnights and more at season to date averages and weekly trends. But if the most recent trends are downward, that usually tends to work against a show. If the numbers have been stable or if they are moving northward, network execs will be much happier. And sometimes, if a show scores well with a particular demographic, that can help as well. As I mentioned above, the 18-49 age range is the demo usually tracked, but sometimes good performance in a narrower range can help, i.e., ***Heroes*** did very well in the 18-34 demographic which kept the series alive as its overall ratings declined in its later seasons.

Ultimately, the networks make their decisions to renew or cancel based on which shows they believe will draw in the most viewers in the upcoming season. They may pay attention to write-in campaigns or other attempts to bring attention to a show (more on that [below](#)) like fans eating at Subway (***Chuck***) or pummeling the network with nuts (***Jericho***). But ultimately it comes down to which shows people are watching and thus the ones most advertisers want to sponsor, which ultimately make the most money for the network. For those shows that *do* get renewed, they face the same cycle starting the next season, hoping to keep enough viewers watching to earn yet another year's worth of episodes.

Does it Really Come Down to Tyrannical Ratings and Cold Hard Cash to Keep a Series Going?

Yes. On to the next question.

Not a good enough answer? Okay . . . I'll revise that to 99% of the time, but that's as much as I will concede.

The fact is that the television networks are businesses and businesses are set up to make money and when one of their products is not making money then it's time to cut it loose. Can you really blame them for that? Can you really expect them to take a loss year in and year out simply to keep *your* favorite show going that not many other people are watching?

Okay, I already know *your* answer to that question. Let's move on.

The truth is that there *are* other factors that come into play when a network decides whether to renew or cancel a series, but the earlier in its run, the more that the numbers dictate its fate.

One of the strange things about this is that networks rarely make a profit on a new scripted series during its first season. Production costs for scripted shows on television are high and continue to rise each year. The broadcast networks pay somewhere in the neighborhood of one to two million dollars per episode for a half hour comedy show and two to four million (or more) per episode for a full hour drama series (the cable networks typically pay less, though sometimes the budgets are on par). On top of that are the ramp up costs for the first season with pilots for a show sometimes running \$5 to \$10 million

(FOX's *Terra Nova* allegedly ran between \$10 and \$20 million). And after the first season, the cost per episode for a show typically *increases* each year as the salaries of the cast and crew rise. If a series pulls decent ratings, then sales of commercial time might bring it to break even during its first season or more likely they will fall short. But the networks know this going in and do not expect *every* show to make a profit each year. But they have to start earning their keep at some point.

In the past, networks had only a few ways to recoup the costs that they sunk into a television series. The primary initial revenue source was (and still is) advertising sold for the show. Then they might make some money through merchandising or licensing the property. And if the show manages to stay on the air long enough, then it can bring in the *big bucks* through sales in syndication where it lives on in reruns on the cable networks or local channels. Yet the syndication market typically wants a *minimum* number of episodes of a series before they will consider buying it. This is usually in the neighborhood of eighty eight episodes (four full seasons) or more as this allows the show to be run daily for several months before it starts to repeat itself. Thus shows that lasted only one or two seasons (or less) rarely make it into extended syndication runs (though several short-lived sci fi shows *have* had successful runs in syndication like the original *Battlestar: Galactica*, *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century*, *The Adventures of Brisco County Jr.*, and more).

More recently, the home video market offers another revenue source that a television show can generate, though this market did not really take off until economically priced DVD sets began to see notable sales figures beginning in the early to mid 00's. Nowadays even more revenue sources have begun to present themselves such as Internet streaming (with advertising spots included) and episode downloads through services like iTunes and Amazon Instant Video. Still, none of the newer revenue sources have proven that they can *supplant* the old model of commercials and eventual sale to the syndication market as far as bringing in the big bucks that networks crave. Thus we get back to those heartless ratings, and the money they generate through advertising sales, which dictate the lives of so many Prime Time shows.

But What About Internet, DVR Viewing, and Episode Downloads? Those are Measures of a Show's Popularity as Well

It's absolutely true that Internet viewing as well as delayed viewing on DVRs *are* important measurements of the audience of a show. But both of these tend to generate less response to advertising, which again I must emphasize pays for the production costs. When a show is online at a network's website or a service like Hulu.com, it runs with adds, but it has fewer commercial spots and advertisers pay less for these (significantly so, from what I understand). And when people watch a show on DVR after its scheduled time, they almost always forward through the commercials, which obviously advertisers are not thrilled about.

I see numbers published for DVR viewing (at sites like [TV by the Numbers](http://TVbytheNumbers.com)) and these tend to improve some shows' overall ratings better than others, especially Friday night broadcasts. And sci fi shows tend to have higher DVR and Internet viewing than other genres because the fans tend to be more tech-savvy. The Nielsens are currently in the process of working toward a revised system that will include Internet and DVR viewing, though likely on a sliding scale. These *should* be factored in, but understand their reduced value is because of the limited advertising exposure.

Episode downloads are another story, and while these have not made a big difference yet, I believe they can become an important means of sustaining a show at some point. The difference here is that the network is getting *paid* every time someone downloads an episode. How much the network and/or studio actually *gets* per download I cannot say. For example, if they had a million downloads at a buck a pop of the most recent episode of ***Vampire Diaries***, I don't believe they made a *cool million* right there. But the episode *did* generate some significant revenue. But as with Internet viewing, I have not found a consistently reliable source of how many downloads an episode of a series has on a weekly basis, and that million number I threw out is likely much, much higher than the average download of a new episode. I'm guessing it's somewhere in the range of a few thousand to maybe tens of thousands, but definitely well below a million. Though I could be completely off base there.

And this is where I will get on my soap box for a moment as I believe this is an area where the broadcast and cable networks are currently missing the boat. When I have seen episodes for a currently running series available for download, the price is usually in the \$2 to \$4 range. Sorry, but that's *too high*. Price them at a buck an episode and maybe the premium channels like HBO can ask \$2 per episode for their original programming like ***True Blood*** and ***Game of Thrones*** (which annoyingly are not available at *all* for download for new seasons). Or set up a subscription to a series (I believe iTunes already does something like this) that works out to about that same price range. This makes it affordable and you can get the whole season for about the same price or even less than its eventual DVD release (which you will probably still buy because of the extras it offers). I believe that pricing like this would increase the popularity of downloads and would give the network a certain revenue source to cover the cost to produce a series. And they are *still* making money on the advertising spots for the live broadcasts. This will likely improve the chances of many sci fi series as they have typically had higher download rates than other genres. We could see more of a move in the direction of downloading shows in the future, but it doesn't seem to have quite caught on yet.

Why Do They Keep Stupid Stuff like the Bachelor and American Idol on TV Instead of Good Shows like Firefly and Jericho?

Television is a wasteland, and let's face facts, it's been that way pretty much since the beginning. But it's not *all* bad and we have had plenty of gems across *all* genres since the boob tube first became popular back in the early 50's. Nowadays, though, it seems like reality shows dominate original programming on the broadcast and cable networks and the fact is that they *do* take up a good chunk of the schedule. So why do we get inundated with brain-dead shows like ***Fear Factor***, ***The Bachelor***, ***American Idol***, or the particularly bad ones like ***My Big Fat Obnoxious Fiancé*** or ***Temptation Island*** when intelligent, inventive shows like ***Firefly***, ***Jericho***, and ***Pushing Daisies*** get the axe?

And the answer is . . . *wait* for it . . . it's all about the money. Once again.

As I mentioned above, scripted programming can be expensive to produce and often shows do not turn a profit during their first season (and sometimes not at *all* during their original run). It takes high ratings as well as syndication and DVD sales to get a scripted TV series into the black, and if a show comes out of the gate struggling then the network may decide it makes more sense to cancel it early rather than potentially throw good money after bad. But it's not quite the same story for a reality show for the very simple fact that they are usually cheap to produce.

A typical reality series (even some of the high-profile ones) can cost half as much to make as a scripted show or even less. And the fact is that they often get *better* ratings than many scripted shows (we have no one to blame but ourselves for that). And even if they do not pull particularly overwhelming numbers, they can still turn a profit. FOX's *Kitchen Nightmares* drew only a slightly larger audience than its low-rated lead-out series *Fringe* this last season on Friday nights, but the network keeps renewing it because it's cheap and it turns a profit. And many of these reality shows will have little to no extended life in syndication or on DVD. They serve the purpose of cheap, throwaway television, and they do that while turning a profit.

So why do the networks play stupid stuff like *The Bachelor* and *American Idol*? The question we really should be asking is why do they bother with *scripted* shows when those are more likely than not to lose money and get cancelled? (The sad truth is that the *majority* of new scripted shows, sci fi or not, get the axe during their first season)

The fact is that networks really *do* care about quality programming . . . And now I will pause for a moment to wait for you to stop laughing out loud.

No really, they *do* care. If they didn't, they would just fill up their schedules with reality programming and call it a day, and they would probably make a decent enough profit doing so. But they *do* want to have something with some substance on their schedules (yes I know that the majority of scripted programming on Prime Time still falls short of that measure, but work with me here). Also, and here's where money comes back into the picture, scripted shows have the potential to bring in the *big dollars*. As I mentioned above, if these shows last long enough to move into syndication and to generate multiple DVD sets, then they really turn into a profitable venture. Reality shows tend to have less value in the syndication market, and also generate less in DVD sales. They are the quick buck whereas scripted shows can be the long-term revenue generators.

So the networks have an impetus to keep producing scripted television shows, but they're going to go with the productions that have the best chance of staying on the air and turning profitable. And *that* comes back to gauging the ratings numbers week in and week out to determine which shows people are watching (according to the Niensens) and which shows sponsors want to spend money on for commercial time. As it stands, it's all somewhat of a vicious cycle with quality programming often suffering in the process.

Why Do the Networks and the Niensens Hate Sci Fi Shows?

They don't. No *really*, they don't.

No network *wants* a show to get cancelled, even a sci fi show. They put up a lot of money to produce a series, and they hope that *every one* of them will be a hit. So that age-old idea among fans that there is a conspiracy against sci fi just isn't true. Sure, some of the network executives may not *care* much for the genre or may pass over shows during pilot season because they have less confidence in sci fi programming. But once that show gets onto the schedule, they want it to succeed. That's the way that business works. You don't put a product out there unless you want people to buy it.

Of course that doesn't mean that the network execs won't make some—shall we say—*questionable* decisions on a show. Why did FOX air *Firefly* out of order and why didn't they give shows like *Human*

Target and **Dollhouse** better timeslots? Why did CBS give up so quickly on shows like **Jericho** and **Moonlight**? Why did ABC subject **FlashForward** to such a long hiatus (three and a half months) between the first and second half of its one and only season? All of these decisions and more have enraged sci fi fans for years and convinced them that the networks stack the cards against genre shows so that they will fail and they don't have to bother with them anymore. But the fact is, they keep producing new sci fi shows every year, with no less than seventeen genre entries scheduled to bow at some point during the Fall 2012 season.

Sci fi has been around since the early days of television and has never completely disappeared nor will it. Networks may be *reluctant* to greenlight genre shows because they tend to be more expensive to produce and they tend to not draw as sizeable of an audience as reality shows, crime dramas, or sitcoms (more on that [below](#)), but they continue to produce new ones every year, so you can't convince me that they hate them. But then that leads into your next question . . .

Why Do Sci Fi Shows Get Cancelled More Often Than Others?

Do they really? For us sci fi fans, it sure seems that way, but I haven't crunched the numbers to get the percentages (there's a *lot* of shows on television each year) and I'm not certain that they do get cancelled more than other genres, there's just not as many of them as there are crime dramas, sitcoms, reality shows, etc. And the fact is, as I have said, *most* new shows get cancelled every year. The survival rate of shows on television is not particularly good, so any new series has better than a fifty percent chance of getting the axe, no matter what genre.

Sci fi shows have a few more things working against them, though, than most other genres which probably give them a *slightly* higher cancellation rate. For one, they tend to be a bit more intellectual and/or heady than the typical Prime Time fare, and thus have a narrower appeal. Or they try to cross genres in order to broaden their scope, but they don't quite succeed at appealing to fans of one or more of the genres touched. They also tend to cost more, because they rely more heavily on special effects for their stories. But even with relatively higher budgets, because of the budget limitations of the small screen environment, they often can't quite meet up to their potential of the grand concepts they introduce and fall short of viewers' expectations. Thus these shows tend to attract lower viewership, and therefore their ratings suffer and they have a harder time succeeding in the Nielsen system. One can note that quite a number of sci fi shows over the last few seasons *have* started with very high ratings before suffering from significant drop-offs (**FlashForward**, **V**, **The Event**, **Alcatraz**). People did tune in; they just didn't always stick with the shows.

The fact is that there *is* a large audience for sci fi out there, but television doesn't always succeed at appealing to that crowd. Sci fi has been a hot property at the Box Office and has actually dominated the cinemas over the past ten years. But the people going to the theater to see sci fi/fantasy films are attracted by the *spectacle* that the big screen promises. Films like **Avatar**, **Star Trek**, the **Transformers** films, the **Harry Potter** films, the recent rash of superhero movies, and even some more heady films like **Inception** and **The Dark Knight** tap into the potential for epic, bigger-than-life storytelling that lays at the heart of the sci fi genre. Television, on the other hand, just cannot deliver this type of production on a weekly basis and shows like **FlashForward**, **V**, and **Caprica** that strove for that ended up disappointing.

The big screen blockbusters that draw people into the theaters often have hundreds of millions of dollars of budget money to play with to deliver a two hour film whereas television often only has

between two and four million dollars (or even less) for a one hour episode. So sci fi TV has to follow a different route than the big budget Hollywood films that have been Box Office gold for so many years. Thus, as mentioned above, genre television shows often turn to the more intellectual side of sci fi which tends to find less favor with Prime Time audiences or they take the genre-crossing route which misfires as often as it succeeds.

For whatever reason, sci fi TV shows tend to draw a smaller audience than most other genres and often the ones that do manage to pull in sizable viewership tend to be entries with only moderate genre elements.

Which Sci Fi Series have Managed to Top the Ratings?

So have any sci fi shows managed to actually do *well* in the ratings. Well, let's take a look back over the past sixty years for some rather eye-opening numbers based on the final rankings for total viewers for the broadcast networks each year dating back to the 1950-51 season. I realize that today the 18-49 demographic is the key stat that networks and advertisers pay attention to, but that's a relatively more recent shift (past thirty years or so), and those statistics were not measured in the early years of tracking viewership. So in order to have a consistent measurement here, I'm going with total viewers. Also note that I am not including ***Alfred Hitchcock Presents***, which had a run in the Top 20 during the fifties, because that was more of a mystery/thriller series with only occasional genre elements. I'm also excluding shows like ***Highway to Heaven*** and ***Touched by an Angel***, because even though they have some quasi-genre elements, these are not shows that myself or most fans would exactly consider *sci fi*.

So if you go all the way back to 1950, you will find that *no* genre series has ever topped the Niensens based on final season averages of total viewership. None. Not one. Pretty much *every other* genre has made it to the top at some point, from westerns to sitcoms to crime shows to variety to dramas to reality and more. But no sci fi. Oh sure, a sci fi show may have made it to the top of the charts one week or so, but it never topped all other shows based on final season averages. A few did end the season *close* to the top like ***Bewitched*** (Number 2 in 1964), ***Batman*** (Number 4 in 1965), ***The Bionic Woman*** (Number 5 in 1975), and ***Mork & Mindy*** (Number 3 in 1978), but none ever made it to Number 1

So then let's look at the Top 10, Top 20, and Top 30. Starting with the 1950-51 season and then coming forward to this past season (2011-12), which is 62 total seasons, only *eleven* genre shows have finished in the Top 10 during that time (and that's not eleven *separate* shows, because some of the same ones repeated a couple of years). When we move to the Top 20, only an additional fifteen get added to the mix, and expanding out to the Top 30 only adds nineteen on top of that. That's 45 times total out of 62 seasons that a sci fi related shows made it into the *Top 30*. *Less than one time per year* on average. (See the [Appendix](#) for the year by year breakdown on these numbers.)

