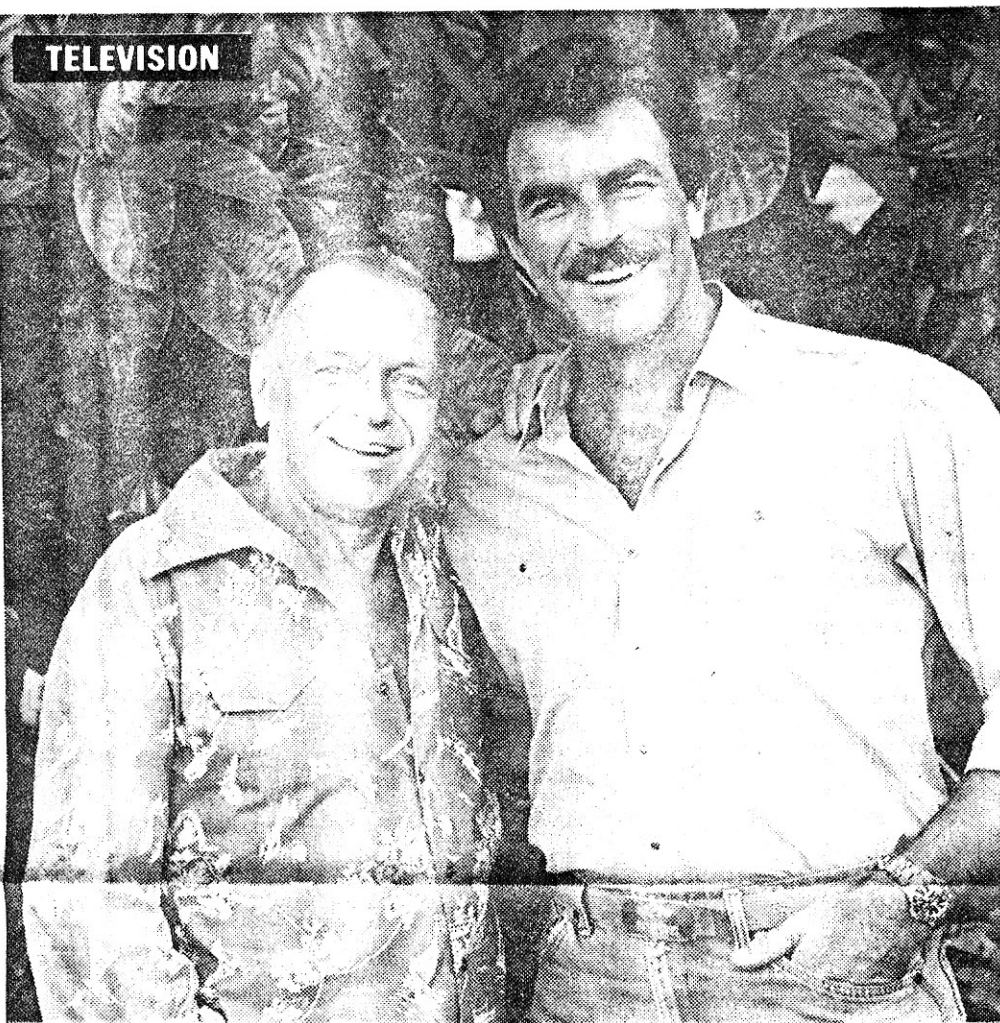


## TELEVISION



WHATTA GUY! Frank Sinatra joins Selleck on tomorrow night's "Magnum P.I." (The)

# The Fall & Rise of 'Magnum'

DAILY NEWS, N.Y.

Tom Selleck has staged an amazing recovery

By ALAN CARTER

**F**OR AN ENTIRE season, those connected with Tom Selleck's once ratings-mighty series, "Magnum, P.I.," had been asking CBS for mercy. "Move us away from 'Cosby,'" came the frequent cry two years ago.

When CBS announced its fall schedule this season, the good news was that the show had in fact moved from opposite the loving Huxtables of "Cosby." But the bad news, the way many TV insiders figured it, was that the show was moving opposite the Carrington clan on "Dynasty."

TV's pundits laughed. How could CBS be so cruel to fans of the detective series? Sure, they took "Magnum" out of the fire but put him in a frying pan. Okay, "Dynasty" was not nearly as popular as "Cosby" but the new Wednesday night

time-slot was still no bargain. "Magnum," everyone theorized, was out of gas and critics were sounding the death knell.

And why not? Selleck repeatedly inferred that this would "probably" be his last season. After all, his contract would be up and he would be free to pursue a movie career. The question was not when the show would die, but how quickly.

Now, seven months after the season has started, the experts are changing their tune. "Magnum" has for most of the season, beaten "Dynasty" handily, despite a recent resurgence from the steamy prime-time soap.

And you'll note, that "Magnum" is not only off the respirator, it's heartbeat is quite strong. Tomorrow night, Oscar-winning singer Frank Sinatra guest stars on "Magnum" in a rare TV appearance (Ch. 2, 9 p.m.). This is

sure to pump even more vitality into the series which premiered in 1980.

**B**EFORE THE CURRENT season started, this episode would probably have been described as simply a much needed shot in the arm for an ailing series. Of course, it needs no such shot now. But that doesn't mean the people connected with the show don't realize what Sinatra's special appearance means. For one thing, few shows get the cover of TV Guide magazine after having been on the air as long as "Magnum."

Sinatra had met Selleck at a dinner party last summer and expressed interest in appearing on the show. And it may not stop here. Sinatra, who plays a retired New York cop, told TV Guide that he enjoyed working with the popular TV sex symbol and saw in him as a possible new movie

sidekick. "We could do a wonderful romantic comedy. We could be here (Hawaii), or in New York or Monte Carlo and the two of us would go out looking for girls together."

The people over at "Dynasty" are probably still scratching their collective head and wondering why "Magnum" was trouncing them in the ratings. We've already seen "Dynasty" scrap some plots as they continue the search to find their winning formula.

But the people at "Magnum" claim not to be surprised that their show is still hanging in there for the count. In fact, before the season began, John Hillerman, who co-stars in the role of Higgins, told the Daily News, "I don't want to minimize the competition with 'Dynasty' but anything will be better than being opposite 'Cosby.' Getting away from that show certainly can't hurt us. We have a strong show with loyal viewers. I'll tell you, our show is not tired by any means."

**O**NE OF THE "MAGNUM" producers concurs. Rick Weaver had logically thought that "Magnum" would do "much better," away from the Huxtables.

"We hit against 'Cosby' at the wrong time," Weaver says, "It became a TV phenomenon. But we still knew that we had a core audience. It was never like we thought, 'Okay, how do we save this show?' We never, ever felt like the show needed saving. It's not like we panicked, or anything like that."

Weaver feels "Magnum" enticed many of "the core" back to the fold with better stories and scripts this season. While he says the basic approach "of the show never wavered," there was, briefly, too much emphasis on "slapstick and not enough on stories about the characters that the audience would care about."

Tomorrow's story obviously falls into that category. But whether there will be more such stories remains to be seen. At press time, Selleck had not yet announced whether or not he would return to the show next year. The silver screen still beckons, you know.

The pundits are saying Selleck, already one of TV's highest paid stars at \$2-million-plus a year, will probably jump ship. But then again, these same pundits thought that the show, by now, would be off the air.