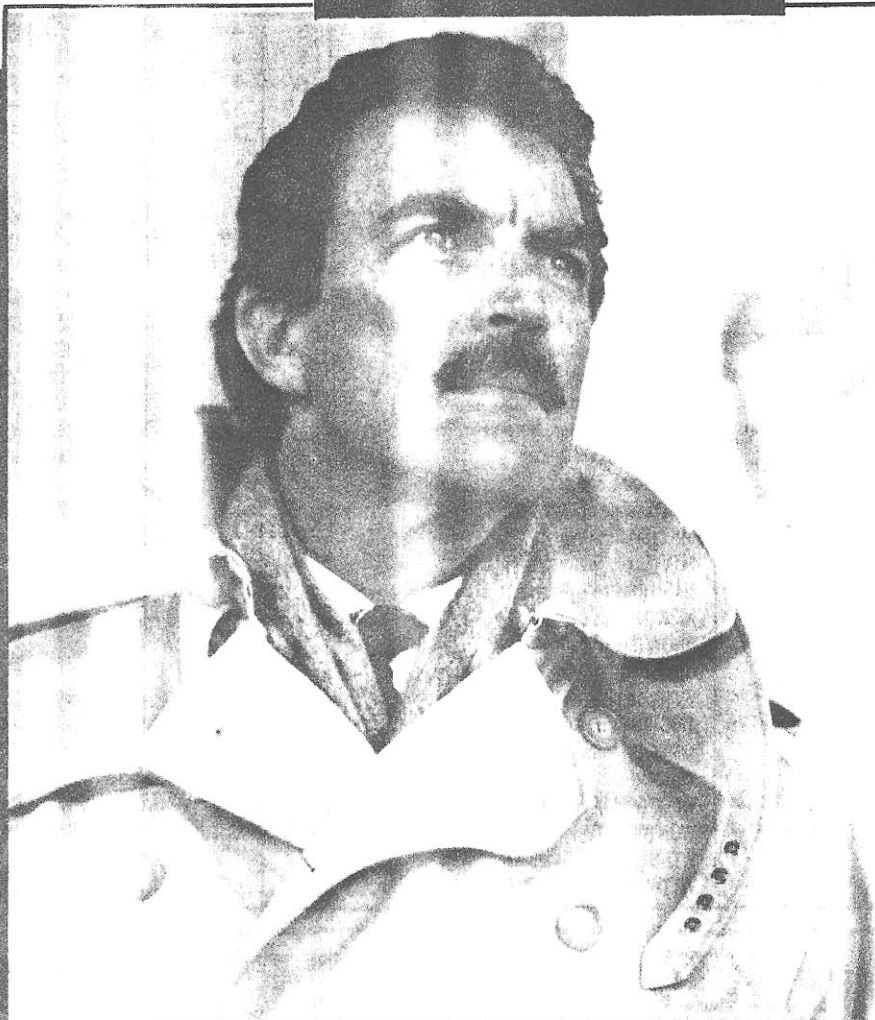


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Surprises in store on 'Magnum' - Page 3

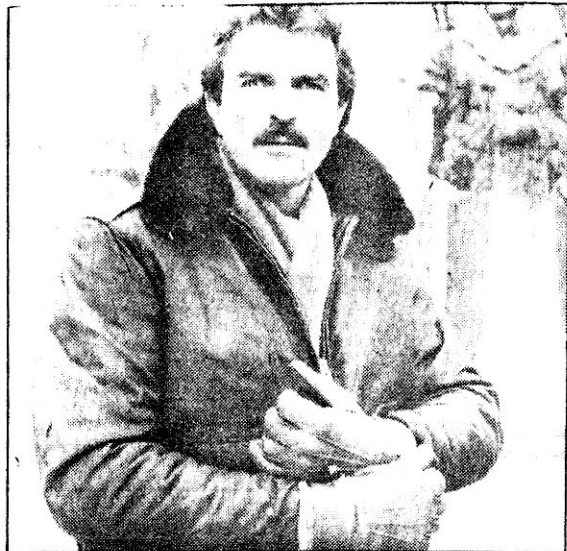
'Magnum's' aloha airs Sunday on CBS

A year ago, it seemed that the end had arrived... but this week, "Magnum, p.i." really is saying goodbye.