And the thing to note, was that these were not necessarily shows we would consider *strong* sci fi entries, as the ones that had the most ratings success were often the ones that crossed genres. Among those enjoying a run in the Top 30, were genre related sitcoms like ***Bewitched***, ***Get Smart***, ***My Favorite Martian***, and ***Mork & Mindy***. Then you had other cross-genre entries like the spy fi shows ***Man from UNCLE*** and ***Mission: Impossible*** or the western spy romp ***Wild, Wild West***. And then in the 70's, ***The Six Million Dollar Man***, ***The Bionic Woman***, and even ***The Incredible Hulk*** managed to crack into the upper reaches of the charts. But what you are missing here are the *big names*, the shows most closely

identified with the science fiction genre. Series like ***Star Trek***, ***The Twilight Zone***, ***The Outer Limits***, and ***Battlestar: Galactica*** don't show up here. A few big names from the genre *did* manage to crack the Top 30 at times like ***The X-Files*** in the late 90's and ***Lost*** this past decade (which actually ranked in the Top 20 or 30—but never the Top 10—all six of its seasons).

Pretty much all of the other major genres of television shows managed to have their heyday at the top of the ratings at some point. Westerns owned the Niensens during much of the 50's, while sitcoms, crime/procedural shows, variety shows, dramas, and more recently reality shows regularly topped the charts at other points over the past 60 plus years. But never sci fi. The closest they came was in the mid-60's when there was a period from 1964 to 1969 where multiple genre shows made it into the Top 30 almost every season. But again, these consisted of cross-genre or marginal entries like the ones mentioned above, so this hardly represented a boon for sci fi on television.

So with those numbers in mind, you might ask yourself why would networks ever bother with sci fi shows? Historically, they just don't draw the audiences that other TV genres enjoy (unless that Nielsen conspiracy has lasted sixty plus years, are the ***Lone Gunmen*** looking into that?). Sci fi seems like a losing proposition for the networks going in.

But then consider the *impact* and *longevity* of sci fi shows. Series like ***The Twilight Zone*** and ***Star Trek***, while never ratings juggernauts, have shown remarkable staying power and have worked their way into our culture. Even relatively short-lived ones like ***The Outer Limits*** (two seasons) and ***Battlestar: Galactica*** (one and a half seasons) have managed to become genre icons. Compare that to the "successful" series of days past like ***The Tales of Wells Fargo***, ***Dr. Killdare***, ***Mannix***, etc. Those shows may have scored well in the Niensens in their day, but now they are mostly looked upon as relics. So while sci fi usually doesn't enjoy ratings success, it has longevity and—more importantly—massive *franchise* potential (more on that in the next section).

Is There a Better Way of Measuring the Success of Sci Fi Shows?

Sure, there's plenty of alternatives. Really, you can spin the numbers many different ways to make a show look like a hit (and the networks do *that* all the time). But just because you have a different way of measuring success it doesn't mean that the networks or advertisers will pay much attention to it. Still, there are several other factors when talking about sci fi shows that I personally believe the networks *should* take into consideration when deciding how to approach the genre.

It's true that the numbers above show that sci fi television programs tend to have smaller audiences, at least initially. Yet on the flip-side, sci fi shows tend to attract a devoted following that gives them long-reaching (and potentially very profitable) *franchise* possibilities. ***Star Trek*** is of course the classic example as it struggled each year in the ratings during its original run but went on to massive success in syndication and also spawned a movie franchise as well as five spin-off series (including the animated version). Other examples include ***The X-Files***, ***Babylon 5***, ***Stargate: SG-1***, and ***Farscape***, none of which were ratings blockbusters (or they started off slow in the ratings) but all of which have turned into renowned, name-brand franchises that continue to generate revenue.

These shows, along with many other genre entries, prove that the short-term ratings results are not always the best gauge for long-term revenue potential of a series, especially sci fi shows. So it would seem obvious that a different approach is necessary for producing a sci fi series, one that requires some

patience, and one that looks *beyond* just the Nielsen ratings to other measures that indicate that a show is building an audience.

There are plenty of ways apart from the Nielsen ratings currently available for measuring viewership. There are the numbers for time-delay (DVR) viewing as well as the numbers showing how many times an episode was streamed or downloaded on the Internet. There are also plenty of forums and social media sites that can be used to gauge the popularity of and opinions on a sci fi show. All of this data and more can be compiled to measure whether a series has engaged a significant number of people and if it has the potential to develop into a franchise.

Canvassing sites where fans express their opinions on current shows also gives producers the ability to determine if they may have engaged the fanbase but may also have a need to *course correct*. For those who followed any of the genre focused social media sites when FOX's **Terra Nova** aired its first season episodes last Fall, they will know that there were plenty of people giving their opinion on the show, and for the most part the feedback was negative. But there was a *lot* of it, much more than the mid-season entries like **Alcatraz** or **The River**, and more than the Fall success **Once Upon A Time**. **Terra Nova** definitely energized sci fi fandom, even if it wasn't necessarily in a positive way. Fans *wanted* to like the show, and that may very well be why its studio is still trying to shop it around after FOX cancelled it. They realize that they may have misfired early on but now want to try and get it more in line with fan expectations (that, and they also still hope to recover at least *some* of the massive investment they put into it).

This is just *one* illustration of where it makes sense to look beyond the Niensens when gauging the success of a sci fi series, and of course Joss Whedon's beloved **Firefly** provides yet another. That series stumbled in the Niensens out of the gate and many blamed this on the fact that FOX aired the episodes out of order. But even if they *had* aired the episodes in the proper order, it's still likely that the show would not have been a huge ratings hit. That's just the plight of sci fi. And at *that* time the networks had not yet made their shows available for Internet viewing nor were time delay viewing numbers much of a factor. But the buzz around the show among both fans and critics definitely pointed to this as a property with great potential. FOX could have gone with a shortened season of the show to keep costs down and greenlighted a second season to see if it could build its audience (similar to what it later did with Whedon's **Dollhouse**). Had it gone that route, with the massive word-of-mouth buzz it was getting among sci fi fans, it could have likely improved its numbers by its second season and potentially grown into the next major genre franchise.

Of course, asking for patience from the networks and studios when dealing with sci fi shows is asking them to make a pretty steep investment that may ultimately reap no rewards. And if the genre was approached from this stance we would probably see a lot fewer entries each year as networks and studios would choose carefully what properties they would be willing to make such a commitment on. But is that necessarily a *bad* thing? It could lead to fewer misfires and mediocre offerings like **No Ordinary Family**, **V**, **The Event**, and **Awake** and possibly bring us longer runs for promising shows like **Firefly**, **Jericho**, **Moonlight**, **Defying Gravity**, etc.

We can speculate and come up with our fantasy scenarios all we like. Yet we must still remember that the production of television shows is a *business*, not a charitable cause, and the purpose of a business is to make a profit. All too often businesses are built on the pursuit of *short-term* profit. My suggestions above would rely on a studio and network that has the available cash and financial stability to gamble on investments that may not turn a profit for several years. Sure, it's potentially a pretty *substantial* profit,

but you have to pay your people in the meantime, and not just every company has the fiscal depth to do that. So it might be nice to dream up all of these schemes that would keep our favorite sci fi shows going for years, but in the real world (or the real *greedy* world of big business) it doesn't always pan out the way we would like it too.

Are There Other Viable Options for Episodic Sci Fi?

There are plenty other options for sci fi series (or any genre for that matter), but are they *viable*? The Internet has run rampant with science fiction and fantasy web series over the past five plus years, but for the most part these don't make money. These are typically driven by film-makers who have the creative energy (and the ability to convince enough people to work for free) to produce a series that shows what they can do, but they can only keep that going for so long. Web series have no good model at this point to generate sufficient revenue to sustain themselves and even those that run ads or sell DVDs of a complete season rarely make enough money to cover their production costs. And these series seldom go past one or two seasons (remember that their episodes are typically in the five to fifteen minute range). So while they can be creative and at times pioneering works, the instances of them surviving for an extended run are rare at best.

But what about an Internet only series that was sold on a per episode basis through services like Amazon.com or iTunes? That sure seems like it could work, but I'm guessing that shows already available on a pay per download basis aren't generating enough activity yet for studios and/or networks to look at that as a workable option yet. But I do believe it has a future. It just takes one pioneering series to prove the concept and of course a studio with deep enough pockets to fund the production prior to selling it on the Internet. Or it will take some of these new film-makers currently producing their own web series pushing that venue as a way to keep their productions going. Web series like ***Pioneer One*** and ***L5*** have already built a reputation and energized sci fi fans to *donate* to help cover production costs. It seems like shifting to *selling* their episodes through services like Amazon.com or iTunes is the next logical step.

What about a direct-to-DVD series? I'd say that's an extreme longshot because it involves funding an entire season on the hope that DVD sales could make enough money to turn a profit. This would be especially difficult for a new series that people have not had the chance to sample before buying the set. It might be tenable for an established series, maybe one that was cancelled and wants to do a few wrap up episodes. Or maybe for a new property, a TV or small-scale theatrical movie could introduce the concept and then the DVD release could follow. But it doesn't appear that DVD/Blu-ray sales alone generate enough revenue to cover the production costs of a TV series, and even if they did, it would require a heck of an upfront financial commitment from the studio to get the sets on the shelves.

The internet seems like the most viable option at this point, it just hasn't proven itself out. Or services like Netflix could provide the next wave as well (more on them below). With that said, I'm thinking that we might be on the verge of a paradigm shift (more on *that below*). Even so, I don't think we will see too much in the way of pioneering on the Internet front beyond independent film-makers taking the risk in the immediate future.

Do “Save My Show” Campaigns Really Work?

How many times have we seen it? The cancellation announcement for a sci fi series hits and shortly thereafter enraged fans rally together a campaign to let the network know that people *are* watching (despite what those stupid Nielsens say) and that it should reconsider its decision. Or more often these days, we see preemptive campaigns when a show's ratings are flagging and fans try to muster the troops to prove to a network that it should not get cancelled. And in both of these cases, fans have tried any of a number of—sometimes crazy—strategies to save their show, from the old-school tactic of letter-writing campaigns to the more Internet-age savvy ploys of Twitter or Facebook campaigns and also such stunts as sending hot sauce, nuts, or flowers to the network or even organizing blood drives (yes, all of these are for real and you can read about them in the [Section 2](#) of this book).

But do these campaigns really work? Well . . . maybe. But if you ask the networks they will tell you absolutely, positively, without-a-doubt that they *never, ever, ever* influence their decision on whether they bring back a series. Remember, this is network executives we are talking about here . . .

The fact is that some "Save My Campaigns" have succeeded and we need go no further than the granddaddy of these efforts spearheaded by Bjo Trimble that brought ***Star Trek*** back for a third season. Back in the 1967-68 season, when it looked like NBC was on the verge of cancelling ***Trek*** because of low ratings, she organized a massive letter-writing effort to convince the network to keep the show on the air. These weren't gushing letters sent from the younger members of the audience or geek tirades sent from fanboys. These included letters from doctors, scientists, professors and even the Mayor of New York, Nelson Rockefeller. The campaign generated over a hundred thousand letters of support for the show, and even though NBC later claimed they were considering renewing the show *anyway*, you can't convince me that those stacks of mail didn't have a notable influence on the network's decision.

Of course *that* campaign became legendary among sci fi fans and many series that would get cancelled after that would generate similar onslaughts of fan mail, though rarely with as broad of a range of support and almost never with the same impact. Over the last ten plus years, fans have become more creative and have found *different* ways to get the attention of the networks. This came sometimes in the form of picking out a particular item associated with the series like hot sauce (***Roswell***), nuts (***Jericho***), daisies (***Pushing Daisies***), or sunflower seeds (***The 4400***) and having many, many fans send these to the networks. In some cases, fans have raised money for advertising in trade magazines like ***The Hollywood Reporter*** or ***Variety*** or to put billboards up in the hope of getting the attention of other networks to pick up the show (fans of shows like ***Angel***, ***Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles***, and ***Legend of the Seeker*** employed this tactic). In some cases, people appealed directly to prominent sponsors of a show as with NBC's ***Chuck*** when fans headed *en masse* to show sponsor Subway to show their support. In some cases, fans even tried to raise money to keep their favorite show going independent of the network as with ***Star Trek: Enterprise*** and ***Firefly*** (the latter spurred by a comment made by Nathan Fillion about buying the rights of the show from FOX). And in one case, fans wrote to *Congress* in hope that they would intervene! (More on these in the [next section](#).)

And sometimes these campaigns achieved their goal, at least partially. ***Roswell*** was picked up by UPN for one season, ***Chuck*** lived on for one and a half seasons, ***Jericho*** got a shortened, seven episode second season. But sadly, more often than not the fan campaigns failed to save the shows, and even those that *did* continue only stuck around for a short time.

Is There a Better Way to Convince the Networks to Save a Show?

Possibly. And again, it comes down to money.

While gimmicks like sending nuts and Tabasco Sauce have worked for a few shows, it would make much more sense for fans to try and appeal to the one thing that gets the attention of network executives: dollars. Go for the bottom line and prove that the show *can make money*. If a series is available for download, then start watching it that way. Organize fan campaigns to pay to download episodes each week even if they are at the current higher price of \$2 to \$4 per episode. And if the show had previous seasons, go out and buy those on DVD or download them as well. This represents an *immediate inflow of cash*, and we all know that the eyes of network execs light up when they see the green. Ultimately it may not succeed in saving the show, but I think it has a better chance than most of the other campaigns we have seen crop up because it generates revenue that a show might be falling short on with advertising if it has lagging ratings.

I've not seen a campaign like this yet (though it's possible one existed and I just missed it), but I have seen instances where fans have organized to buy DVD sets of previous seasons of a show. This was the case with *Jericho* and *Pushing Daisies* and I believe that *Sarah Connor* fans did it as well. None of the campaigns succeeded, but I don't know what numbers they generated in DVD sales. But if fans were to get together a big enough campaign to download episodes of a series and were to get the numbers into the hundreds of thousands per episode (possibly lower for a cable series), I can't imagine the networks wouldn't sit up and take notice.

This is all just speculation, but when it comes down to it, what do you think is more likely to convince a network to renew a series: flowers (which didn't work for *Pushing Daisies*) or real money from Internet downloads and DVD sales?

Will Netflix be the Savior of All Cancelled Sci Fi Shows?

In late 2011, Netflix announced that they wanted to bolster the amount of original programming available through their streaming service, and in the process they have shown an interest in reviving fan-favorite cancelled television shows. They have already begun producing new series (the Steven Van Zandt starring *Lillyhammer* being the first to debut) and are in the process of filming new episodes of one previously cancelled series, FOX's cult-comedy *Arrested Development*. They have also raised their hands in 2012 several times with an interest in picking up cancelled sci fi shows including *Terra Nova*, *The River*, and even *Jericho* (and there were some rumbblings around *Firefly*, but those were just speculation and rumors). But thus far, no revival plans that I know of are in the works for any cancelled genre series.

Netflix quickly threw its hat into the ring when FOX cancelled *Terra Nova* early in 2012 followed by the show's studio claiming that they would shop the series around. The streaming service also entered into talks with ABC concerning *The River* before that series was *even cancelled* (though it was definitely headed in that direction based on its ratings). Netflix ended up passing on both of these and it's possible that they never really had serious designs on the properties, they just wanted to generate publicity around their efforts to expand their original programming. The fact is that *Terra Nova* demands a *massive* budget that even the networks are leery of and that *The River*, while not as expensive, cost a fair amount to produce as well. Netflix likely just doesn't have that sort of money to

commit to a series as they probably realistically could afford only the production costs akin to one of the lower end basic cable networks (more along the lines of MTV's *Teen Wolf* or Syfy's *Being Human*). Take *Lilyhammer* as an example, which according to IMDb.com ran around half a million dollars per 45 minute episode for its first season. At numbers like that, even *Jericho* would be a stretch (it likely cost around \$2 million per episode at CBS), though Netflix might reach a bit beyond their means if they thought it would draw attention to their service sufficient to generate a significant increase in subscriptions.

