

MAGNUM, P.I.

THE BIBLE

(R. Lader - 1/15/82)

BIBLE

I. AN OVERVIEW

MAGNUM, P.I. is a private detective series which incorporates and integrates elements of action, adventure, drama and humor against the exotic backdrop of the Hawaiian Islands.

The show's namesake, Thomas Sullivan Magnum, resides at the opulent North Shore estate of Robin Masters, a famous "pulp" novelist. (one of the more famous of these, "Tahiti Kill", was made into a movie that was filmed on this extremely photogenic estate). Magnum also gets to drive Robin's \$60,000 red Ferrari. All together, not a bad life if you don't weaken.

Magnum worked his way into this ideal situation by running a security check at the estate, known throughout the civilized world as Robin's Nest. In doing so, he so ingratiated the very generous, (and very absent), Robin to the point where he was given "guest" status. However, Magnum's definition of "guest" quite often differs with that of Higgins, the estate's very proper, very British, major domo. Various points of contention often include access to the pool, tennis courts wine cellar, darkroom, billiard room, big-screen tv room and, of course, the Ferrari. It's worse than being married.

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BIBLE: OVERVIEW CONTINUED

Also peopling Magnum's world are his best buddies, Rick and TC, both Vietnam vets like himself. Rick, a short dapper guy with a somewhat laissez-faire toward life, manages the King Kamehameha Club, a private beachfront establishment that counts among the elite of Oahu as its members. It also counts Higgins, (as Robin Masters' proxy), as a member of the Board of Directors -- and by extension, Magnum as a "guest". Or freeloader, as Rick prefers to consider it.

TC was just about the best helicopter pilot that ever buzzed a Southeast Asia tree-line. He's transferred and parlayed that flying expertise into the Island Hoppers, a helicopter charter service with offices located at a local heliport. TC, however, sometimes gets the feeling that he's doing more flying for Thomas Magnum, his 'friend', than he's doing for his paying clientele. Also, when he goes out with the paying clientele he usually doesn't come back with bullet-holes in his plexiglass.

MAGNUM, P.I. is not about a handsome detective who sits around a pool frolicking with off-duty stewardesses in betwixt being hired by beautiful and glamorous strangers for all sorts of exotic and bizarre reasons; but rather, MAGNUM, P.I. is about a man, who despite some rough and leisurely edges, is a person of conviction who will stop at nothing to vindicate a client, a friend, or a principle he believes in...rather like Chandler's Marlowe, a good

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man struggling to help those he cares about, those less able than he, those who are trapped in the underbelly of Paradise.

Despite all that noble sounding stuff, Magnum has a degree of naivete that keeps his ego intact, a charm, a certain innocence that gives him an optimistic outlook on life. (He's a man who doesn't always remember where he's left his gun, an unfortunate personality trait for most tv detectives; but that's Magnum). He doesn't want to be a hero; basically, he just wants to lead that almost fantasy existence among the soft breezes, white sands, and warm waters of the beautiful Hawaiian Islands.

Unfortunately, the world quite often gets in the way.

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NOTE

THE NEXT SECTION DEALS IN DETAIL WITH THE SHOW'S CHARACTERS, THEIR LIKES AND DISLIKES, THINGS THEY HAVE DONE, AND THINGS THEY WOULD NEVER DO. FOLLOWING THAT, PART III WILL DISCUSS THE SPECIFIC SETS AND LOCATIONS USED IN THE FILMING OF MAGNUM, P.I. AND FINALLY, THE LAST SECTION WILL DEAL WITH THE BASIC PHILOSOPHY OF THE SHOW, A NOT-TOO-RIGID GUIDE ON THE WRITING OF MAGNUM, P.I.

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II. THE CHARACTERS

THOMAS SULLIVAN MAGNUM was born on August 8, 1944 in Tidewater, Virginia. He did college time at the Naval Academy at Annapolis, graduating with the class of '67 and quarterbacking the football team for three successful years. He served in Vietnam, three tours of duty, was twice wounded and decorated and following that, spent five years in Navy Intelligence.

Three years ago Thomas Magnum resigned his navel commission, just prior to an impending promotion to Lieutenant Commander.

Why?

