

The Eyes Have It in Tomorrow's 'Magnum' Opus

MY COPY OF the "Magnum, P. I." episode starring Frank Sinatra was delayed. CBS is sending it to me from Hawaii. By bottle.

It's a major event. Old Blue Eyes meets Old Green Eyes (Tom Selleck). Sinatra is the most exciting guest star since Ian McShane ("Lovejoy") played a Mau Mau. Not to mention Angela Lansbury dropping by in November to help solve a crime.

The Sinatra episode will be going on, as they say, "wet" tomorrow night at 9 on WCBS/2.

But I have been meaning to say a few good words about "Magnum, P. I." They are somewhat delayed. I'm not going to let a logistical problem cheat "Magnum" of a first review six years late.

I hadn't been watching "Magnum" as much as I should since it premiered on Dec. 11, 1980. I had a memory lapse like Blake whenever it was on. Suddenly this season I began watching "Magnum." What changed the situation was putting it up against "Dynasty."

In short, I've come to an admiration of "Magnum" years behind the rest of the audience.

"Magnum" was a significant show when it began in 1980. It represented a big change in Hawaiian detective shows. Out were the cold, humorless detectives as represented by Jack Lord of "Hawaii Five-O." In were the charming, amusing Burt Reynolds-"Saint" types, like Tom Selleck as Magnum, the private investigator.

The last thing in the world I needed back in 1980 was another macho bore. Tom Selleck at first glance looked too much like Reynolds. And all of that talk about Nam made me nervous. It was too soon after the war.

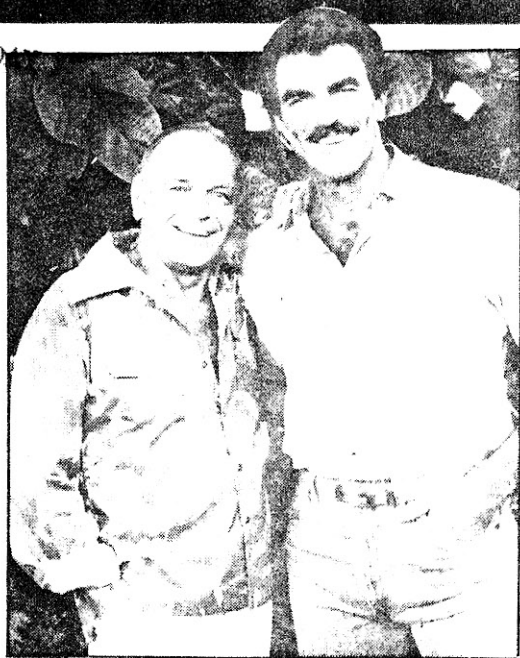
Actually, Magnum was — as explained by Selene Bayak of Atlantic Beach, who was urging me all that first season to restudy the Selleck phenomenon sweeping the nation — neither macho nor a bore. "He is gorgeous and unassuming," she explained. "He is the perfect man."

But still I didn't watch or love it. Nasty people said I was envious.

Envious? *Moi?*

Of what? As a matter of fact, Tom Selleck and I look alike. Draw a mustache on my picture and see if we're not brothers.

What bothered me as a critic by the next season was the Tom Selleck Revolution. The fall TV



Old Blue Eyes meets Old Green Eyes in a sight for sore eyes on tomorrow's "Magnum P. I."

schedules in 1981 were a Tom Selleck look-alike contest. Every show had one. Remember "Matt Houston" (with Lee Horsley)? "The Devlin Connection" (Jack Scalia)? "Gavilan" (Robert Ulrich)?

What is the Tom Selleck Look, I remember writing in 1981? What is the appeal? It's not very appealing, I concluded. Maybe it's a woman thing.

He's actually not sexy at all. No more than Gardner McKay was in "Adventures of Paradise."

Hmm. I couldn't sell that well. I tried.

He was so hot by 1982 that they were even selling the "Selleck Shirt" ("The ultimate island shirt," an ad in Los Angeles magazine said. "Designed and made for Tom Selleck and available to you, exclusively. Tropical prints on comfortable 100 percent cotton or rayon challis. Blue, Black, Burgundy or Cream Ground. At \$65.") Those are the same ones that made him look like Harry Truman with a mustache, I wrote.

I can be incredibly small sometimes.

And then I actually started watching the show. I loved that nasal voice of his. It's so out of character. His high-pitched loquaciousness constantly throws you off from the usual cliché of the terse gruff P. I.

I liked the way he was always whining at Higgins (John Hillerman) about this or that. He had what we call an amusing whine. Despite being so handsome, he still whines. The rest of us whine because we aren't Tom Selleck.

Here he is in Paradise (Hawaii), and Selleck is still wearing his baseball cap (Detroit Tigers) and maintaining his passion for junk food. You can't see him eating pu pu.

I really identified with his imperfections. his
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Executive Producer

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many feats of clay. I think that's why he was so incredibly successful the first few years. Women think he's gorgeous and funny. But men could tolerate him because of his warts.

The show is great. It has character development, interesting stories and Selleck is nothing to be afraid of. He's a big overgrown boy in an adult body. I really liked him.

Fortunately, I was able to do a remedial "Magnum" course on WOR/9, which had bought the reruns. These are the ones for which Ch. 9 paid \$98,000 per episode. That's one station — for 129 episodes. My calculator doesn't go that high in computing what they cost. But it was worth it as far as I was concerned. (free)

Watching the "Magnum, P. I." episodes every night has been an experience like going to Hawaii. I get into my Hawaii beach shirt, load up with Selleck junk foods and sit there. My wife says it's not the same thing as Hawaii. It reminded her of her father who, whenever she wanted to go to Coney Island as a girl, would say, "Wait a minute, I'll get some herring and a (electric) fan and you'll be at the beach."

The Ch. 9 reruns caught me up on Tom Selleck. Old Green Eyes is as good as everybody said.

And I'm especially enjoying him this year since they moved a supposedly fading-in-the-

ratings "Magnum" opposite "Dynasty" at 9 on Wednesdays. People were suddenly talking about how "Magnum" is getting its second wind, beating "Dynasty." Maybe it's not that "Magnum" has suddenly improved. You put any successful show against "Dynasty" today and it would get a shot in the arm.

You can tell how much CBS thought "Magnum" was slipping by the merger of "Magnum" and "Murder, She Wrote" earlier this season. That was not a good sign. Like if they merged "ALF" with "Cosby," you'd know it was "ALF" that was in trouble.

"Murder, She Wrote" is a very clever show. And Angela Lansbury is a wonderful actress. My wife loves the way a woman of a certain age can be a big star on TV today. But I didn't like the merged "Magnum, She Wrote" any more than "ALF Joins Cosby." Hawaii isn't big enough for those two superstars.

Sinatra said he really liked "Magnum." It's one of his favorites. It's nice that I finally have something in common with the chairman of the board.

It's supposed to be a great episode. I'll be out there at the beach tomorrow night in my Hawaiian shirt with my pineapple mai-tai like everybody else.

Old Blue Eyes meets Old Green Eyes and Old Four Eyes. /II