However, should Netflix grab for a cancelled genre show or decide to produce an *original* sci fi series, they *could* offer the ideal platform that would follow close to the model I outlined above. Any original series that the rental service streams will not be dependent on immediate ratings returns like the shows on the broadcast and cable networks. The company will of course keep a close eye on the online viewing numbers, but if the first few episodes do not score high, that will not result in immediate cancellation. Assuming they produce an entire initial run of around thirteen episodes, they should still let the full series play out, even if it does start off weak. This gives genre programming something that the broadcast and cable networks rarely offer: a chance to build up an audience. Fans often claim that it takes time for a genre show to find its audience, and a service like Netflix may finally offer the format where that can play out. The fans who want to bring attention to their series need only reach out to the larger community and implore them to watch the show via Netflix streaming. If this results in increased viewing, those measurements will be captured immediately. This offers many *new* possibilities for sci fi shows, and series from other genres as well.

But the fact is that, even with Netflix, it still comes back down to money and measuring audience viewership. It costs money to produce a series, and Netflix has to make that back somehow. Increased subscriptions are key, because that represents their immediate windfall. Later DVD releases will also factor in, but as I mentioned above, no ongoing series are produced these days (at least not that I am aware of) banking mostly on profits from the home video market. Still, the Netflix platform offers a good alternative for episodic television that takes out the middleman (read: the Nielsens) and also much of the guesswork.

So back to the question of whether Netflix will be the savior of all cancelled sci fi shows. I would say no to that. But, there's a good chance they will save a few. As long as the price tag is not *too high* and they feel the audience is there (I'm talking to you *Legend of the Seeker* and *Secret Circle* fans) then Netflix might just give them the chance. And it's not impossible that they could bring back a series like *Jericho* or—dare I say—*Firefly* if they felt the added expense would deliver sufficient returns in the long term. Netflix is only just getting started with their original programming, and they have had other struggles weighing them down of late, so it's uncertain how far they will go in this direction. But they've definitely been making waves with the shows they have expressed an interest in, so they are one company genre fans should keep an eye on.

Why Do Some Shows with Lower Ratings Get Renewed and Others with Higher Ratings Get Cancelled?

With an ever-fractured audience watching television these days and with more and more viewing options available, gauging the ratings success of a television show continues to change each year as the broadcast and cable networks compete for an ever-dwindling audience share. Numbers that would have meant certain doom for a show just a few years ago now prove more than sufficient to keep it alive for several seasons. But trying to determine success in the ratings varies widely depending on such

factors as the network airing the show as well as the cost to produce that show and the timeslot in which it airs. A series on Syfy may be pulling only a 0.5 rating in the 18-49 demographic with about one and half million total viewers and get a renewal whereas a show airing on one of the big four broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC) may pull a 2.0 rating and eight million total viewers and get cancelled. This is because each network has its own criteria for what it considers a successful series based on its ratings numbers. Looking at the past two years should present a good gauge of what the different networks currently expect as far as ratings returns on original scripted series these days.

The most important number for network executives (and the advertisers who buy commercial time) is the overnight rating among adults in the 18-49 demographic because that tends to be the group with the most buying power and who respond most positively to advertising spots. In some cases, the narrower demographic of adults 18-34 is looked at more heavily or some networks have an even more narrow focus such as The CW which targets the young adult audience, particularly female viewers (though they are expanding that for the 2012-13 season). Also, the ratings should be for the live plus same day viewing which means shows that were watched when broadcast or on DVR the same day of that broadcast. Watching a recorded episode after the day of its broadcast does not count as heavily because viewers tend to fast-forward through advertisements (though the networks may still later *refer* to the numbers that include delayed viewing when they want to give a good spin on the performance of a show). The numbers I will reference below are the overnight ratings for the 18-49 demo that do not include delayed viewing beyond same day. These are the ones that generally heavily influence network decisions on whether a show is cancelled or renewed.

During the 2010-11 season, no sci fi show on the broadcast networks had much success and the higher rated genre shows on those channels were actually *more likely* to be cancelled while the several lower rated shows actually survived. ABC's **V** and **No Ordinary Family** both averaged below a 2.0 rating in the 18-49 demographic, though the latter started stronger (above a 3.0) and dropped throughout the season. Both shows ended up getting cancelled. On NBC, new series **The Event** started strong (a 3.7 for its debut) but dropped far by season end and was cancelled after averaging about a 1.8 rating for the season. On FOX, veteran series **Fringe** averaged a 1.7 rating but ended up getting renewed. That series, though, aired half of its season on Fridays which is typically a low viewership night and networks usually temper their expectations for shows on that night. It had also finished three seasons and a fourth would give it enough episodes for a syndication run, giving them a further impetus for keeping it going (and word is that the show's studio gave it to FOX for its fourth season at a reduced license fee, making it more economical). On the fifth place network The CW, **Vampire Diaries** averaged a 1.4 rating, **Supernatural** a 1.0, and **Nikita** a 0.9, but all three were renewed because those were among that network's top-rated shows for the season.

Two cable shows from the 2010-11 season had much better success and one even outpaced the genre shows on the broadcast networks. AMC's post-apocalyptic zombie series **The Walking Dead** was a surprise hit in its first season, averaging a 2.7 rating in the 18-49 demo and more than five million total viewers per episode. That series even trended up as its first season progressed, pulling a 3.0 rating in its final outing. HBO considered their fantasy series **Game of Thrones** a success even though it had more modest returns. It averaged around a 1.2 rating in the 18-49 demo and over two million viewers per episode (that does not take into account multiple airings of the same episode in a week). And like **The Walking Dead**, that series trended up as the season continued, with its Season 1 finale pulling a 1.4 rating and three million total viewers.

In the Summer of 2011, MTV was happy with the performance of its new series ***Teen Wolf***, which wrapped up its first season averaging close to a 0.7 rating and just under two million total viewers. Subsequently, the series received a second season renewal. On TNT, alien invasion series ***Falling Skies*** performed well averaging about a 1.6 rating in the 18-49 demo and pulling more than five million viewers per episode. That series also received a renewal. On Syfy, new series ***Alphas*** counted as a success with that one averaging around a 0.7 rating and over one and a half million viewers per episode, and it also received a renewal.

This past season (2011-12), cable series continued to dominate among genre shows, while the broadcast networks had few successes. The FX cable series ***The American Horror Story*** performed well, averaging a 1.6 rating in the 18-49 demo and pulling between two and a half and three million total viewers per episode. AMC's ***The Walking Dead*** returned for its second season even stronger than its first, averaging a 3.4 rating during the first half of its season and pulling between six and seven million viewers per episodes. And when it returned for the second half of its second season, it set a record with a 4.2 rating and over 8 million total viewers. Then the series broke *that* record with its season finale when it pulled a 4.7 rating. HBO's ***Game of Thrones*** returned strong for its second season, premiering with a 2.0 rating and pulling nearly four million total viewers. It would slip some by season end, but it still performed better than its first season and easily received a third season renewal.

On the broadcast networks, FOX's high-profile dinosaur/time travel series ***Terra Nova*** started off with a decent rating of 3.1, but began to drop after that, averaging only a 2.5 rating by the time it ended its run. Those numbers weren't *too* bad and might have saved a less expensive show, but ***Terra Nova*** had a high cost per episode and FOX cut ties with the series. ABC had a surprise hit with the fantasy series ***Once Upon A Time*** which debuted with an impressive 4.0 rating and with just under thirteen million total viewers. That slipped in the ratings as the season progressed, but it still ended with a 3.3 average and received a second season nod. NBC considered their dark fantasy series ***Grimm*** a success even though it averaged just a 1.6 rating. It aired on low viewership Fridays, though, and outperformed its genre competition in its timeslot (***Fringe*** on Fox, ***Supernatural*** on The CW, and ***Star Wars: The Clone Wars*** on Cartoon Network), so it got the greenlight for a second season. Surprisingly, FOX's new series ***Touch*** received a renewal despite a steady decline in its ratings after a promising start. That decision seemed like a bit of an anomaly, but apparently the network felt that it still had more potential despite its late season stumble and renewed it over ***Alcatraz*** (which tracked a similar ratings course). Another anomaly was FOX's renewal of ***Fringe***, but I'll discuss that in more detail in the next section.

Over at fifth place network CW, all of its shows took a major hit this past season as it seemed to be losing its battle with the Big Four. ***The Vampire Diaries*** remained the network's highest rated show, but it only averaged a 1.3 rating throughout the season. Veteran series ***Supernatural*** slipped considerably this past year, averaging just a 0.7 rating which put it at the same level as many of the cable networks (and considerably below cable barn-burners like ***The Walking Dead*** and ***The American Horror Story***). Still, the network decided to bring that show back for an eighth season. Freshman supernatural series ***The Secret Circle*** did okay early in the season, yet dropped considerably as the year ended. Still, its season to date average of a 0.8 considerably outpaced sophomore entry ***Nikita*** which could only muster an average 0.5 rating. But the latter received the renewal nod over the former. That had many people scratching their heads, but apparently ***Nikita*** plays well to international audiences and that was enough to keep it alive (***Terra Nova*** was *also* popular overseas, but that wasn't enough to keep it running).

So what number gets a series renewed? Roll the dice . . .

Okay, it's not *quite* like that, but there is no one answer as it varies based on the network and mitigating circumstances. But some ballpark numbers might help you in at least gauging the health of a series based on its ratings returns. On the big four broadcast networks, a series will likely need to average above a 2.5 rating to be considered successful and perhaps more if the show has higher than average production costs. However, if the series airs on Friday nights, a 1.5 rating or higher would likely be counted as an acceptable, or even decent, rating. On The CW, a rating of a 1.0 or higher would likely be counted as successful (and just throw **Nikita** out of the equation). On the basic and premium cable channels, a rating of 0.7 or higher (and perhaps even a 0.6) would be acceptable for shows with lower production costs. A more expensive sci fi show would likely need to pull a rating of 1.5 or higher to be considered successful. These numbers are just rough estimates, though, and many factors are taken into consideration to ultimately determine if the show classifies as a success. And also note that the thresholds seem to be dropping every year as the Prime Time audience continues to fracture and find other venues for its entertainment. So it's very possible that even lower numbers than those I've indicated above could keep a series going in the upcoming season.

Do All the Networks Treat Sci Fi Shows the Same?

No. CBS hates them, The CW loves them (with a supernatural tinge and a skew to the younger crowd), Syfy doesn't seem to understand them, FOX is still trying to make amends for **Firefly**, and the other networks tolerate them hoping to stumble on the next **Lost**. But let me elaborate. Here's a quick look at each of the networks individually:

The Broadcast Networks:

ABC: This network has demonstrated an openness to genre shows having brought on at least one new sci fi/fantasy entry each year since **Lost** became a surprise hit for the network in 2004. But while the network is willing to *try out* genre shows, it rarely gives them the chance to find an audience if they don't have early ratings success. Only four sci fi/fantasy shows have survived past a single season on ABC (apart from **Lost**) since 2004 (**Pushing Daisies**, **Eli Stone**, **V**, and **Once Upon A Time**) and three of those disappeared quickly after having only a shortened second season. **Once Upon A Time** had a much stronger first season than any of those other three, though, so it looks poised to weather its second year, but other genre shows should know that ABC has high expectations and will quickly pull the plug on what they perceive as an underperforming series.

FOX: This network has a notorious reputation as a sci fi killer because of its infamous axing of **Firefly** back in 2002 (and **Sarah Connor** fans have a pretty serious beef with FOX as well). But the fact is that this has been the most sci fi-friendly of the Big Four over the last few years. They have picked up multiple genre shows each year for the past few years and have stuck with several long past the time after other nets would have cancelled them. Take **The Sarah Connor Chronicles** as an example. That one received a second season renewal despite declining ratings throughout its first season, *then* it received a full season pickup during its second season despite continued poor performance. It *did* get cast to Fridays and it did ultimately get the axe, but at least FOX gave it *somewhat* of a chance. Then there were the miracle renewals of **Dollhouse** and **Fringe** (more on those below). Sure, plenty of shows received their walking papers, but all were typically poor ratings performers (though I say they completely missed the boat with **Human Target**, but more on that below). So this network seems to be *trying* to hold the olive branch to genre fans to an extent and is probably a better landing place for genre shows among the major networks.

CBS: This network has shown the lowest tolerance for genre shows among the broadcast networks for the past half-dozen years or more. Go back to fan-favorite shows like *Jericho* and *Moonlight* that both pulled decent—if not spectacular—ratings in their original runs, but got the axe. Then consider 2008's *Eleventh Hour* which got cancelled even though it ended the year in the Top 25 shows (and ahead of *Lost* in total viewers). And this past season's *Person of Interest* from J.J. Abrams was given little chance to explore its sci fi themes as the network seemed to want just another procedural with a twist (though hopefully it will delve into more of its sci fi potential since it got a second season renewal). Basically, the network doesn't take too many chances on genre shows, and those few that it does greenlight have a very low survival rate.

The CW: The part-time network has actually been very genre friendly over the past few years, though it prefers more supernatural oriented shows and those tend to skew to a younger audience. And as of this past season, The CW has essentially fallen into the same tier as the basic cable networks based on its continued ratings declines. But since it has lower expectations than the Big Four (and its shows are typically much cheaper to produce) it can give them more leeway. 2007's *Reaper* is an example of this which got a second season renewal despite subpar ratings in its first year. And look at this last season's renewals of *Supernatural* and *Nikita*, both performing at or near *marginal* basic cable levels. You wouldn't expect to see bigger genre productions here like last season's *Terra Nova* or this coming season's *Revolution*, but the ones that do make it to The CW have a better than average change of surviving.

NBC: You might think that the fourth place network would have more patience with genre shows and give them a chance if they are underperforming, but that's not necessarily the case. In fact, *Grimm* is the only genre show that has received a renewal since the 2009-10 season. But the network *does* at least give genre shows a shot, even if it doesn't necessarily stick with them if they aren't setting off ratings fireworks. Mediocre ratings *might* keep a sci fi show alive on this net these days, but it doesn't have the luxury to tolerate poor ratings as the other three in the Big Four seem to be pulling away and NBC is being left behind with The CW.

The Basic Cable Channels:

Syfy: You would expect that the network formerly known as the Sci Fi Channel would be the perfect spot for any and all genre shows. But that has not been the case for quite some time. Despite multi-season runs of shows like *Farscape*, *Stargate: SG-1*, *Stargate: Atlantis*, and *Battlestar: Galactica*, this network has shown that it is just as willing to axe a sci fi show as any of the broadcast networks. Among its list of truncated fan-favorite genre shows are *Good vs. Evil*, *The Dresden Files*, *Painkiller Jane*, *Stargate: Universe*, and *Caprica*. And even several series that lasted beyond two seasons notoriously received abrupt cancellations that enraged fans (*Farscape*, *Sliders*, *Stargate: Atlantis*, *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, *Eureka*), so this network has not shown the patience with fan-favorite shows that you would expect. And as of late, it has moved away from the more epic series like *BSG* and the *Stargate* entries in favor of its lower cost entries (that I have dubbed "sci fi lite") like *Warehouse 13*, *Haven*, and *Being Human*. The upcoming series *Defiance* (as well as the planned reboot of *Blake's 7*) may be indicating a shift back, but as of now, Syfy is not well regarded by sci fi fans and it has proven itself less than tolerant of shows underperforming in the ratings.

None of the other basic cable channels have built up much in the way of genre blocks of programming over the past few years, though those that *have* flirted with sci fi mostly have been rewarded with

success, so it's hard to gauge their tolerance level for shows not meeting up to ratings expectations. AMC has had a huge success with *The Walking Dead* and has shown interest in more genre entries. And others that have tasted genre success lately and that might be looking to expand on that are TNT (*Falling Skies*), FX (*The American Horror Story*), and MTV (*Teen Wolf*).

The Premium Cable Channels:

HBO: This network has struck gold with its last two genre entries, *True Blood* and *Game of Thrones*. The former has been a ratings barn-burner and the latter has pulled decent ratings while also receiving many accolades from fans, critics, and the industry. The network had not previously dabbled too much in genre programming (sadly giving up on 2003's excellent *Carnivale* after only two seasons), but its success with these two recent entries could lead to more on HBO.

