



'STAR' SHINES: Edward James Olmos, center, calls "BSG" the best use of the TV medium he's been involved with.

THE FANS

"Battlestar Galactica" had an impact far beyond hardcore sci-fi fans. Inside, some explain why the show is important to them — or simply important.

THE ASTRONAUT

Garrett Reisman watched "BSG" in orbit, then appeared on the show.

THE COMEDY WRITER

"Daily Show" scribe Rob Kutner wonders about taking satire into space.

THE POLITICAL BLOGGER

Steve Benen calls "BSG" the most political show since "The West Wing."

THE REAL-LIFE STARBUCK

USAF 1st Lt. Miranda Brasko explains how "BSG" captures the military spirit.

THE DEFENSE ANALYST

John Arquilla says "BSG" teaches all you need to know about strategy.

THE RABBI

"BSG" asks big questions about God and morality, says Michael Cahana.

THE SOLDIER

Retired Col. John Antal sees lessons about humanity and morality in war.

THE SCIENTIST

Peter Denning wonders if the human race is becoming the robot Cylons.

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THE FILMMAKERS: HAPPY WARRIORS

MAKING SPACE FOR TRUTHS

Moore pushed writers to go beyond their best

By DAVID WEDDLE

Writing for Ron Moore on "Battlestar Galactica" was the most exhilarating, challenging and fulfilling experience I've had in television. But that's not to say it was a romp. Far from it.

When new writers joined the staff, they were often pleasantly surprised by the informality of our outlining process. We would warn them that while other shows put more effort into outlining, the real work on our show came in writing the scripts themselves. Moore would put us through three, four and

sometimes five drafts of scripts, pushing us on every draft to dig deeper into the characters, add complexity to the themes and texture to the scenes.

But only when the new writers were actually in the trenches would you see that look in their eyes ... of someone treading water in a deep, fast-flowing river, desperately hoping to avoid the rocks in the rapids ahead. They were afraid of letting Ron down, of failing to come up to the level he wanted you to attain.

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Weddle

For a veteran helmer, skein offered freedom to turn episodic TV into art

By MICHAEL NANKIN

I am twice the filmmaker I was when I started my first episode of "Battlestar Galactica."

I have directed episodic television for almost 20 years and never encountered the freedom, the support and the encouragement to experiment that I did on the set of "BSG." Only in that kind of freedom can you push yourself and grow. The producers of "BSG" have remembered what many have forgotten, that film — even in television — is an art form and thrives in an environment of openness and audacity.

There's an old joke in television: Movie directors say, "This

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INSIDE:



'DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES' 100TH EPISODE: Creator Marc Cherry risked damaging his franchise when he retooled the storyline. PAGE A5

THE FANS SPEAK

Luminaries in many fields saw cutting-edge ideas and insights reflected in 'BSG'

Cool screen: Watching 'Battlestar' on the space station

The coolest opportunity to watch "Battlestar Galactica" has to be while orbiting the planet called Earth.

Each astronaut gets to select about four different television programs to watch while living aboard the International Space Station, and "BSG" was one of my choices.

There was some downside to watching the show

Garrett Reisman has been a NASA astronaut since 1998. He completed his first space flight last June, having logged more than three months aboard the International Space Station.

in space, however. First, after seeing battlestars equipped with faster-than-light drives and bristling with laser cannons you can't help but feel your space station is kind of lame. Second, after a few episodes you start getting the sneaking feeling that at least one of your crewmates is really a Cylon.

Still, there was nothing like watching "BSG" while floating along in zero gravity. First I'd go throughout the modules turning off all the lights that I could. There would still be a few blinking lights and LEDs on the comm panels and the other equipment, and when the window shutter was open

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FREE FLOATING: Astronaut Garrett Reisman wonders why the Galactica bothered with gravity.

A real-life Starbuck admires show's details

I'm a 1st Lt. in the U.S. Air Force, a newly winged Combat Systems Officer (back-seater) who will fly the B-1B Lancer. I am a huge "Starbuck" fan, and it was quite fitting that at my naming ceremony, where new aviators get their call signs, my squadronmates christened me Starbuck. I was thrilled.

I am very impressed with the subtle details in "BSG" — little things that only military members would recognize are spot-on.



Brasko

In my favorite episode, "Scar," two hotshot female pilots battle to see who can defeat the Cylon raider known as Scar. Their mission becomes a personal fight to restore the honor of the fallen and to prove to each other

that they are capable in combat.

Military personnel push ourselves beyond our limits so that we don't let down our brothers and sisters in arms. I took an oath to defend principles, ideals and values — the American way of life. But in the end, I train so that my squadronmates — the people I work with every day — are confident that I can keep them safe. I trust in them to do the same.

After Scar is defeated, the crew toasts the memory of their comrades and remembers that at any moment, they each may be called upon to give the ultimate sacrifice. War is an ugly thing.

