

Jim Britt



Dear Magnum:  
Get Tough,  
Get Passionate,  
Get Smart  
(and get rid  
of that  
baseball cap)

MAGNUM P.I. (T.V.)

A best-selling romance novelist advises Tom Selleck on how to spruce up his show

By Janet Dailey

Dear Magnum,

With all the stiff competition you're getting on Thursday night from *The Cosby Show* and *Family Ties*, I thought it was about time somebody offered you advice on how to beef up your ratings. To be honest, you could also use a few lessons on how to be a hero.

Let's face it. A lot of your gimmicks have been stolen by other shows. Right after we fell in love with your red Ferrari, here came *Knight Rider* with a flashy sports car that not only looked great but could think and talk and do all sorts of stunts. Then the premise of your Vietnam buddies, TC and Rick, helping with your cases was expanded upon by the wild characters of *The A-Team*. And *Riptide* soared onto the airwaves in a helicopter—granted, not in one as sleek and modern as TC's. Finally, the disembodied voice of your employer, detective novelist Robin

Masters, was upstaged by the in-the-flesh mystery writer Jessica Fletcher in *Murder, She Wrote*. At the moment, the only thing you've got going for you is that we haven't seen Mike Hammer lately strolling around with a gorgeous, buxom blonde on each arm.

In my opinion, it's time to take a fresh look at your situation and start taking steps to improve your image—give it a little more rugged, masculine flavor and tone down the little-boy-lost look.

Nobody—and certainly not I—can argue that you don't have all the right equipment to be a real hunk, or that your series doesn't give you a lot of beefcake opportunities to show off your muscular chest and sexy legs. The shorts and the aloha shirts and tank tops are all right, but the baseball cap . . . I mean really, is it necessary? Every time I see you wearing it, I expect any second to see you blow a bubble and pull out a pack of baseball cards to trade. Invariably that cap signals you're about to be lectured by Higgins for not keeping your room clean, or mistreating the

*Janet Dailey's latest novel is "The Glory Game" (Poseidon Press).*

vari, or borrowing something without permission. It plays havoc with your credibility. You're a grown man, Magnum; don't you get tired of being scolded like some irresponsible teen-ager?

It's no wonder that you don't get any respect. If Rodney Dangerfield thinks he has a problem, he should watch your show. It isn't just Higgins who doubts your veracity, questions your ability and views your motives with suspicion, but your best buddies do, too. On occasion, even your clients haven't trusted you. Sometimes I wonder if your private-detective service isn't at the bottom of the list in the yellow pages and your clients come to you for help as the last resort.

You're always trying to con someone, Magnum—whether it's Higgins, TC, Rick, or the police. And they always see through you. Haven't you noticed you can't talk your way out of a paper bag? The truth is, you're a lousy con man. I know every time you're lying, because your voice goes up a full octave. It's a dead giveaway. No wonder you can't convince the crooks that you're a tough guy. Maybe you should see if you can persuade Jim Rockford to give you some lessons in the art of conning people.

Another thing that troubles me about your image is the way women react to you. As handsome as you are, they should be falling all over themselves trying to catch your eye—swooning at your feet, if necessary. Instead they usually end up crying on your shoulder while you hold their hands. Hawaii, with its wave-kissed beaches and swaying palms, is such a romantic setting. Just what does it take to get you "in the mood"? You're always playing the role of the "big brother." It worries me that you don't even appear to be tempted to make love to any of them. Just where does all this willpower come from? You never display it on any other occasion in the show. But with women, you have the strength of a saint. I think some torrid love-making is in order—and more sexually charged scenes. A little tarnish on the halo would be a welcome change.

Let's be honest, Magnum. You've got

what it takes—a 6-foot-plus frame, a virile physique, thick dark hair, a Clark Gable mustache and a roguish look. It's true, you flaunt it. But with ammunition like that, you should keep both barrels loaded and use it once in a while. If you're going to run around half-naked in a scene, why not try it in a bedroom—with a woman?

You know the old saying, "Nice guys finish last." Well, it's time to stop being a nice guy and to start fighting tough. For starters, why don't you drop the inept moocher/beach-bum routine. It never was all that funny, and mainly gave Higgins the chance to steal all your scenes together. Besides, you're up against two sitcoms, and *The Cosby Show* is a real powerhouse. You should downplay the comedy stuff and insert more drama and suspense. Give the viewer a definite choice.

(Fru)

If you take a look at the episodes of *Magnum, P.I.* that have generated a lot of positive reaction, I think you'll find they usually dealt in some way with Vietnam. Now I doubt very seriously that the success of those shows was due to the subject matter as much as it was that we saw another Magnum—a heroic Magnum. You didn't run around in shorts, an aloha shirt and a baseball cap. There you were—a commanding figure in uniform, either dashing and ramrod straight in your whites, or rugged and macho in your camouflage fatigues, like some daring soldier of fortune. You were all business, ready to fight your way out of a situation instead of whining shrilly in an attempt to talk your way out of trouble.

It's time to take charge of your life, Magnum. Stop living off the generosity of Robin Masters, kowtowing to Higgins, conning your buddies and playing at being a private eye. Drop the little-boy-with-his-fingers-in-the-cookie-jar act and become the strong, sensitive man that I know is hiding in there somewhere.

Wouldn't it be something if Robin Masters died and left everything to you—and you became Higgins' boss? Money just might teach you some responsibility. Think about it. (END)