Starz: This network has flirted with the genre a bit, producing the sword and sandal series *Spartacus* that has some genre appeal and last Summer picking up *Torchwood* from the BBC to produce its fourth season. And while the latter series delivered pretty tepid ratings, the network didn't cancel it, they just let it slip into limbo because series creator Russell T. Davies has been occupied elsewhere. More genre entries could be on the radar for this network, and it's possible that another season of *Torchwood* could emerge at some point.

Showtime: While HBO and Starz have taken stabs at sci fi shows, Showtime has remained mostly on the sidelines. There is word of some productions in development, though, so this network could throw its hat in over the next year or so.

How Much Longer Will We Have to Put Up With the Nielsens?

How much longer do we have to tolerate these guys? Well, they've been around pretty much since television took off in the early 50's and no other company offering audience measurements has managed to supplant them. So I don't see the networks giving up on the Nielsens anytime soon. But I *do* believe that we are witnessing the beginnings of significant tremors that will result in major changes on how shows are measured.

The fact is that the broadcast networks are seeing their audiences drop every year while at the same time the cable networks continue to carry out bloody contract battles with the cable and satellite providers (just this last Summer, a spat between Viacom and DirecTV resulted in the former pulling all seventeen of its channels from the satellite company for a couple of weeks). In the meantime, viewing by Internet streaming is growing all the time, even if it has become more fractured. Considering all this, I believe that the current models will start to collapse at some point and move toward an Internet focused system of distribution. For this to happen, streaming will have to become more seamless (when was the last time you watched an episode on Hulu or one of the network's sites without it freezing up multiple times), but services like Netflix already seem to have figured this out (personally, I have little to no trouble watching *anything* on Netflix's streaming service).

I believe the key to this will be when television sets start to integrate more seamlessly with the Internet, and we are already seeing that with many of the higher-end consoles on the market. On top of that, mobile devices like the Apple and Android tablets will also play a part in driving viewing to a computer based platform (heck, they're already well into that). As the momentum continues in that direction, and

as cable channels continue to enter into cage-matches with their providers, then the change in that direction will almost certainly begin to snowball.

How will the new landscape look when it emerges? I'm guessing that companies like Viacom and Turner Broadcasting as well as the premium channels like HBO and Showtime will decide to cut out the cable/satellite company middlemen (the ones that *none* of us like) and start offering their channels directly to consumers via the Internet. They'll likely give us the option to buy one of their channels or get a package deal via subscriptions (sort of like selecting cable channels a la carte) that lets us watch their programming on our computers, mobile devices, and Internet ready television sets. And I'm also guessing that advertising will still be a part of the deal, because subscriptions alone likely won't provide a sufficient revenue source to cover the costs of all of the programming.

In truth, the technology is there to do this right now, but Internet-ready televisions don't dominate the market *yet*, and there may be an issue with bandwidth for the time being. *And* the fact is that this represents a huge paradigm shift and we know that major corporations are resistant to changes of this magnitude. In order for a massive move in this direction to occur, one maverick (whether it's one channel or a larger company like Viacom) will have to take the plunge and lead the charge. I'm sure that Viacom considered their options during their recent tiff with DirecTV, but they weren't quite ready for a move like that yet. So as competition continues to heat up among the many channels out there and the old guard like Time Warner and DirecTV refuse to change with the times, the stage continues to be set for a major change with how we receive television channels.

When this happens, the Niensens will have to adapt quickly or get left in the past. Once Internet delivery of programming becomes the norm, then the networks will have instant stats available to them on viewing numbers and will no longer have to rely on that small, hallowed elite of Nielsen families which some allege are selected by dubious sampling methods. It doesn't mean that the Nielsen company would *go away* at this point, as they could assume the role of *compiling* the stats across all of the networks and become a clearing house for viewership measurements. It is likely that they would be gathering hard numbers at this point, not samples, based on actual hits tracked over the Internet. That would give a lot of people whose shows don't pull sufficient viewership much less to argue about when a series gets cancelled. But we would at least know that the axing was based on much more solid numbers than what the networks rely on now.

How quickly this change would happen, if at all, I can't say. Personally, I think that within ten years, television viewing, if we even still call it that, will look considerably different than what we see today. The current state of technology seems to suggest internet delivery, though perhaps some completely new technology or a variation of an existing one will lead the charge instead. The broadcast networks and cable channels will likely go kicking and screaming—large corporations loathe change, and are slow to adopt it—despite the fact that the current landscape seems all too tenuous, just ripe for a major upheaval not far away.

**Be sure to get the second edition of *Why Were They Cancelled?* Now available from Amazon.com:
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Part 2

Cancelled Sci Fi TV Series

The first half of the book has been spent trying to help with a general understanding of how the ratings work and how they impact the decisions by networks on which shows to cancel and which ones to renew. But now you ask “What about *my* show? The show that I came to know and love and that I tuned in for each week until [*insert name of your favorite sci fi-hating network*] heartlessly yanked it from the schedule?” You say “tell me specifically why ***Star Trek, Space: 1999, Max Headroom, Sliders, Farscape, Firefly, The Sarah Connor Chronicles*** and those many, many others were cancelled.”

The reason for each of these cancellations vary to some extent based on the circumstances, but for the most part it almost always comes back to ratings. In this section, I will look at quite a number of sci fi series and pass on what I have learned through my research about why they were cancelled. I will start off with a few case studies that provide some more notable examples of series cancellations and I will then look back at the last couple of years and provide my thoughts on the more recent cancelled genre shows. Then I will go back and do an extended survey of shows dating back to the 60’s (there’s not much information available on cancellations in the 50’s). This isn’t an exhaustive look at *all* of the sci fi cancellations that have occurred over the past fifty plus years; I’m mostly covering the better-known shows and the more notable examples. If you don’t see one of your favorite series included here, then write to me (cancelledscifi@gmail.com) and I will do some research and find what information I can and include that in an upcoming **Cancellation Watch** column as well as future editions of this book.

Some Case Studies in Sci Fi TV Show Cancellations

The vast majority of science fiction and fantasy shows have ended through cancellation (actually, that’s true of the vast majority of *all* television shows) as opposed to ending on their own terms like ***Star Trek: The Next Generation, Babylon 5*** (which just *barely* got its fifth season), ***The X-Files***, and ***Lost***. Despite the fact that us sci fi fans are certain the cancellations came because the networks and the Niensens hate genre shows, the truth is that low ratings more often than not were the actual culprit (though not absolutely *every* time as you will see below). But why were the ratings low? Did the network schedule the show in a bad timeslot or not promote it properly? Did it not give it enough time to build an audience? Did it simply put the show out there to fail to prove that sci fi shows are ratings albatrosses? As far as those questions, each show has its own tale even if the final answer usually comes back to low viewership. Following are a few infamous cancellations (and one renewal) that provide some interesting case studies on sci fi shows and their relationships with their networks and the Niensens.

Star Trek (NBC, 1966-69, 3 Seasons Totaling 79 Episodes): The story of ***Trek***’s cancellation is of course infamous and a good case study on the life and death of a television series. Even though ***Star Trek*** has gone on to become one of the most recognized science fiction franchises the world over, during its original network run it never drew very strong ratings and in fact it never finished in the top 50 shows for the season over its three years. In fact, it had mediocre ratings at best early in its first year and NBC might have cancelled it before it completed a full season based on its overall numbers. But the network was one of the first to begin tracking the *demographics* of their viewers at that time (age, income, gender, etc.) and discovered that ***Star Trek*** attracted what they considered a *higher quality* audience (upper income, well-educated, etc.) and decided to greenlight a second season of the series based on

this. But the show still struggled in its second year (it actually *dropped* in the ratings) and rumors began to circulate that NBC would cancel it. At this point, Bjo Trimble and her husband John stepped in to *fan* the flames of support for the series (pun intended). Bjo had previously been a prominent figure in science fiction fandom, having been involved with several early conventions and fan societies in the 50's and 60's. When she heard of **Trek's** struggles, she organized a letter-writing campaign (one of the first of its kind) which ultimately generated over a hundred thousand letters of support for the show, coming from doctors, scientists, professors and even the Mayor of New York, Nelson Rockefeller. This was quite a feat considering that science fiction fandom was not as well organized at that time and she didn't have something like the Internet (or even the old Usenet groups) to help her easily reach out to others who followed the show. Ultimately, NBC decided to keep the show running for another season (and rumors are that they did not *necessarily* have it pegged as a certain cancellation anyway). However, the network did tinker with **Trek** in what would be its final season, bringing in a new executive producer (the notorious Fred Freiberger), dropping the budget, and moving it to the Friday night "deathslot" (10 PM EST). Not surprisingly, the show's ratings did not improve, resulting in its eventual cancellation after its third season. But the series would go on to find a much larger audience in syndication in the 70's and it would build into a phenomenon that would go on to launch multiple television and film continuations of the franchise.

Star Trek gives us the classic example of how ratings alone may not sufficiently gauge the popularity of a show or its chances of generating a profit in the long term. NBC did at least look beyond the base numbers at the demographics, a pioneering step at that point, but even that did not give them the full story. **Trek** had very broad appeal, from children to older professionals, and notable staying power as indicated by its syndication run as well as the film franchise and TV sequels it spawned. And they already had an indication of this from the fan mail that the series generated on a weekly basis (apart from the campaign to save the show), which was more than any other series on their schedule. But the show did not score well in the Nielsens and it did not fit within the standard model for a Prime Time television series that demanded short-term ratings success to attract sponsors. Thus, the original series was truncated after three seasons, but it ultimately spun itself into a long-running phenomena that still continues to this day.

Battlestar: Galactica (ABC, 1978-79, 2 Seasons, including **Galactica: 1980**, Totaling 34 Episodes): This series looked poised to revive sci fi on the small screen in 1978 just like **Star Wars** had done for the genre in the movie theaters the year prior. And everything seemed on track as the show scored strong in the ratings with its early broadcasts. But then CBS did a counter-programming strike and moved its sitcom juggernauts **All in the Family** and **Alice** to the same hour as **Galactica**, delivering a blow to the latter's ratings. The numbers continued to drop as the season progressed, and ABC ultimately decided it was too expensive to keep the show going if it wasn't topping the Nielsens. They cancelled it after only one season, which led to a massive letter-writing campaign to save the show along the lines of the effort that won **Star Trek** a third season. And the ABC brass *did* have a change of heart, though it's uncertain how much the write-in campaign impacted that as opposed to the network's realization that they had far too few episodes for a syndication run, and thus no chance of recouping their costs from **BSG's** one season. So they made the decision to revive the series the following year in an altered (and more budget-friendly) format and dubbed it **Galactica: 1980**. This continuation had the **Galactica** discovering Earth, but choosing not to make direct contact with its people right away because humans did not have the technology to resist a Cylon attack. This resulted in several Earth-bound episodes that were much less expensive than the space-based stories of the first season. But the new series had also gutted much of the original cast—some because of lack of availability, some for cost-cutting reasons, and some because they chose not to participate in the new series. In addition, **Galactica: 1980** skewed more to a

younger audience, getting moved to the family friendly Sunday 7 PM EST timeslot, and many fans of the original disliked this change in focus. Upon its return, the show debuted to tepid ratings and enjoyed little in the way of accolades from fans or critics, and it disappeared after ten episodes. Why ABC didn't try to move the series to a different timeslot during its first season remains a mystery. **BSG** enjoyed ratings success early on, and if they moved it to a less competitive timeslot, it may have been able to keep its numbers from dropping so low. But the show faltered against the competition that CBS threw at it and ABC gave up on a series in which they had invested significant money way too easily. True, they *did* at least try to keep it going with **Galactica: 1980**, but that turned out to be too little, too late. And with the cancellation of **BSG** and NBC's subsequent axing of the big budget **Buck Rogers in the 25th Century** the following season, the networks would shy away from any sort of ambitious science fiction television series for the next twenty years and more.

Mork & Mindy (ABC, 1978-82, 4 Seasons Totaling 95 Episodes): Well remembered by many of us who grew up in the late 70's, this sci fi sitcom is a case study in the perils of network tinkering. **Mork & Mindy** exploded out of the gates in its first season as it capitalized on the sci fi boom spurred by the success of **Star Wars** and gave us one of the funniest series ever to hit television—for one season at least. During its first year, young comedian Robin Williams stole the show with his anarchic read on the alien character Mork which led to his wild antics and over-the-top improvisations. But the rest of the cast, including Pam Dawber as the resilient Mindy and Elizabeth Kerr as her feisty grandmother, still succeeded in holding their own next to the frenetic Williams. And the show was a ratings smash, ranking Number 3 among all shows for its first season. But then ABC decided to move it from its comfy Thursday night timeslot between **Happy Days** and **Laverne and Shirley** and try to use it as a means to put a dent on the other networks' lock on Sunday nights (perhaps as a response to the CBS counter-programming against **BSG** in the 1978-79 season). But the worst part was that ABC tinkered with the show's formula in an attempt to draw more younger viewers (inexplicably ignoring Williams' mass appeal to the young crowd). They dropped several of the cast regulars from the first season (including Mindy's dad and grandmother, Fred and Cora) while adding new faces and a different setting for the show. They also cut way back on Robin Williams' antics, a key to the success of the first season, and began to deliver by-the-numbers sitcom stories. This led to a drastic decline in the ratings (slipping to number 27 among all shows in the 1979-80 season) and an attempt by ABC to undo many of the changes. Fred and Cora were brought back for the third season and deli owners Remo and Jean were dropped from the series without so much as a mention. Still the show did not return to the glory days of its first season and despite a last ditch effort to save it by bringing in Jonathan Winters for comedy sparring with Williams, **Mork & Mindy** continued to fall in the Nielsens and got the axe after its fourth season. And the lesson that should have been learned was that if it isn't broken, don't try to fix it.

Twin Peaks (ABC, 1990-91, 2 Seasons Totaling 30 Episodes): Though not really a genre series, this quirky murder-mystery from eccentric film-maker David Lynch appeals to much of the same fanbase and *did* work in some genre elements into its stories. **Twin Peaks** debuted on ABC to much acclaim, with Time Magazine saying that it "may be the most hauntingly original work ever done for American TV". And it initially enjoyed strong ratings, but its numbers quickly began to drop off as the series had to compete with NBC's Thursday night comedy juggernauts led off in the same timeslot by **Cheers**. The audience for **Twin Peaks** continued to drop throughout its first season, but when its finale aired on Wednesday instead of Thursday, its numbers jumped back up. In addition, the series had attracted a rabid fan following and had become a major "water cooler show" during its initial run, and this was enough for the network to see fit to giving it a renewal. However, ABC felt that the show needed to resolve the storyline revolving around the murder of Laura Palmer in the second season, even though Lynch had originally *never* intended for that mystery to be solved. For him, the series was all about the eccentric

characters that populated the town of Twin Peaks and the murder storyline was nothing more than a MacGuffin to keep the show moving along. He succumbed to network pressure, though, and resolved the murder midway through the second season. This seemed to take the wind out of the show's sails, and to make matters worse ABC began to bounce the show around its schedule resulting in **Twin Peaks** bottoming out in the ratings. ABC yanked the show, though eventually aired the final episodes of the second season during the Summer. And from this we learn that challenging, original shows face a major uphill battle on the networks (and many of the cable channels as well), and that their daring and quirkiness will only be tolerated so long as the ratings look good.