When the final script for the 1986-87 season - in which the Hawaii-based detective, played by Tom Selleck, was critically wounded in a shoot-out - originally was written, CBS was expected to cancel the show at the end of that year. In its former Thursday slot, its ratings had sagged opposite NBC's "Cosby Show," but a miracle developed when "Magnum" was moved to Wednesdays. It held its own (and more) against ABC's "Dynasty," and CBS became anxious to hang onto "Magnum" and Emmy Award-winner Selleck, though the actor already was looking into new ventures. A deal was made for an eighth season, resulting in the character's amazing recovery from the brink of death. However, though repeats will live on in syndication, "Magnum" truly does sign off from CBS with Sunday's two-hour finale.

Now finding feature-film success as a result of the hit comedy "Three Men and a Baby," the genial Selleck (who also has been "Magnum's" executive producer for the past two years) clearly is ready for a rest from the weekly grind, but he admits that he's dealing with mixed emotions about the show's end. "I think I'm going to have a pretty big 'down' period," says the popular star. "The hardest part was breaking up with the cast and crew, because we had a great group. We worked real hard, and for a lot of hours, but we had fun. I'm lucky to have a little buffer period, because I've been into the post-production and editing as a producer, so I haven't had to go just cold turkey. It'll sink in, though. During the last couple of weeks of shooting, I kept trying not to let it creep into my mind, but I started to think, 'This is the last time I'll do this.' It's real hard, as an actor, not to give into that emotion and not to let it bleed through into the show."

While some tabloids have featured recent stories purporting to reveal the big secrets of "Magnum's" swan song, Selleck firmly believes that viewers are in for a lot of surprises. "I've read a lot of things about this, and some writers are off on really bizarre tangents," he laughs. "We had general ideas of what our final episode could be about, but they kept shifting, which is what 'Magnum' has done all along... it has always evolved. We found that we couldn't write (the last story) until we were well into this last season, because we've always allowed the character to change, but we always felt that it should be about the 'Magnum' family more than anything else. We didn't want to introduce a lot of new characters."



Magnum (Selleck) visits Virginia in series finale

Indeed, Magnum and his closest chums - Higgins (played by fellow Emmy-winner John Hillerman), Rick (Larry Manetti) and TC (Roger E. Mosley) - are in the focus of Sunday's concluding installment. Along the way, the show has featured famous stars such as Frank Sinatra and Carol Burnett, but recurring guests familiar to steady "Magnum" viewers are the ones who get attention in the final tale. Among them: Gwen Verdon as the detective's mother; Jean Bruce Scott as Navy liaison Maggie Poole; Gillian Dobb as Higgins' prim friend Agatha Chumley; and Jeff MacKay as Magnum's now-deceased friend Mac (whose presence in the episode may, or may not, provide a hint of things to come).

"Logistically, to make sure that everybody is available at a specific time is almost impossible," Selleck concedes. "It was a bit of a nightmare, but what amazed us is that we got everyone we wanted. Quite honestly, most of them did smaller parts than they'd normally do, but we were real flattered that some of them liked the show enough to rearrange their schedules for this. It made us feel grateful that they'd be willing to come over (to Hawaii) and do maybe one scene, just because it was our final show, and because they've enjoyed their association with 'Magnum.'"

ON THE COVER

As private detective Thomas Magnum, Tom Selleck visits the Lincoln Memorial and other sites in the nation's capital, as the popular CBS adventure series "Magnum, p.i." ends its eight-season run with a concluding two-hour episode Sunday.