It's not something that Magnum will talk about, not in a lot of words anyway, and not even to his close friends. What happened was one day he awoke at age thirty-three with the realization that he had never been twenty-three. He had seen possibly every deplorable and base act that one man can commit on another in the jungles of three countries. He has felt the bitter loss of friends and loved ones. And has lived through the fright and helplessness of psychological stress for which he was briefly hospitalized. He has watched the uncontrollable circumstances of an unpopular war separate him from the only woman he ever truly loved, his wife Michele, a French girl he married in Vietnam. They are now separated by a husband that she thought was dead, seven thousand miles of water, and two cultures that can never be one...

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BIBLE: CHARACTERS CONTINUED

Magnum has physical scars that are almost unnoticeable now, but his emotional ones will never leave. He recognizes that and deals with it in his own way...by giving to every minute of his life the best shot he's got:

He likes to surf-ski, run on the beach, drink beer from longnecked bottles, swim in the estate tidal pool, drive the Ferrari in high-gear, play beach volley ball, basketball, tennis, sleep late, eat sushi, follow the Detroit Tigers, drive Higgins crazy, raid the estate wine cellar, (Magnum's a masterful lockpicker, with a collection of picks for just about every lock in the known world). Magnum doesn't like: clients who lie to him, clients that stiff him; he doesn't like to wear ties and socks, also doesn't like to pay his mythical "tab" at the King Kamehameha Club, or pay TC gas money for schlepping him around in the chopper. He does like to borrow things from him, though, somehow always forgetting, (quite honestly), to return them.

He also likes to do VOICE-OVERS. Nobody else can hear them but us. We don't know why or how, but they're there. The only departure from this time-honored p.i. literary device is that Magnum's voice-overs are usually philosophical in nature, not simply fancy ways of telling us what we're seeing on the screen or a convenient and cheap way of getting through some plot-holes. His voice-overs tell us his innermost thoughts, his

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BIBLE: CHARACTERS CONTINUED

fears, his trepidations, what he's really thinking, (as opposed to what he's saying), and his hopes.

Use them judiciously.

But, most of all, what Magnum really likes...is life. And getting the best he can from it. And if he can help anyone else get the same, then hell, the world's one beautiful place.

Paradise.

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On the other hand, to JONATHAN QUAYLE HIGGINS, the world is not a beautiful place; it is a well-ordered place, or at least it should be. And if there is to be chaos and confusion, then let it be outside, not inside the high-security walls of Robin Masters' estate, Higgins' domain, and frankly, his raison d'etre.

That isn't to say, however, that Higgins, a man of eloquent tongue and taste, does not have his outside proclivities. In fact, some of Higgins' more mundane hobbies include being Chairman of the Honolulu Chapter of the Britannic Seaman's Fund, Co-Chairman of the Honolulu Socite du Vin, Honorary Vice-Commodore of the Yacht Club, being one of the sponsors of the Beach Croquet Tournament for the Art Affiliates Fund-Raiser.

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BIBLE: CHARACTERS CONTINUED

He's also found the time to lecture at the Hawaiian Napoleonic Society, stage "Romeo and Juliet" for the Anglo-Hawaiian Shakespeare Festival, and as mentioned previously, serve as Robin Masters' proxy on the King Kamehameha Club Board of Directors.

Additionally, on those rare occasions when perhaps Magnum is stymied on a particular case or what particular course of action to take, Higgins can be quite loquaciously helpful, (to the extreme!), by drawing on his experiences as Sergeant-Major in the Prince of Wales West Yorkshire Regiment. His military travels have also taken him so Java, the Suez, Nepal, Shanghai, India, Kwangju, Beirut and Zambezi. He was attached to Alexander's command on the Quattara, was in Mandalay when Burma gained its independence, was the British liaison for Merrill's Marauders, and served as a liaison to the Soviet Army of Occupation in Vienna after World War II. Higgins also has served on an Army Investigative Unit in Wales and at one time even worked for MI-6 in Northern Ireland.

The man is a walking encyclopedia, (voluminous). He can identify a Soviet Kalashnikov AK-47 on sight and can supply size, firing range, and extent of damage on virtually every weapon imaginable -- sometimes just by listening. He's conversant with hypnosis, speaks Chinese, and performs acupuncture. Also dabbles in the martial arts and beach croquet.

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BIBLE: CHARACTERS CONTINUED

He can give advice on financial investment, show-horses, polo, cricket, and kudu bucks. He's an ace student of military strategy and tactics and is quite knowledgeable on Marxist theory. Additionally, he's a life master bridge player.