Firefly (FOX, 2002, 1 Season Totaling 14 Episodes): This is of course one of the most notorious cancellations of the past decade or so and one of the most infamous for science fiction television in general. When Joss Whedon brought this sci fi western to FOX it was highly anticipated by genre fans because of the reputation he had built up with his previous cult-favorite genre shows **Buffy, The Vampire Slayer** and **Angel**. But **Firefly** ran into problems early on as FOX had lost faith in the show before it even debuted and decided to air the episodes out of order believing that the pilot would prove too confusing as a series opener (that two-parter ended up being the *final* episode aired for the show). Instead, they first started with the episode "The Train Job" which threw viewers into the action with no real introduction to the characters. Had the series been more episodic, that decision may not have had as much impact. But Whedon had crafted a fairly intricate mythology which made it hard for viewers to follow the show as the network aired several more episodes out of their intended order during **Firefly**'s short run. It probably didn't help that FOX promoted the show as an action-comedy, down-playing the dramatic elements and more involved plotlines. The series also aired on low viewership Fridays and suffered from several preemptions early on, so obviously it stumbled in the Nielsens right out of the gate. A preemptive campaign dubbed "**Firefly** Immediate Assistance" tried to convince FOX not to cancel the show by sending postcards to the network, but this was to no avail as the series was given the axe after only eleven of its fourteen episodes had aired. There was then an attempt to convince other networks to pick up the show, primarily focused on UPN (which had previously nabbed Whedon's **Buffy, The Vampire Slayer**), but that failed as well. The series received some vindication the following year, though, when it was collected in a DVD set (a rare thing at that time for a short-lived television series) and it quickly broke many sales records, going on to sell around 500,000 units within two years' time. The success of the DVD set led to Whedon getting the greenlight for the **Firefly** film which would be named **Serenity**. This was an unprecedented move at the time, bringing a truncated television series to the big screen. And unfortunately, the movie performed below expectations at the Box Office, pretty much ending any chance of the franchise continuing there. But the efforts to bring back **Firefly** by fans (who have dubbed themselves Browncoats) did not subside and a short time back resulted in a campaign to raise money so that series star Nathan Fillion could buy the rights to the series from FOX (prompted by an off-hand comment he made in an interview). That quickly dissipated, though, when both Fillion and Whedon stepped up and said it was not feasible, but as recently as the 2012 San Diego Comic Con the entire cast of the series reunited and hopes for the show's revival continue to this day.

Had FOX been more patient with the series when it first aired and understood that sci fi shows tend not to be ratings barn-burners, they would have found that they had a show on their hands that could likely have blossomed into the next major genre franchise. Now they have only a truncated set of episodes (which have still live on in reruns on the Science Channel), a lot of what-ifs floating about, and the ire of many sci fi fans regularly directed at them.

Jericho (CBS, 2006-08: 2 seasons totaling 29 episodes): Of the shows that have been cancelled in the last six years or so, this one is probably the most notorious. This post-nuclear war series started out

with decent ratings, but by mid-season they were in decline. It didn't help that the series had nearly a three month hiatus between its Fall and Spring run, and the fact that it was slow to provide many answers to its mysteries during the first half of the season probably frustrated a large number of viewers as well. But still, the numbers for the series were not bad and the producers actually expected to get picked up for a second season. However, word came in May that CBS would not continue the series and *then* they had to deal with the wrath of the fans. A huge outcry followed that resulted in fans sending large quantities of nuts to the network to show their support for the show (prompted by Jake's reply of "Nuts!" to Constantino when the latter demanded that Jericho surrender to the New Bern forces). Allegedly, up to 20 tons of nuts were sent to the network (who then donated them to charity). The tenacity of the **Jericho** fans led the network to agreeing to a truncated second season run of seven episodes. But they showed no real commitment to the series and failed to take advantage of the fact that it was one of the few original scripted shows on the air during the spring of 2008 because of the impact of the 2007 writer's strike (the second season had been filmed prior to the strike and was just waiting in the wings to air). The network could have heavily promoted it and possibly even rerun the first season as a warm up to fill up dead air time. Yet they didn't take that route and Season 2 of Jericho languished in the ratings, leading to the show receiving a cancellation notice for the second time in a year (beginning the genre aversion we have seen from CBS of late which also claimed 2007's **Moonlight**). Fans of the show drew together and lobbied other networks to pick it up, and the producers themselves got into the act and tried to shop it around. Even so, no other network would bite on it and the show ended its run after twenty nine episodes.

However, fan support led to a continuation of the story in comics with the six issue run of **Jericho Season 3: Civil Wars** from Devils Due/IDW and the follow up **Jericho Season 4** which started up in July of 2012. There have also been talks of a big screen version, and Netflix recently showed an interest in reviving the series as an addition to the original content on their service (they had previously brought back the cancelled FOX comedy **Arrested Development**). No word has been heard on either of these initiatives as of this writing, so the show remains firmly cancelled.

Fringe (FOX, 2008-12: 5 seasons—including the upcoming final season—Totaling 100 Episodes): This series gives us the one example of a sci fi show that *didn't* get cancelled as it managed to beat the odds, *and* the Niensens, and get the opportunity to go out on its own terms. **Fringe** was a much-anticipated new entry on the 2008 Fall schedule coming from **Lost** co-creator J.J. Abrams, but it never managed to live up to its expectations ratings-wise and has struggled each year it has aired. When the series first premiered, it pulled decent ratings, but not quite the numbers that FOX was looking for. During the second half of its first season, though, they moved the show to one of the post-**American Idol** timeslots and its numbers vastly improved. However, for the show's second season, FOX moved it to the Thursday 9-10 PM EST timeslot where it had to contend with ratings juggernauts **CSI** on CBS and **Grey's Anatomy** on ABC as well as NBC's popular comedy shows. **Fringe** immediately plummeted in the ratings, and by all appearances seemed certainly headed for cancellation. FOX claimed that they understood that the show occupied a difficult timeslot, and they cut it considerable slack leading to the decision to renew it for a third season. It returned in the Fall of 2010, but its numbers slipped further and then the network announced that they were casting it to Friday nights, which is typically a death knell for *any* show. But FOX said no, and they actually poked fun at themselves in spots promoting the move to the new timeslot. Again the series received a renewal for another season. In its fourth year, the show saw its numbers fall even lower and it ended the season ranked only 105th among the broadcast network shows based on the 18-49 demographic. After four complete seasons, the show had amassed 87 episodes, which would be enough for a syndication deal, so there didn't appear to be a financial incentive to keep it going any further. But no early cancellation decision had been made and

the producers of the show wanted one more season to wrap up the storylines. Miraculously, FOX gave them that. The upcoming 2012-13 season will give the show a final thirteen episodes to wrap up all its storylines, but that came about through an unprecedented set of decisions. True, the studio that produces *Fringe* probably gave it to the network at a reduced licensing fee just to give it enough episodes to reach syndication, but they had no real reason for going *beyond* the 87 from the first four seasons. Maybe it was more appealing to them to have the series end with some sort of resolution, but other relatively recent shows that made it to four or more seasons were *not* given that opportunity such as *Heroes*, *Angel*, and *Star Trek: Enterprise*. With *Fringe*, for once, a sci fi series seems to have had the networks (if not the Niensens) on its side throughout its entire run. Just *think* if FOX had taken the same stance with *Firefly* back in 2002. But we definitely shouldn't complain because *Fringe* has delivered a notable genre entry that has at least attempted to strive for intelligent science fiction stories (even if it hasn't always succeed). Instead, let's just count our blessings on this one and bask in the moment. We likely won't see this again for quite a while, so let's not ask too many questions...

Cancelled (and Not Cancelled) Shows from Past Two Seasons

Following is a look at the past couple of seasons and several of the genre shows that were cancelled as well as a few that survived.

Why Did These Shows, Which Struggled in the Ratings, Survive?

The three series below delivered mediocre or just downright bad ratings during the past season (2011-12), but they all received renewals. Following are my thoughts on why each survived.

Grimm (NBC): NBC's dark fairy tale/procedural hybrid was probably never really in much danger during its first year, but it was also never really a strong ratings performer either. It *did* start out okay, pulling a 2.1 rating in the overnights with the 18-49 demo for its debut in the Friday 9 PM EST timeslot. But then it settled into numbers between 1.3 and 1.5, which the fourth place network apparently considered acceptable for that low-viewership night. It also beat out its genre competition in that timeslot which included FOX's *Fringe*, The CW's *Supernatural*, and Cartoon Network's *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*. On top of that, NBC had enough other holes in their schedule to deal with, so I guess they decided **Grimm** plugged up one leak well enough for the time being. For the 2012-13 season, the network plans on keeping it on Fridays (though it did give the show a preseason push with an early start in August on Mondays to capitalize on the boon from their Olympics coverage), so as long as the show stays in the 1.5 rating range it should be okay. It has appeared to have established somewhat of a following among genre fans, so at this point it looks like it's in good shape to coast into a third season.

Nikita (CW): This was The CW's lowest rated series for the 2011-12 season, but then that doesn't mean too much for a network when pretty much all of your shows are living in the gutter (their highest rated series, *Vampire Diaries*, only averaged a 1.3 rating in the 18-49 demographic for the season based on the overnights). **Nikita**, though, has one edge that most of the other CW shows did not: a sizable international audience. Now usually, that doesn't mean much for shows airing on the U.S. broadcast networks. It couldn't save *Terra Nova* this past season nor *Heroes* a few years ago (where a fifth season, even a shortened one, would have given it a much more attractive syndication package), and both of those shows also played very well internationally. But then both of those had much higher production costs than **Nikita**. So despite averaging only a 0.5 rating (based on the overnights), the show's foreign fans and the fact that The CW appears to have adjusted its standards to that of many of the basic cable

channels apparently helped keep it alive. Given that, **Nikita** has a good chance of getting a fourth season as well, with recent trends suggesting that if a series (which has been averaging 22 episodes per year) gets picked up for a third season then that likely means that the network/studio has pre-committed to at least one more year to get the show to the key eighty eight episode mark to make it attractive to the syndication market. I can't see **Nikita's** numbers dropping much more this coming season (heck, I think reruns of **The Andy Griffith Show** over on TV Land were already beating it on a regular basis), so it seems like a good bet that the show will be around at least one more year after the current season.

Touch (FOX): This series from **Heroes** creator Tim Kring which stars **24's** Keifer Sutherland delivered **Touched by an Angel** with numbers as it focused on an autistic boy who could predict future tragedies and would give cryptic messages on how to avert them. It started out very strong in the ratings with a 3.9 overnight rating in the 18-49 demographic, but its numbers went on a steady decline after that and it ended the season pulling around a 2.0 in the overnights. Despite that, the series received a second season renewal. Maybe it was the star power of Sutherland that kept it alive (they may have promised him at least two seasons). Or maybe FOX felt this series has some potential and just needs a few tweaks, believing that a slight course change might bring back the audience that first tuned in when it debuted. But all logic seems to have suggested that this one should have been cancelled just like FOX's **Alcatraz** which charted a similar course in the ratings (though that one sunk lower than **Touch** by the end of its first season). This one is on pretty unsure footing going into its second season, though, and seems almost assured of disappearing after it airs the thirteen episodes the network has ordered thus far.

Why Were These Shows Cancelled?

Following are the more notable cancellations among genre shows from the past two seasons (sorted alphabetically) accompanied by my commentary on why I believe they didn't make it.

Awake (NBC, 2012, 1 Season 13 Episodes): This dual-reality series likely suffered from the same drawbacks that doomed FOX's **Alcatraz** from the same season (see below), but possibly even more so. It merged procedural and sci fi elements, but did it in an even less satisfying manner than the J.J. Abrams series. And the show started off on uncertain footing as its debut pulled fairly weak ratings (a 2.0 rating for the overnights in the 18-49 demo), though actually not *too* bad for fourth place NBC. But by the end of its run it was teetering on low CW-range ratings (falling below a 1.0 rating), and struggling NBC just couldn't justify keeping it around. A petition did emerge to keep the show alive, but apparently most of the fans were already asleep by that point.

Alcatraz (FOX, 2012, 1 Season 13 Episodes): This J.J. Abrams entry delivered a crime drama with strong sci fi elements (much stronger than his CBS entry from the same season **Person of Interest**), but it apparently just did not appeal to enough fans of either genres to keep it afloat. Sci fi fans it seems quickly became frustrated with the show as it settled into a formula of escaped convict of the week. And apparently the sci fi story arc just didn't do it for the viewers accustomed to more straightforward procedural shows. **Alcatraz** actually started decent in the ratings (pulling a 3.3 in the overnights for its debut) and held onto its audience for several weeks, but then it went into a quick decline (averaging only a 1.6 rating for its final episodes) as nonplussed viewers began to give up on the show. There were some rumblings amongst fans to try and revive the show, but not enough to garner much attention or convince another network to pick it up.

The Cape (NBC, 2011, 1 Season 10 Episodes): This odd comic book mish-mash series was just *too* entrenched in its own roots to appeal to a wider audience. Plus, it delivered a completely new character (that borrowed heavily from many pre-existing comic book heroes), so the show didn't have a built in following (apart from those tuning in to see Summer Glau) and it annoyed many fans because of its derivative nature. On top of that, it also merged together a dark superhero tale with odd touches of camp that even those who *liked* the show found a bit hard to digest. It started to hit its stride, quality-wise, during the second half of its shortened run, but that was far too late because the show started with poor ratings and only went down from there. It could still achieve cult status, and may one day be remembered as a quirky addition to the superhero genre on television. But for now, it's just one more piece of evidence for those championing the Summer Glau sci fi curse (all series she's on get cancelled: **Firefly**, **The Sarah Connor Chronicles**, **Dollhouse**).

Caprica (Syfy, 2010-11, 1 Season 18 Episodes): This **Battlestar: Galactica** prequel, like **Stargate: Universe** (see below), seemed like a sure thing before it first aired. But then it actually *debuted* and viewers found themselves somewhat befuddled by its extremely dense, planet-based, multi-character drama that mixed soap opera, with mafia tale, with virtual reality, with a science fiction story that also challenged religious beliefs. That proved quite a bit for one series to tackle, and what started out quite promising became far too muddled and also suffered from extremely slow pacing. The show stumbled out of the gate, giving the network one of its lowest rated debuts of the past few years, and it never really improved its numbers too much throughout its only season. And considering that it was an expensive show to produce, Syfy decided not to keep it around past its initial run, as the network began a notable move away from more ambitious science fiction series like this or **SGU**.

The Event (NBC, 2010-11, 1 Season 22 Episodes): This show, like 2009's **FlashForward**, was hailed as the next **Lost** and it appeared to offer much that fans of *that* series were looking for with its many mysteries, interconnected characters, and flashback story-telling style. It definitely looked like the next big genre hit when the series debuted with a 3.7 in the overnights in the 18-49 demo. But unfortunately the show's storyline all too quickly spiraled out of control and, like **V** (see below), it started to descend into bad camp. And the ratings spiraled as well. By the end of the season, this once-promising series was pulling numbers below several of The CW's better rated shows, which was not acceptable for one of the Big Four networks (even fourth-place ranked NBC). Of course the network didn't help things by subjecting the show to an extended hiatus at mid-season that spanned over three months, but it's a stretch to blame that when the show itself had already turned away many fans with its overly convoluted story arc. After the show's cancellation, rumors floated that Syfy (owned by NBC) might do a mini-series continuation the following year, but these were denied by network executives. And NBC even showed an interest in doing a TV movie to tie up some of the plot threads, but nothing ever came of this and the show has since joined the list failed **Lost** copycat series.

Human Target (FOX, 2010-11, 2 Seasons 25 Episodes): FOX just gave this fun action/adventure romp no respect. This adaptation of the DC comic book character actually had a very Prime Time friendly format and a stellar cast with perfect chemistry (for the first season at least). But its ratings didn't soar in its freshman year so the network tinkered with it some, bringing in two female characters to expand the show's appeal. However, the new cast members didn't quite gel with the three central characters from the first season (though Guerrero and Ames started to develop some sparks as the season progressed), but the biggest problem was that the quality of the scripts fell off during the show's second year. On top of that, the network shuffled the series all over its schedule throughout its two seasons (even though it still held onto and even grew its audience). This one deserved the plum post-**American Idol** slot to

attract a larger viewership and establish itself. But the network saw differently and ended up axing it after two short seasons. To my knowledge, there wasn't much of an attempt by fans to keep the show alive, but I'd certainly love it if this one showed up on Netflix or some other network with new episodes at some point. Perhaps we should send Guerrero in to talk to some of the network executives . . .

