

S MOST COMPLETE TV COVERAGE

Magnum, VIII

Selleck returns for 8th and 'final' year of series

LOS ANGELES—"Who's your tailor?" was Tom Selleck's comeback line when he walked into a room full of TV critics wearing Hawaiian shirts.

Let's face it, on a press tour as long as this one, a little fun lightens the load. As one executive commented, the fall preview media tour is lasting longer than some of the TV series will.

That doesn't apply to Selleck's "*Magnum, P.I.*," now in its eighth and—this time he really means it—final season on CBS.

"Magnum" fans may be grateful for another year of their favorite private-eye plots, but returning poses a problem. In last year's final episode, "Limbo," Magnum was shot and his spirit seemingly bid us farewell when "it" walked off on a cloud. How do they plan to bring him back alive?

"No showers, no dreams," said Selleck, who just finished "Three Men and a Baby" with Ted Danson and Steve Guttenberg. "Our job is not to manipulate the audience. My feeling is in the final episode Magnum had an out-of-body experience.

"We learned from 'The Fugitive' that once (David Janssen) was caught, it influenced syndication sales. 'Magnum' is doing well in syndication."

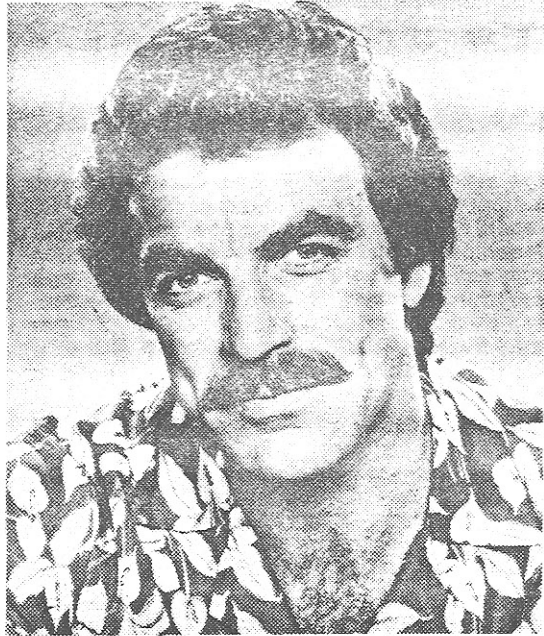
Selleck says "fatigue" was the reason he was ready to quit last year. "I was burned out," he admitted. "It was the hardest decision I ever had to make. I put a lot of things on hold—family, friends and relationships. As much as you like the job, there's more to life than that.

Why, then, did he change his mind? "Our facility over there (Hawaii) exists because of the show. And the state wants us to continue. There would have been nothing left, and this family I've become fond of would dissolve. You learn it's a community decision."

The actor said that once he announced he planned to quit, everybody was very nice to him. "Even John Hillerman (who plays Jonathan Quale Higgins III), in his knife twisting way, said, 'I'd really like to do it another year.' But he likes things. He probably wants to buy another house."

Selleck has a deal whereby he can exit the show midseason if he so chooses. So far, he plans to do 13 shows, but he could do as many as 22, depending on how he feels. "Right now, I couldn't commit to a full season," he admitted.

Whenever he walks away, he expects it will be painful. But he leaves the door open for possible Magnum movies.



ALOHA: Tom Selleck says so long, Magnum—we think.

"I love this character," he said. "If I could get Chris Abbott and Charles Floyd Johnson (the show's producers) together, I wouldn't rule it out. I thought I'd get bored after (the first) three years, but it never happened. Because of the writers, we were able to expand on the character and eventually find out something not only about his future but his past. So it would be just as interesting to me to find out what happened to him three years later."

As for another TV series, the handsome, 6-foot-4 actor is not ready for one—yet. "I don't rule out doing television. Some of the best opportunities for an actor are in TV. So I never say never."

Whatever the future brings—and working as a producer figures to be part of it—he will keep his house in Hawaii and hopes to be based there. The athletic star likes to play volleyball on the beach to relieve the tension of work.

Meantime, this will be the last opportunity for stars to head for Hawaii and appear as guests on "Magnum." Last year, his highest-rated episode starred Frank Sinatra.

"That was a big thrill for me," he said. "I loved working with Frank."

The series will have a thread of a story line running through this season, and even a love interest. For all Selleck and his producers know, Magnum may even return to his Annapolis roots.

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