In between this myriad of activities Higgins devotes himself to overseeing estate security, accommodating Robin Masters' many and varied guests...and getting rid of Thomas Magnum.

Ostensibly. Because we really don't believe any of it. Not for a second.

Ya gotta realize that the one time Magnum was gone for any sort of spell, Higgins went nuts. Talked to the dogs, drank by himself, mumbled. Another time he searched the Pacific for him. However, when Magnum was found, Higgins could only complain about Magnum's ruining of one of Robin Masters' tuxedos...Theirs is a relationship that lies far beneath the surface, beneath the insults, beneath the petty thievery, the tricks.

One could almost call it friendship.

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TC served with Magnum in Vietnam on the same Communications Intelligence unit, and as a Marine pilot he's bailed him out

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BIBLE: CHARACTERS CONTINUED

of many jams. Sometimes he's got to think that this is his life's work, because he's still bailing Magnum out of many jams. And still in the chopper. And frankly, TC is getting rather sick of it. It's gotten to be where he tries to avoid Magnum and his requests like the plague. It's not that Magnum's not grateful, or that he never tries to repay TC; as a matter of fact, he's forever promising to take him to lunch or dinner. But somehow, something always gets in the way, like angry guys with automatic weapons who just want to be left in peace while making a drug transfer in a mountain clearing, or belligerent Sumo wrestlers and vicious dwarfs.

TC all too painfully realizes that it's not easy being Magnum's friend. But nevertheless, he is. Because once you're his buddy, you're his buddy for life. He's by no means a push-over, but some things will always have a soft spot in his heart...like the group of underprivileged kids to whom he plays "big brother"...or his life-long love of the art of ballet dancing. He's a man of depth and dimension. The only thing he doesn't have is a last name.

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The fourth member of this quartet is Rick. Real name: Orville. In Vietnam he was a short feisty weapons specialist. He was qualified for this particular duty because of his growing up on the streets of Chicago. But Rick survived both of these traumas

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BIBLE: CHARACTERS CONTINUED

to go on to the more sedate life of nightclub impressario in Honolulu. In fact, for a while Rick even had a 1980's version of "Rick's Cafe American" from the movie "Casablanca". But he left the white dinner jacket, Bogart's mouth twitch, and "Sam" behind to move on up to the more promising Kamehameha Club.

The only remnants of his past are still his ability with the weapons and his erstwhile former "connections" -- which Magnum from time to time, (to time to time), prevails upon him to exploit for various reasons pertaining to Magnum's p.i. work. Rick usually helps, but always reluctantly. He doesn't particularly care for bringing up his past connections into his present life as manager of the prestigious King Kamehameha Club. And on top of that, it usually costs him. And Magnum usually doesn't pay. It's familiar, vicious cycle. But it seems that's the price one has to pay for being a friend of Thomas Magnum.

Rick also finds himself a reluctant volunteer for many of Magnum's cases and has had to perform any number of unusual tasks in the process: drive a pedicab, deliver fish, move furniture, and pretend to be a drug buyer.

If Rick has any shortcomings, they could only be that he falls in love too easily and that he allows Magnum to charge all his food and drinks at the club to his nonexistent "tab". Of course, Magnum might label the latter weakness a virtue.

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RE-OCCURRING CHARACTERS:

LIEUTENANT MAC REYNOLDS is Magnum's connection in the NIA, (Naval Intelligence). Like all of Magnum's friends, he is sometimes manipulated into using his position in life to help the p.i. out on his cases. Mac is a computer genius and is often times quite helpful in getting a make run for Magnum on any international terrorists or spies that Magnum might be a bit curious about. Of course, Mac just doesn't do these things for the hell of it; usually getting involved with a "favor" for Magnum means jeopardizing his job, going into classified information. After all Magnum is a civilian now. Then why does Mac stick his neck out? One reason is because he's such a nice guy. And the other is because Magnum bribes him. Nakedly, shamelessly, openly. With food. MacReynold's consuming passion. Mac isn't dumb; he knows he's being conned. But....