No Ordinary Family (ABC, 2010-11, 1 Season 20 Episodes): This was a genre show that didn't want to be a genre show as it struggled between deciding if it would give us a superhero series, a procedural, or a family dramedy. None of those elements ever really meshed, and that apparently confused and fractured the audience as the show never really caught on during its one and only season. It actually started with decent ratings, pulling a 3.1 in the overnights with the 18-49 demo, but then it suffered from a steady decline, falling well below a 2.0 rating to CW levels by the end of its run. ABC saw little choice but to cancel the show after its freshman season, and not much in the way of a fan campaign (that I am aware of) ever emerged to keep it alive.

The River (ABC, 2012, 1 Season 8 Episodes): This horror/mystery series from Oren Peli and executive producer Steven Spielberg (who apparently needs to stick with movies based on his batting average in the 2011-12 season, see **Terra Nova** below) delivered a **Lost** meets **Paranormal Activity** hybrid but with little of the spark of either of those two. It started off its eight episode run with a mediocre debut (only a 2.4 rating in the overnights in the 18-49 demo) and the numbers just went down from there, dropping to near CW levels by the time it wrapped up. Thus, despite the pedigree of the show, ABC decided to cut bait and move on. Netflix raised their hand on this one as they did with **Terra Nova**, but it was financially out of their reach and they passed on it. A campaign to save the show did emerge, but seemed to have little steam, leaving the series certainly sunk at this point.

Sanctuary (Syfy 2008-11, 4 Seasons 59 Episodes): This show (which began life as a web series) was never one of the Syfy's higher rated entries throughout its run and it only averaged a 0.4 rating (in the 18-49 demo based on the overnights) during its final season. The show had amassed 59 episodes over its four seasons (it usually ran 13 per season), so bringing it back for one more year would not get it to the magic 88 number that the syndication market seems to prefer these days. So apparently the decision was made to go ahead and put it to rest, and apparently the series had wrapped up most of its loose ends with the season finale, so the network saw little reason to keep it going. Fans did rally to try and get a fifth season, but at this point that appears to have little chance of succeeding.

The Secret Circle (CW, 2011-12, 1 Season 22 Episodes): This supernatural series seemed like a surefire winner going into the season. It had Kevin Williamson guiding it and it was based on a series of L.J. Smith novels, and that duo had already launched a winner on The CW with **Vampire Diaries**. And **The Secret Circle** had the post-**Diaries** timeslot, so you would expect viewers of the first show to stick around for the second. But it never quite worked that way as it failed to hold onto the audience of its lead-in, and its numbers sunk considerably by the end of the season when it was losing over half of audience of **Vampire Diaries**. So The CW decided that one season was enough and gave **The Secret Circle** its walking papers. This show had an energized fanbase, though, and they began a letter-writing campaign to convince the network to bring it back, at least as a mid-season replacement. They also targeted several of the cable networks such as Syfy, ABC Family, and MTV (where it would make a good companion series to that network's similarly skewing **Teen Wolf**). Warner Bros. actually entered into talks with ABC Family about picking up the show, but nothing came of that and word was that the studio would make no further attempts to keep the series going. The fans continue their efforts, though, and this one might be a good fit on Netflix as it would be a much more economically pickup than either **Terra Nova** or **The River**, which that company had shown interest in acquiring.

Stargate: Universe (Syfy, 2009-11, 2 Seasons 40 Episodes): Syfy's third **Stargate** series seemed like a sure thing going in to its first season, but it actually ended up stalling the franchise and marked the network's move away from more ambitious science fiction programs. **SGU** took a very different course from the previous two **Stargate** series with its darker, grittier feel and its more heavily story-arc'd approach, and that apparently annoyed fans of that franchise who showed a reluctance to jump on board (calling it **Stargate** meets **BSG**). And the series didn't bring in enough *new* viewers to make up for the **Stargate** fans it lost, maybe because *they* felt they would be lost by not knowing the backstory of the previous two series. In any case, **SGU** just did not draw sufficient ratings as it debuted with only mediocre numbers and never managed to improve much throughout its two seasons. Syfy ultimately decided that its numbers did not justify its hefty production costs, and along with the cancellation of **BSG** prequel series **Caprica** (see entry above), the network dropped the last of its space opera shows and began to focus more on its slate of budget-friendly, "sci fi lite" shows like **Warehouse 13**, **Haven**, and **Being Human** for its scripted original programming. **SGU**, though, had developed enough of a following that rumors emerged that the series might continue apart from the Syfy channel (as they don't hold the license for the **Stargate** franchise). The producers of the show actually lobbied the fans, telling them that letters in support of the show would be nice, but DVD sales and downloads would be much better (as I [expounded upon above](#) for *all* cancelled shows above). Nothing has surfaced yet, but I'm guessing that this franchise still has a pulse and we could see a continuation of **SGU** or another entry at some point.

Terra Nova (FOX, 2011, 1 Season 11 Episodes): This series had a lot going for it coming into the season including a theatrical level budget, plenty of hype, and the genre-cred of Steven Spielberg's name attached. And, it had *dinosaurs*, which had plenty of genre fans (including myself) pumped (hey, it brings out the kid in us). But the series delivered a major misfire out of the gate as it gave us a sci fi/family drama hybrid that piled cliché upon cliché and went heavy on the teen angst angle. Genre fans *wanted* to like **Terra Nova**, and many lively debates sprung up across the Internet forums. But the series never drew huge ratings, and it saw a steady decline throughout its eleven episode run. Still, it played well internationally and apparently the network executives really *wanted* to bring it back. But it was just too expensive, and ultimately the numbers did it in: too big of a budget without high enough ratings to justify the expense. However, after the FOX TV network decided to cut ties with it, the show's studio, 20th Century Fox TV, immediately started shopping it to other networks. Netflix showed an interest in acquiring it in an attempt to bolster their original content, but apparently the show was beyond their financial means and they bowed out. There's been no further word since, so that means that its chances of continuing are fading fast.

V (ABC, 2009-11, 2 Seasons 22 Episodes): ABC certainly thought they had struck gold with this one when it debuted in November 2009 pulling a 5.0 rating for the overnights in the 19-49 demo. But the series headed into a quick decline after that and ended its first season barely averaging above a 2.0 rating for its final episodes. Still, they felt they had something here, and decided to see if one more season might jump start it back to ratings success. But it returned for its second season with numbers hardly better than where it ended its first, and ABC ultimately decided that this ratings under-performer was far too expensive to keep on their schedule. Some will argue that the extended hiatuses ABC subjected the show to doomed it (several months between the first and second halves of its first season, and almost nine months between the end of its first and the start of its second season). But it was a dubious reboot to begin with, having only so much fuel in the tank. The first mini-series was a sci fi (though somewhat campy) classic, true, but the subsequent mini-series and short-lived ongoing series quickly fell victim to the law of diminishing returns. And the reboot's lapses into bad camp did not help. There was an

attempt by fans to revive the series, but it never gained much momentum, and this one has since been put to rest.

More Cancelled Shows from Throughout the Years

Here are even more cancellations (and non-cancellations) among sci fi shows from the past fifty years with minimal commentary and mostly just the results of my research into what led to their getting axed.

The Twilight Zone (CBS, 1959-64, 5 Season 156 Episodes): This series had a healthy five year run and after its fifth season both CBS and Serling seemed to feel that it was time to move on. The network execs decided to exclude the show from the schedule for the next season, citing budget overruns and declining ratings. Rod Serling did not quite agree with their claims, though, and he actually asserted that *he* “decided to cancel the network.” Serling’s agent thought that there was an opportunity to sell the show to either NBC or ABC, but CBS held the rights to the ***Twilight Zone*** title. Serling and his agent toyed with the idea of a similar series under a different title (Serling’s agent suggested ***Witches, Warlocks, and Werewolves*** while Serling countered with ***Rod Serling’s Wax Museum***), but nothing ever came of it and ***The Twilight Zone*** slipped into television infamy, and a long syndication run still going today, after its five season run.

The Outer Limits (ABC, 1963-65, 2 Seasons 49 Episodes): This classic sci fi anthology series did quite well in the ratings during its first year, but in its second season ABC made a scheduling change that doomed it. They moved it from Monday nights (where ***Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*** would assume its timeslot) to Saturday nights to compete with the popular ***Jackie Gleason Show***. The ratings for ***The Outer Limits*** took a nose dive, and instead of rescheduling the show to a better timeslot, ABC just decided to cancel it at midseason, truncating its episode run at 49. This of course gives us a classic example of scheduling tomfoolery dooming a promising series and also plenty of fodder for those claiming a network/Nielsen conspiracy against sci fi shows.

Jonny Quest (ABC, 1964-65, 1 Season 26 Episodes): This Hanna Barbara product was one of the rare animated shows developed for Prime Time in that era and it pulled very good numbers in its first and only season. However, it was expensive to make, so the network decided not to continue the series. It would live on for years in reruns on Saturday mornings, though, and in the 80’s and 90’s several revivals would continue the adventures of young Jonny Quest.

Lost in Space (CBS, 1965-68, 3 Seasons 83 Episodes): This campy sci fi classic performed decently well in the ratings for its three seasons and the cast and crew all expected to come back for a fourth year. But CBS unexpectedly pulled the plug without much of an explanation after its third season wrapped. Possible reasons since suggested for the cancellation have been production costs, falling ratings, and lack of enthusiasm from some of the cast members (where else can you go but down after performing next to a giant, talking carrot in the episode “The Great Vegetable Rebellion”).

Batman (ABC, 1966-68, 3 Seasons 120 Episodes): When this series debuted at midseason in January 1966, it was an instant success and quickly became a pop culture phenomenon, establishing the camp perception the public would have of Batman and Robin for many years to follow. But its necessarily formulaic approach (over-the-top villains trapping the Dynamic Duo in increasingly ridiculous death-traps followed by even more absurd escapes) wore thin all too quickly. By its third season, the series had slipped significantly in the ratings despite attempts to revive interest by introducing the Batgirl

character. ABC decided to part ways with the show and while NBC had an interest in picking it up for a fourth season, they ultimately decided the cost would be too high. Still, since the series ran twice per week in its first two seasons, it did manage to amass 120 episodes and thus lived on for many years in syndication (but where is our DVD release of the complete series?).

Dark Shadows (ABC, 1966-1971, 5 Seasons 1225 Episodes): This supernatural soap opera drew strong afternoon ratings beginning with its second season when the vampire Barnabas Collins was introduced and supernatural elements became a core part of its stories. But the severe economic recession of the early 70's, as well as the loss of advertising revenue because the government had banned commercials for cigarettes at that time, prompted ABC to seek ways to cut costs. And **Dark Shadows** was vulnerable because its audience skewed younger than most other soap operas. Because of its supernatural subject matter and its later afternoon timeslot, its audience consisted more of kids coming home from school and less of stay at home moms who had more of the purchasing power in the house. Also, its ratings had dropped somewhat from the peaks it experienced back in the late sixties. So ABC decided to cancel the soap opera in favor of scheduling a less expensive game show in its timeslot. A letter-writing campaign tried to convince the network to change its mind, but to no avail. Still, unlike most soap operas of the time, **Dark Shadows** was released into syndication and it would live on in that market for many years after its cancellation.

The Prisoner (1967-68, 1 Season 17 Episodes): Despite claims made to the contrary in various places and the fact that it only ran seventeen episodes, **The Prisoner** was not cancelled. It was always intended to have a short run, and in fact Patrick McGoohan originally wanted to do only *seven* episodes. But the British network ITV, which produced the series, insisted on more and seventeen were produced including the finale "Fallout" that still has people scratching their heads and that resulted in McGoohan having to go into hiding from his fans for several months after it aired!

UFO (Syndication, 1970, 1 Season 26 Episodes): Gerry Anderson's first foray into live-action television (after years of working on Supermarionation shows like **Thunderbirds** and **Captain Scarlet as the Mysterons**) was originally headed to a second season when the early returns from its syndication run in America looked good. However, ITV wanted the second season to take place mostly on the Moon since those episodes in the first season tended to be more popular. So the decision was made to move the series forward twenty years when SHADO's moonbase had been expanded and call the second season **UFO: 1999**. However, the ratings began to drop toward the end of the show's first season syndication run and ITV changed their minds on the second season. As you can guess, though, the idea eventually morphed into **Space: 1999** and you can read more about that one below.

Star Trek: The Animated Series (NBC, 1973-74, 2 Seasons 22 Episodes): The animated continuation of the adventures of the crew of the Enterprise was not really cancelled, it was just not continued. It was common practice at the time for Saturday morning shows to have a relatively short run of new episodes, which would be constantly repeated for several years. A show had to be a breakout success to justify a longer run, and even though the **Trek** animated series received acclaim and several awards, it did not draw enough of the younger audience that the Saturday morning schedule targeted. But simply getting a second season for a Saturday morning show classified it as a success back at that time.

Kolchak: The Night Stalker (ABC, 1974-75, 1 Season 20 Episodes): The two TV movies that preceded this series, **The Night Stalker** and **The Night Strangler**, had been ratings successes for ABC (the first of the two was the highest rated TV movie ever up to that time) and prompted the network to order a series based on the supernatural investigations of Carl Kolchak. However, neither producer Dan Curtis (who

had previously created *Dark Shadows*) or scriptwriter Richard Matheson returned for the ongoing series and it seemed to suffer from their absence. Series star Darren McGavin complained that he often had to rewrite scripts and also that he did not care for the show's monster-of-the-week formula. And the series never recaptured the ratings success of the two TV movies, pulling at best mediocre numbers. ABC ended up axing the show after only 20 of the 26 episodes ordered for the first season had been filmed, leaving three scripts that had been commissioned and completed unproduced. But even though the series did not quite live up to the quality of the TV movies that preceded it, it still left a lasting impression and many creative talents would cite it as an inspiration in the years that followed, most notably Chris Carter who considered it a direct influence on *The X-Files*.

Space: 1999 (Syndication, 1975-77, 2 Seasons 48 Episodes): Gerry Anderson's second live action sci fi series was almost cancelled after its first season because of flagging ratings in syndication and the fact that none of the U.S. broadcast networks had elected to pick it up. But a last minute decision kept it going (and also led to the notorious Fred Freiberger jumping onboard as executive producer) and toward the end of its second season run plans were moving ahead for a third year. However, that would have run only thirteen episodes in order to keep costs down. But ITV ultimately decided not to go forward with Season 3, because even though the show had a loyal following, it had never managed to attract a wider audience (though the timing of their decision to cancel the show came *before Star Wars* helped revive science fiction in the Summer of 77). An interesting note: if they had gone ahead with the third season of **Space: 1999**, there were also plans in the works for a spinoff series starring Maya which would have run concurrently with the parent series.

The Incredible Hulk (CBS, 1977-1982, 5 Seasons 82 Episodes): This series began filming Season 5 episodes immediately after the conclusion of its fourth season because a major strike in the entertainment industry threatened to shut down production of *all* television shows. Seven episodes of the fifth season were completed when CBS abruptly decided to cancel the show citing ratings declines in the face of high production costs. Series creator Kenneth Johnson tried to convince the network to greenlight nine more episodes for the fifth season, but to no avail. Later in the 80's though, the Bill Bixby and Lou Ferrigno duo returned for three made for TV movies that would bring back the Incredible Hulk, two of which would also introduce other Marvel characters (Thor and Daredevil) who could have possibly spun off into their own series. The third of these movies gave us the death of the Incredible Hulk, but there were still plans to continue the TV movies and with the Hulk revived with Dr. Banner's mind still intact. This film was cancelled, though, due to Bill Bixby's declining health and we unfortunately lost that talented actor to cancer in 1993.

Buck Rogers in the 25th Century (NBC, 1979-81, 2 Seasons 37 Episodes): The second of the late 70's sci fi series to try and jump on the *Star Wars* bandwagon (*Battlestar: Galactica* being the first), this show just barely fought off cancellation during its first year. Even though it premiered to decent ratings, its numbers headed south as its season progressed, but NBC execs still saw fit to give it a last-minute greenlight for a second season. They demanded changes, though, which eventually doomed the show. In its second year, the series moved from a tongue-in-cheek sci fi romp to an ersatz *Star Trek / BSG* hybrid and viewers completely lost interest resulting in NBC calling it quits, blaming low ratings and high production costs. And following the expensive failures of this and *BSG*, sci fi almost completely disappeared from the networks for an extended period of time.

Amazing Stories (NBC, 1985-87, 2 Seasons 45 Episodes): This series was big news when first announced because it represented genre mogul Steven Spielberg's triumphant return to television (he got his start directing for various television series including *Night Gallery* and he also directed the made for TV movie

Duel). This series also, along with the **Twilight Zone** revival over on CBS and the **Alfred Hitchcock Presents** reboot also on NBC, was supposed to bring the anthology show format back to television. But it was all for naught. **Amazing Stories** provided some particularly un-amazing tales despite its high production values and it failed to generate much enthusiasm from Prime Time audiences. NBC had contracted with Spielberg for a minimum of two seasons for the show, and they honored that commitment. But the show never delivered more than mediocre ratings and the network dropped it after its second season. CBS would also cut ties with the **Twilight Zone** revival after the 87 season (though that series *did* have one more season in syndication), and NBC jettisoned **The New Alfred Hitchcock Presents** after one season (it would have three more, though, on the USA Channel) ending the brief anthology revival on the broadcast networks.

Max Headroom (ABC, 1987-88, 2 Seasons 14 Episodes): This early cyberpunk series that offered a dystopian satire on television (and technology in general) run amok became a pop cultural phenomenon of sorts when the Max Headroom character took the world by storm in the 80's, and the six-episode first season debuted to decent ratings on ABC in early 1987. But fickle viewers had already lost interest when the show returned the following season and **Max Headroom** also had to contend with stiff competition after being rescheduled against popular shows **Dallas** and **Miami Vice** on Friday nights. ABC then cancelled the series early in its second season as the show ultimately fell victim to the very thing it satirized.

Beauty and the Beast (CBS, 1987-90, 3 Seasons 56 Episodes): This series never delivered strong ratings through its three season run and could not survive the loss of leading lady Linda Hamilton after its second season as well as the change to a darker tone that followed. Its ratings plummeted in its final year and CBS gave it the axe.

Alien Nation (FOX, 1989-90, 1 Season 22 Episodes): An example where ratings could *not* help a series, **Alien Nation** did well for the fledgling FOX network, then just beginning its attempt to compete with the Big 3 broadcast networks ABC, CBS, and NBC. However, FOX ran into financial difficulties in its early years which resulted in them cancelling *all* of their drama series going into the 1990 season. **Alien Nation** would still get a chance to continue its story, though, when a healthier FOX network produced five made for TV movies from 1994 to 1997.

The Flash (CBS, 1990, 1 Season 22 Episodes): This one season wonder is considered by many to be one of the better television superhero series, but suffered from unfortunate scheduling decisions. It aired on Thursday nights against NBC's juggernaut **The Cosby Show** and an upstart little animated series in its second season from FOX known as **The Simpsons**. Obviously, **The Flash** lost out even though CBS *tried* to give it a chance by bumping it a half hour and having it run from 9:30 to 10:30 EST (a rare scheduling move for an hour long show). That didn't help, nor did frequent preemptions during the second half of the show's season when the Gulf War broke out. Add the fact that this one was expensive to produce, and you know what decision the network executives made when the season rolled to a close.

The Adventures of Brisco County Jr. (FOX, 1993-94, 1 Season 27 episodes): This western with hints of sci fi delivered equal parts **Wild Wild West** and **Indiana Jones** (series creators Carlton Cuse and Jeffery Boam had previously penned the script for **Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade**) and kicked off the 1993 season for FOX with impressive ratings. But its numbers quickly began to drop, blamed in part on its Friday night 8 PM EST timeslot. By the end of the season, it was one of the lowest rated shows on the broadcast networks and FOX decided to cancel it. Despite only lasting one season, the show *did* have a healthy syndication run on TNT through most of the 90's and fans even lobbied that cable network to

produce new episodes. They never went that route though, as it would have been too expensive for them to produce an original series of that nature at that time. Interestingly, *Brisco County's* lead-out series during its run on FOX was *The X-Files*, also in its first year, which had low ratings as well but *that* one was cheaper to produce and had received much acclaim from fans and critics. And that one would eventually make Friday nights appointment television for many genre fans.

seaQuest DSV (NBC, 1993-96, 3 Seasons 59 episodes): This underwater adventure series was never a huge ratings grabber and for that reason it got shuffled around the schedule multiple times and it also changed its format and cast members pretty much every season. By the end of its third season, its number had sunk low enough that NBC could not justify bringing it back for a fourth year.

Earth 2 (NBC, 1994-5, 1 season 22 episodes): This series began as a strong contender in the ratings, but it quickly fell off as it progressed through its one and only season. Even though it received several award nominations, including nods from the Emmys and Saturns, it could not hold onto a large enough audience for NBC to see fit to giving it a second season.

American Gothic (CBS, 1995-96, 1 Season 22 Episodes): This quirky horror series from the *Hercules/Xena* crew of Sam Raimi and Robert G. Tapert as well as creator Shaun Cassidy struggled to find an audience during its initial run as it diverged considerably from the standard fare on Prime Time television. CBS cancelled it after one season, but it developed a cult following in the years that would follow and there were plans to reboot the property on the big screen around 2004. Gary Cole would have returned as the sinister Sheriff Lucas Buck, and several other series regulars were set to reprise their roles with Sam Raimi returning as producer. A new actor would have played Caleb, though, as Lucas Black had grown too old to play the character. However, the movie plans stalled over various concerns and were eventually shelved altogether in 2005.

Space: Above and Beyond (FOX, 1995-96, 1 season 24 episodes): This space combat series (inspired by the 60's war series *Combat!*, but also borrowing generously from *Aliens*) immediately attracted a devoted fanbase when it debuted, but unfortunately the show did not attract a broad enough audience to count as a ratings success. Since this was a very expensive series to make (approximately \$5 million per episode according to IMDb.com), FOX decided to pull the plug on it after one season. It has kept a cult following since its initial run, though, and is often lamented as a potentially great series cancelled before its time.

Kindred: The Embraced (FOX, 1996, 1 Season 8 Episodes): This vampire series based on the role-playing game *Vampire: The Masquerade* and which gave us a supernatural-tinged *Godfather* tale of sorts developed a strong cult-following despite its short run. Showtime was actually in negotiations to pick up the series several years after its cancellation, but the show's star Mark Frankel died in a motorcycle accident and that halted further talks of a continuation. It *was*, however, one of the first short-lived television series to get a full DVD release, which came in 2001, two years before *Firefly's* record-setting DVD set hit the shelves.

Millennium (FOX, 1996-99, 3 Seasons 67 Episodes): This horror/supernatural crime drama was the second series that *X-Files* creator Chris Carter developed for FOX and it looked like it would be his second hit with the pilot pulling in the most viewers for a FOX show up to that point. But its rather intense subject matter frightened away many Prime Time viewers after the first episode and its numbers had sunk somewhat by season end, though it *did* still get a renewal. It changed around its format some in its second season, though its numbers continued to drop and ended the year on a rather apocalyptic

note that suggested the producers were certain it would not get renewed. But FOX *did* decide to bring it back for one more year leaving the writers with the task of scrambling for a way to work around the implications of the Season 2 finale. The third season would bring more changes and a continued decline in the ratings which resulted ultimately in its cancellation. Unfortunately, this time around Carter had higher hopes for its renewal prospects and ended the season on a cliffhanger. Fans of the series eventually got a rather unsatisfying wrap up when Frank Black made a final appearance on an episode of *The X-Files* (which aired toward the end of 1999 and was appropriately titled "Millennium").

The Crow: Stairway to Heaven (Syndication, 1998-99, 1 Season 22 Episodes): This syndicated television series that adapted James O'Barr's *The Crow* comic book to the small screen aired on the Sci Fi Channel in the United States and in Britain. It was well received by fans and actually developed a strong following after its initial run. Unfortunately the company that produced the series, Polygram, was sold to Universal while the series was running its first season and the new company decided not to produce a second season. The show's producers wanted to do a television movie to at least wrap up some of the storylines, but Universal nixed that as well, leaving fans of the series with only its one season run of twenty two episodes.

Angel (WB, 1999-2004, 5 Seasons 110 Episodes): This spin-off to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* had performed well on the WB for five seasons and was actually one of their higher rated shows. But the network made an early announcement in 2004 that the show would not be coming back for a sixth season in response to rumors that had leaked on the Internet. Series creator Joss Whedon was surprised by the news and claimed that hearing it was like a "healthy guy falling dead from a heart attack." One of the writers for the show claimed that the reason the WB cancelled the show was because Whedon had pressured the network into giving an early renewal for the series (but whether that is the actual reason is a subject of debate). Outraged fans organized letter-writing campaigns, blood drives, online petitions, and even paid for advertisements in trade magazines and on billboards to convince other networks to pick up the series (*Buffy* had moved from WB to UPN a few years prior). The WB could not be convinced to change their minds, and no other network took a flyer on the show, and thus *Angel* ended without resolution. The story would continue in comics, though, with the publication of *Angel: After the Fall* in 2007, Whedon's official continuation of the series. And the characters from the series have remained a fixture in comics and have continued to expand on the "Buffy-verse" since that book debuted.

Crusade (TNT, 1999, 1 Season 13 Episodes): This spin-off series to *Babylon 5* found itself in trouble before it even hit the air. TNT had greenlit *Crusade* at the same time they agreed to pick up Season 5 of *B5*, but almost from the beginning, J. Michael Straczynski found himself at odds with his new network. TNT research showed that the viewers tuning in for *Babylon 5* were not sticking around for the other programs the cable channel had on its schedule. So they demanded changes to *Crusade*, which had just started up production, but JMS was reluctant to move the show in the direction they preferred. He claimed at one point that they wanted to turn the series into Wrestling meets *Baywatch* (hmm, Syfy would *love* that, no?), and he resisted their tampering. He even at one point claimed that *he* had cancelled the show, and *not* TNT, but no matter how it went down, it seems that the network was not willing to move forward past their initial thirteen episode commitment. Warner Bros, who owned the *B5* franchise, entered into negotiations with the Sci Fi Channel (as it was known when they could still spell) to pick up *Crusade*, but they had already allocated their production budget at that point (with new entry *Farscape* likely taking a good chunk), and they could not afford to pick it up. Thus, this continuation of the *B5* saga was truncated, by network tampering, before it ever really got started.

Roswell (WB, 1999-2002, 3 Season 61 Episodes): This series based on the young adult novels **Roswell High** fought off cancellation throughout its three season run. When the WB threatened to cancel it at the end of its first season, fans started up a campaign that involved sending bottles of hot sauce to the network (particularly Tabasco Sauce, for which the alien characters on the show had an affinity). The network decided to go ahead and greenlight a second season, but they brought in **Star Trek** veteran Ronald D. Moore to kick up the sci fi elements. The ratings still lagged, though, and the WB axed the show after its second season. However, 20th Century Fox worked a deal with UPN to take **Roswell** along with **Buffy, the Vampire Slayer** which the network had just wrested away from the WB. Thus, UPN aired the third season of **Roswell**, but the show still struggled in the ratings and was cancelled for good after its one season run on that network.

Strange World (ABC, 1999, 1 Season 13 Episodes) : This series from **Heroes** creator Tim Kring and **Buffy/Angel** producer Howard Gordon was one of several that came in on the wave of **X-Files** clones in the late 90's, though it borrowed mostly just the paranoia and government conspiracy aspects from the Chris Carter show. The producers of **Strange World** realized early on that ABC was not going to support the show, and they were correct as the network only aired three episodes before pulling it from the schedule. However, they decided to go ahead and write a resolution to the series and considered the final product more of a self-contained mini-series. The entire thirteen episode run would finally be aired when the Sci Fi Channel picked it up in 2002 and ran the full series.

Farscape (Sci Fi Channel, 1999-2003, 4 Season 88 Episodes): This series debuted on the Sci Fi Channel to much acclaim in 1999 and quickly developed a strong fanbase that followed it throughout its four seasons. However, the cable network enraged the show's fans when they abruptly cancelled it before the fourth season began airing in 2002 (which would leave it on an unresolved cliffhanger). Sci Fi gave the usual reason of declining ratings in the face of high production costs (according to IMDb.com, the series cost \$2 million per episode to produce which was quite high for a cable series at that time). Fans immediately mounted a campaign that launched letters, phone calls, and emails to the cable network demanding that they give the show a fifth season. The comic strip **Fox Trot** even jumped in as uber-geek character Jason Fox directed his ire at the Sci Fi Channel and petitioned for them to change their mind. The campaign brought significant attention to the show and ultimately several European backers agreed to help with the finances which allowed the Jim Henson Company to produce the mini-series **Farscape: The Peacekeeper Wars** which resolved many of the storylines from the series. But that was not the end of **Farscape** as it would live on in comics and Rockne S. O'Bannon is still working toward a revival today. He had mentioned plans for a web series several years back, but nothing has yet surfaced, though word is that he has not given up yet on reviving the beloved show.

Star Trek: Enterprise (UPN, 2001-05, 4 Seasons 98 Episodes): **Enterprise** has the unfortunate distinction of being only the *second Trek* series to end because of cancellation (**TOS** of course being the first). The show had picked up the franchise baton from **Star Trek: Voyager** which ended its seven year run in Spring of 2001, just prior to the Fall 2001 debut of **Enterprise**. But the new **Trek** entry never quite caught on as well as the three spin-off series that had preceded it. The show struggled in the ratings throughout its four year run, and when its fate looked quite grim after its third season, fans launched a letter-writing campaign. UPN *did* renew it for a fourth season, though how much the campaign impacted that decision is uncertain. But the numbers continued to slide, in part because the show was moved to Friday nights, and also because of frequent preemptions. UPN then decided to cancel the show after its fourth season, but fans started up *another* campaign which included a drive to raise money to fund the fifth season and appealing to Congress (!) to ask for a renewal (**Trek** fans are nothing short of fanatic). This however was not enough to change the mind of UPN executives (perhaps fans

should have gone all the way to the *president!*), and the franchise was put on hiatus until J.J. Abrams rebooted it with his 2010 film.

The Tick (FOX, 2001-02, 1 Season 9 Episodes): The live action television series that brought Ben Edlund's comic book character **The Tick** to Prime Time television (an animated series had previously run on Fox Kids block) received critical and fan acclaim upon its debut in 2001. However, the series only produced nine episodes and FOX only aired eight of those. Series star Patrick Warburton blamed the network for the show's failure saying that they never supported it and rarely promoted it. There were hopes that the DVD release of the show would lead to the character jumping to the big screen (similar to what happened with **Firefly**) and Barry Sonnenfeld (who directed the pilot and executive produced the series) expressed interest in doing the movie. But nothing ever came from it leaving us with only the nine episodes of this fun and witty super hero spoof.

Jeremiah (Showtime, 2002-04, 2 Seasons 35 Episodes): J. Michael Straczynski ventured far from his **Babylon 5** universe with this post-apocalyptic series—loosely based on a French comic book—that ran for two seasons on Showtime. But **Jeremiah** never attracted a large following and differences between Straczynski and production company MGM led to it getting cancelled after its second season. The series did have a resolution of sorts, but Straczynski had more ideas for the show that never saw fruition because of its early demise.

Carnivale (HBO, 2003-05, 2 Seasons 24 Episodes): This supernatural period piece created by Daniel Knauf debuted to good ratings and attracted a strong core of devoted followers. However its numbers had dropped considerably by its second season and its dedicated fanbase was not enough to sustain it for its planned six season run. HBO was actually willing to bring it back for a third season, but the show was expensive and they asked the producers to get it down below \$2 million per episode. A deal could not be worked out, though, and HBO ultimately decided to cancel the series. Fans pelted the cable network with a letter-writing campaign that allegedly generated fifty thousand Emails in a single weekend, but it did not change the fate of the show and the series ended unresolved after only telling one third of its planned story (Knauf had envisioned a six season arc). There were talks of a possible TV movie to wrap up some of the loose ends, but Knauf felt he couldn't do justice to the story in such a limited amount of time, and nothing else ever surfaced.