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Then there is LIEUTENANT TANAKA, the police "presance" on MAGNUM, P.I. Lieutenant Tanaka and Thomas Magnum are the only two Detroit Tiger fans in the tropics. Both of them bemoaned the loss of Steve Kemp to Chicago, and Mark Fydrich to arm problems. Baseball is a bond that is sometimes stronger than anything. You

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BIBLE: CHARACTERS CONTINUED

have to be a fan of a loser to understand. Tanaka is pretty old, he's been around the island a couple of times, and knows just about every scam or trick that's ever been tried. He's seen it all. He's not a fashionplate. Usually, he's given to wearing faded aloha shirts, khaki trousers, and a Detroit cap which he extorted from Magnum the first time they met.

Tanaka, upon first appearance, is particularly unimposing. He's a nudge, though, talking incessantly, constantly picking up things, looking them over, putting them back in the wrong places, and always using baseball as a metaphor for life, much as Higgins draws on his wartime experiences. Ultimately, about the best thing you can say about Tanaka, is that he's the only cop Magnum's ever been friends with.

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ZEUS is one of the two highly trained Dobermans that help guard the estate. Higgins refers to them as "the lads". They obey his every command dispassionately, blindly, and with unwavering loyalty. Except when it comes to Magnum. Even after all these years, they still hate him. They trap him out in the tidal pool, they surround the car, they sometimes won't let him out of his guesthouse. Actually, they'd like to eat him. Magnum, in front of Higgins, is quite polite to them, though his dislike of them is commensurate with theirs. In fact, the time Higgins

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BIBLE: CHARACTERS CONTINUED

discovered a can of Mace in Magnum's guesthouse almost ruptured the two men's relationship. All over a couple of dogs. The bane of Magnum's existence. And Higgins' delight.

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APOLLO: (SEE ZEUS).

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BIBLE: SETS AND LOCATIONS CONTINUED

find him there, you could check the darkroom and see what develops.

THE KING KAMEHAMEHA CLUB: First, the EXTERIORS. There is an enclosed beachfront bar area where our heros have been known to suck up a coupla brews or two. In this area are a few tables and chairs for the extras to sit on. You can walk out from the beachfront bar area onto the BEACH. A nice place to have a conversation and see some more extras. Also, there is a front entrance to the KING KAMEHAMEHA CLUB where cars drive up and one of the club valets, probably KEOKI, will take the vehicle and park it. The only INTERIOR we have to worry about with the CLUB is Rick's office, which is a standing set on our soundstage.

Other more peripheral sets or locations include MacReynolds' office at NIA, TC's heliport and office, and the local police station, which has a booking desk, squadroom, corridor and cell area.

And then of course there's the biggest location of them all. Paradise.

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IV. IN CONCLUSION: FINAL NOTES

The most important element in the development of any Magnum story is that our guy's involvement must be organic, if not at first at least shortly after. Magnum is not Barnaby Jones, Mannix or Boston Blackie. Clients do not appear at the top of Act One with job offers. (I know it's happened, but that's to be avoided). Magnum is usually out of work, and what work he does get is usually a sordid and tawdry divorce case as Higgins would refer to it, or an insurance adjusting gig. The best Magnum stories evolve from something personal, an emotional attachment to a friend with a problem, or a desire to see justice done for a buddy unfairly treated. Other ways to get into stories are utilizing the device of "perhaps doing Robin a favor". God knows, Magnum owes him. Also, the various and myriad "guests" of the estate are often an avenue for getting Magnum involved.

In structuring the show, a couple not-so-hard-and-fast rules apply. One, we usually prefer to have a "Third Act Twist" in which at the end of the act we suddenly throw everything 180 degrees from what we've been building to, leaving the audience breathless and amazed while the Chairman is being sold. Magnum realizes his neat theories have been shot to hell, and is usually rushing to rectify the situation by the time the fourth act opens. Also, we usually prefer to have a subplot, or "runner", generally humorous, (depending on the tone of the show), to cutaway to. The runner does not have to be substantial, nor does

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BIBLE: FINAL NOTES

it have to be thematically related to whatever is occurring in the main plot. And generally, it is neatly wrapped up after the denouement, sometimes culminating in the show's standard freeze-frame ending. Additionally, once-a-show it is desirable to have Magnum look into camera. This usually occurs during a moment of chagrin, after a particularly apt voice-over, or sometimes even at the end of the show. It's a trademark.

Avoid having Magnum routinely carrying a gun, gratuitously falling in love, figuring out clues by intelligent deduction, or saying dumb things, and you will have discovered the essence of what MAGNUM, P.I. is all about: A human being, with faults and foibles just like everyone else.

Just a guy trying to get along in Paradise.

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THE END