The 4400 (USA, 2004-07, 4 Seasons 44 Episodes): In late 2007, with the writer's strike looming, USA decided to cancel both of its sci fi shows, **The 4400** and **The Dead Zone**. According to **4400** co-creator Scott Peters, declining ratings and mounting costs also factored into the decision to cancel the series. Fans started up a campaign that involved sending letters and sunflower seeds to the USA network as well as to NBC (which owns USA) and the Sci Fi Channel in hopes that the latter would pick up the show. But this was to no avail and the story of **The 4400** was left unresolved as the fourth season ended on a cliffhanger.

Stargate: Atlantis (Sci Fi Channel, 2004-09, 5 Seasons 100 Episodes): Technically, the second live-action **Stargate** series was not actually cancelled, but like the Sci Fi Channel did with Season 10 of **Stargate: SG-1** and Season 4 of **Battlestar: Galactica**, they *announced* the fifth season as **Atlantis'** last. And the fact is that **Atlantis'** ratings had been in decline. The cable network also promised that the story would continue with at least one direct-to-DVD movie, and **Stargate: SG-1** had gone that path with two such films, but unfortunately the movie for **Atlantis** never did surface (and series executive producer Brad Wright *has* confirmed that the movie is currently on indefinite hold). This may have been in part because the **SG-1** movies did not quite produce the revenue expected, but it also stemmed from the

financial troubles that plagued MGM in the later 00's. In any case, fans were left wanting more of this series only to see the *next* entry in the franchise, ***Stargate: Universe*** (see entry above), get truncated early as well.

Invasion (ABC, 2005-06, 1 Season 22 Episodes): This series about a silent alien invasion of Earth appeared to have a bright future as it would occupy the lead-out slot for 2004's surprise hit ***Lost*** during the latter show's second season. And it started out well, pulling 17 million viewers for its debut episode. But by mid-season it was getting only half that and by the end of the year ABC decided to cut bait on the freshman series. There were talks of the show moving to upstart network The CW, but that never happened and the story of an alien invasion of a small Florida town was left unresolved.

Threshold (CBS, 2005, 1 Season 13 Episodes): This was another alien invasion series that followed the genre-revival in the initial wave of ***Lost***'s success, but like ***Invasion*** on ABC it failed to catch on. It started out with a severe disadvantage, though, by getting scheduled on Friday nights where it never managed to attract a sizable audience. CBS *did* try moving it to Tuesday nights, but its numbers dropped further after that shift, and they cancelled the series almost immediately afterwards.

Heroes (NBC, 2006-10, 4 Seasons 77 Episodes): ***Heroes*** enjoyed huge ratings in its first season and was one of the few sci fi shows to find success on the broadcast networks after ***Lost*** re-energized interest in the genre. Even so, ***Heroes*** would see significant drops in its numbers each subsequent year to the point that NBC could not justify bringing it back for a fifth season. Series creator Tim Kring claimed that the show had a huge international audience, but that was not enough to convince the network to keep it running. There were talks of a couple of movies or possibly a mini-series to wrap up the show's plotlines (Season 4 *did* end on a pretty major cliffhanger) and that likely would have made the show more attractive for syndication (falling eleven episodes below the magic 88 number), but nothing ever came of this.

Bionic Woman (NBC, 2007, 1 Season 8 Episodes): This reboot of the 1970's series by ***Battlestar: Galactica***'s David Eick got off to a strong start when its debut landed in the Top 20 shows for that week. But then it saw a quick decline, probably partly due to the behind the scenes shake-ups that occurred during early production which led to inconsistent quality of the episodes. The first season was then cut short to only eight episodes because of the 2007 writer's strike, and NBC ultimately decided not to order more once the strike was resolved.

Journeyman (NBC, 2007, 1 Season 13 Episodes): This series began NBC's campaign of futility in the post-***Heroes*** timeslot as no series succeeded at that hour from 2007 to 2010 (when ***Heroes*** was cancelled). ***Journeyman*** actually started out strong, but like ***Bionic Woman*** it took a steady downward trend. The network then let the option for a full season order lapse, which effectively acted as its cancellation notice. Fans started a ***Jericho***-like campaign to send Rice-a-Roni to NBC (the series was set in San Francisco and that's the "*San Francisco Treat*"), but nothing much came of it leaving its many mysteries unresolved.

Moonlight (CBS, 2007-08, 1 Season 16 Episodes): Another writer's strike casualty, this vampire series (that was more ***True Blood*** than ***Twilight*** or ***Vampire Diaries***) was actually one of the few shows that got a handful of additional episodes once the strike ended. The show's pre-strike run actually delivered decent numbers, but the post-strike numbers dipped some, though not bad. However, CBS cancelled the show, prompting a fan campaign organizing blood drives around the country. But that was not

enough to save it and the network would continue to struggle to fill the Friday night post ***Ghost Whisperer*** timeslot that ***Moonlight*** had occupied for the next few years.

Pushing Daisies (ABC, 2007-09, 2 Seasons 22 Episodes): This quirky fantasy/comedy series from Bryan Fuller made a splash in the ratings when it first debuted, but the odd, dark fairy tale for adults it delivered didn't have good staying power and it saw a steady decline in its numbers. Still, ABC renewed it for a second season after its first was cut short by the writer's strike. It returned to low numbers and only went down from there. Diehard fans of the show attempted to save it by sending daisies to the network and also by lobbying other networks to pick it up. But nothing came of this and the series ended without a satisfying resolution after only 22 episodes. Fuller has since claimed that he plans on doing a graphic novel to continue the story and has also hinted at bringing ***Pushing Daisies*** to Broadway.

Reaper (CW, 2007-09, 2 Seasons 31 Episodes): This supernatural dramedy about a man who finds that his parents had promised his soul to the Devil never quite found its audience during its run on the fifth place network. It was one of The CW's lower rated shows during the 2007-8 season, but they still elected to bring it back the next year as a mid-season replacement. Whether a campaign instigated by series star Bret Harrison to send socks to the network (because of Tyler Labine's character's nickname "Sock") prompted the decision is uncertain. But when ***Reaper*** returned in 2009, it's numbers were even lower and they decided to let it go to the Devil after its second season.

Eleventh Hour (CBS, 2008-09, 1 Season 18 Episodes): This American remake of the British science-tinged crime drama (that starred Patrick Stewart over there) gives a clear example of the genre-aversion that CBS has demonstrated of late. The show actually ended the season ranked in the Top 25 (and ahead of ***Lost*** in total viewers), but CBS cancelled it despite renewing other shows ranked lower. ***Eleventh Hour*** did lose a fair amount of the audience from its ***CSI*** lead-in, which hurt it, but its numbers were not bad and it often won its timeslot (competing with ABC's short-lived remake of *another* British series, ***Life on Mars***, part of the season). Of course CBS was the Number 1 network (in total viewers) that season (as it has been most seasons of late) and had set a higher bar for its shows. It seems a pretty tough call, though, to cancel a Top 25 performing series that's just beginning to find its stride, and considering this and the network's axing of ***Jericho*** and ***Moonlight***, its reputation for genre-aversion seems well deserved.

Legend of the Seeker (Syndicated, 2008-10, 2 Seasons 44 Episodes): This fantasy series based on Terry Goodkind's ***Sword of Truth*** novels fell victim to a changing syndication model. While original science fiction and fantasy shows had enjoyed great success in syndication during the latter half of the 80's and into the 00's (with examples like ***Star Trek: TNG*** and ***DS9*** as well as the ***Hercules*** and ***Xena*** series), fewer and fewer original series (genre or not) appeared in the syndication market by 2008 when this show bowed. While it performed okay in the ratings, it didn't qualify as a breakout hit, and after its second season it's distributor Tribune decided not order a third year. ABC Studios, the producer of the series, then tried to shop it around, initially talking to Syfy, though nothing ever came of that. No other network showed an interest despite a raucous campaign by fans that raised money to put ads in major trade publications. The campaign actually continues to this day over at the SaveOurSeeker.com site, and this one might actually be a good prospect for Netflix who appears to be in the cancelled series saving business of late.

Middleman (ABC Family, 2008, 1 Season 12 Episodes): This TV adaptation of the comic book of the same name by Javier Grillo-Marxuach (who also worked closely on the series) most likely fell victim to a bad choice of networks. It's hip, witty, quirky humor seemed out of place on the cable network ABC

Family. It never quite found its audience there and got cancelled after only one, well-regarded season. Grillo-Marxuach later said that he was very happy with the series and the creative control ABC Family allowed him and would much rather have done only 12 episodes the way he wanted than multiple seasons with the network looking over his shoulder.

Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles (FOX, 2008-09, 2 Seasons 31 Episodes): Yet another series that started out strong then went south, this television continuation of the ***Terminator*** films debuted at mid-season when there were not too many viewing choices as far as original scripted series because of the 2007 writer's strike. It pulled high numbers at first, but had experienced a pretty sharp decline by the end of its first season. Still, FOX brought it back, and the show began its second season poorly in the ratings, prompting predictions of a quick cancellation. The network stuck with it, though, giving the show a full season order, but it relegated the series to Fridays for the second half of the season where it continued to deliver poor returns. FOX had seen enough by that point and cancelled the show, but enraged fans lobbied hard for a continuation, shelling out large dollars to generate attention through magazine ads, billboards, television spots, and more. It was all for naught, though, as the show remained cancelled.

Dollhouse (FOX, 2009-10, 2 Seasons 26 Episodes): Joss Whedon returned to television (and the network that ingloriously cancelled ***Firefly***) for the first time since ***Angel*** went off the air in 2004 with this series about people (referred to as "dolls") who could be programmed with different personalities and abilities. The series started off on the wrong foot when FOX scheduled it to air on low-rated Fridays (teaming it up with the struggling ***Sarah Connor Chronicles***). Despite much early attention from Whedon fans (and a preemptive "Save My Show" campaign that began before the first episode aired!), it did not draw much of an audience with its debut. Then its numbers went down from there to lower levels than what some of the fifth-place network CW shows were pulling. But miraculously, FOX decided to renew the show for a second season (giving this one the nod over equally low-rated ***Sarah Connor Chronicles***). It returned to even lower numbers though, and FOX cut bait on it before mid-season. The series had struggled from the start with network tinkering behind the scenes, and the adult themes that Whedon wanted to explore were more suited to the premium cable channels, not one of the broadcast networks. That proved its undoing and for the second time a promising Joss Whedon series was cut short by FOX (though they *did* at least give it more of a chance than ***Firefly***).

Defying Gravity (ABC, 2009, 1 Season 13 Episodes): This series mixed soap opera with space exploration and gave us a rare, realistic look at near-future space travel. Unfortunately it did not get much support from its network as ABC scheduled it for a late Summer run and didn't give it much in the way of promotion prior to its debut. This resulted in low ratings returns and the network unceremoniously dropped it from its schedule after only eight of its thirteen episodes had aired. Since it never drew much of an audience, it didn't have much in the way of fan support to keep it going, but it has since gained some attention as somewhat of a sleeper science fiction series and the full series *did* eventually get a DVD release.

FlashForward (ABC, 2009-10, 1 Season 22 Episodes): Like NBC's ***The Event*** in 2010, ***FlashForward*** was dubbed the next ***Lost*** when it debuted in 2009. The show definitely seemed ready to pick up the torch when it bowed with strong ratings, pulling a 4.1 in the overnights with the 18-49 demographic. But then it began a steady spiral downward that ultimately doomed the show. Fans in part blamed the show-runners who failed to adequately explore its premise of a worldwide blackout, as it side-tracked into stories laced mostly with soap-opera and procedural elements. Another blow to the show was the fact that ABC subjected it to an extended mid-season hiatus as it disappeared from the schedule for three

and a half months. However, the network *did* heavily promote it upon its return, and the show-runners appeared to have gotten it back on track with more stories that focused on the central story arc. They even delivered many of the promised answers during the second half of its season as they set it up for a new arc that would carry into its sophomore year. But the ratings had dropped too low by that point with the show failing to crack a 2.0 rating as it closed out its season. ABC decided that the audience had given up on the show, and apparently they felt it wasn't worth reviving it (electing to greenlight the equally struggling *V* for a second season instead). A rather sizeable fan campaign emerged after the cancellation announcement as people staged mock blackouts in front of ABC studios and several other media-worthy locations. Despite their attempts they failed to drive much attention to the plight of the show which ultimately found itself relegated to the heap of failed *Lost* wannabes.

The story continues with the second edition of *Why Were They Cancelled?* Now available from Amazon.com: [Print](#) | [Kindle](#)

Also, read about even more sci fi TV cancellations in my book [Cancelled Sci Fi TV: 1949 to 2015: The Ultimate Guide to Cancelled Science Fiction and Fantasy TV Shows](#).

Appendix – Sci Fi Shows in the Nielsen Top 30 Over the Years

Science fiction and fantasy shows that have made it into the Nielsen Top 30 based on final season averages for total viewers from 1950 to 2011.

You can also view this at the following link: <http://johnnyjaysays.blogspot.com/p/sci-fi-shows-in-nielsen-top-30-over.html>

Total Genre Shows in the			
	Top 10	Top 20	Top 30
Totals	11	26	45

Season Beginning	Genre Shows in Top 10	Genre Shows in Top 20	Genre Shows in Top 30	Show and Rank
1950	0	1	1	Lights Out - 19
1951	0	0	0	
1952	0	0	0	
1953	0	0	0	
1954	0	0	0	
1955	0	0	0	
1956	0	0	0	
1957	0	0	0	
1958	0	0	0	
1959	0	0	0	
1960	0	0	0	
1961	0	0	0	
1962	0	0	0	
1963	1	1	1	My Favorite Martian - 10
1964	1	2	4	Bewitched - 2, The Munsters - 18, The Addams Family - 23, My Favorite Martian - 24
1965	2	4	6	Batman - 4, Bewitched - 7, Get Smart - 12, The Man from UNCLE - 13, Wild, Wild West - 23, I Dream of Jeannie - 27
1966	1	1	2	Bewitched - 7, Get Smart - 22
1967	0	1	1	Bewitched - 11
1968	0	2	2	Mission: Impossible - 11, Bewitched - 11
1969	0	0	1	Bewitched - 24
1970	0	0	0	
1971	0	0	0	
1972	0	0	0	
1973	0	1	1	Six Million Dollar Man - 11
1974	0	0	0	
1975	2	2	2	The Bionic Woman - 5, Six Million Dollar Man - 9
1976	1	2	2	Six Million Dollar Man - 7, The Bionic Woman - 14
1977	0	1	2	Project U.F.O. - 19, The Incredible Hulk - 26

1978	1	1	1	Mork & Mindy - 3
1979	0	0	1	Mork & Mindy - 27
1980	0	0	0	
1981	0	0	0	
1982	0	0	0	
1983	0	0	1	Knight Rider - 25
1984	0	0	0	
1985	0	0	0	
1986	0	0	0	
1987	1	1	1	Alf - 10
1988	0	1	1	Alf - 15
1989	0	0	0	
1990	0	0	0	
1991	0	0	0	
1992	0	0	0	
1993	0	0	0	
1994	0	0	0	
1995	0	0	1	Third Rock from the Sun - 22
1996	0	0	2	The X-Files - 21, Third Rock from the Sun - 27
1997	0	1	1	The X-Files - 19
1998	0	0	1	The X-Files - 28
1999	0	0	0	
2000	0	0	0	
2001	0	0	0	
2002	0	0	0	
2003	0	0	0	
2004	0	1	2	Lost - 13, Medium - 18
2005	0	1	1	Lost - 18
2006	0	0	2	Lost - 22, Heroes 23
2007	0	1	1	Lost - 17
2008	0	0	2	Eleventh Hour - 22, Lost - 28
2009	0	0	1	Lost - 25
2010	0	0	0	
2011	1	1	1	Person of Interest - 12

Total Seasons Surveyed	62
Seasons w/No Shows in Top 10	53
Seasons w/No Shows in Top 20	43
Seasons w/No Shows in Top 30	34