1st Lt. Miranda Brasko, U.S. Air Force



STAR CROSSED: Katee Sackhoff as troubled pilot Kara "Starbuck" Thrace has inspired women in uniform.

'The mind remains the greatest weapon'

All one needs to know about strategy and conflict can be gleaned from "Battlestar Galactica." This series has portrayed the epic sweep of war, touching on virtually all the key themes in military affairs.

When it comes to the importance of surprise and the commander's need to make calculated sacrifices, the point has never been better made than in "Hand of God." Starbuck conjures up a ruse to catch the Cylons off guard — but must offer up much of the strike force as decoys. Many are killed, but the fleet is saved. Afterward, the ashen look on Starbuck's face speaks volumes about the awful weight of such command decisions.

"BSG" also uncovers what conflict does to the human psyche — and to the "csyches" of intelligent machines! View the arc of episodes around the Cylon occupation of New Caprica to see the terrible toll of war, whatever one's side.

"BSG" also conveys a timely, paradoxical message showing, in the initial catastrophe of the Cylon attack, that interconnectivity empowers and simultaneously imperils. The humans are nearly destroyed because their forces are highly networked. Galactica survives because it isn't networked at all — a dramatic way to make the point that the mind remains the greatest weapon.

John Arquilla is professor of defense analysis at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School. He has been advising the Defense Dept. on strategic matters for nearly 20 years.



SPIRITUAL VOYAGE: Religion and politics often collide on "BSG."

At last, TV science fiction gets religion

The ship is under attack and destruction seems imminent. On the lower decks an unnamed guard turns to his prisoner, gets down on his knees and utters the words that changed TV sci-fi: "Will you pray with me?"

Now, that's something you never heard on "Star Trek."

Religion is an integral part of every human society, yet our essential modern mythologies generally ignore it or depict it as fraud.

To see Kara Thrace gently stroking her family's idols before facing a dangerous mission reminds me of the biblical Rachel secreting her family idols as she journeys to a new land.

We carry our beliefs and traditions with us when we venture into the unknown. They are part of what gives us meaning.

In "BSG," humans and Cylons struggle with their beliefs, just as many of us do.



Cahana

The fact that the God-fearing monotheists are the bad guys only makes the experience more stimulating. Does the dogmatic faith in one controlling entity risk a blind certainty that justifies genocide?

Does a belief in many gods (or no gods at all) allow a moral relativism that justifies torture? Stay tuned.

Michael Z. Cahana is senior rabbi at congregation Beth Israel in Portland, Ore.

What if 'BSG' had a 'Daily Show'?

There are numerous reasons why the "Battlestar Galactica" crew is appealing to a "Daily Show" writer. We, too, are always looking ahead, obsessed with sexy robots, and work under spotty fluorescent lighting. But mostly, we have each spent the past few years gazing into a dark abyss and trying to make sense of it.

As thorny topics like national security vs. liberty, terrorism, bioethics, and religious horn dogs with great hair have filled the airwaves, Ron Moore & Co. have repeatedly found ways to attack them in a sidelong fashion — the same way we try to do so.

Our common goal is not to preach or teach but to entertain.

Sometimes I wonder what would happen if our shows collided. If, say, there were a satire ship in the Colonial



THE DECIDER: "BSG's" hapless president Baltar was spared satire.

fleet, "The Aristophanes." Imagine what they could do with the Baltar administration. Under a title "New Caprican't," the fake news anchor (who, to fully commit to the idea, could actually be a Cylon) announces that, due to rationing, all chemicals for the colony are to be channeled directly into the president's veins. "In other news, Starbuck is now entering her fourth month being immobilized by Number 2. It's called bran, Kara. Look into it."

On second thought, maybe it's better we keep our worlds separate.

Rob Kutner writes for "The Daily Show With Jon Stewart."



Kutner

The most political show on television

In the "Battlestar Galactica" pilot, the show shifts from a discussion regarding the line of presidential succession to tensions between military and civilian leadership. Soon, characters are grappling with questions about the chain of command, sleeper cells and the limits of military power in the midst of a security crisis.

That's just the pilot.

By most measures, "Battlestar Galactica" is the most overtly political program since "The West Wing."

It features a detailed political environment — we see a president memorizing talking points and hosting press conferences — with realistic institutions and competing branches. It has explored, in depth, issues such as torture, civil liberties, separation of powers and even the line between church and state.

While some fictional shows will feature elections, in the second sea-

son, "BSG" offered a surprisingly detailed look at a presidential campaign with the kind of electoral strategizing few would expect from the genre. Indeed, students of politics no doubt found a lot that seemed familiar, including attempted fraud and the obligatory "There he goes again" during a debate.

In "BSG," lines are often blurred. It's a show in which morally flexible politicians deal with a never-ending stream of crises while trying to maintain security, satisfy voters, mollify the press, and hold onto power.

In this sense, "Battlestar Galactica" has held a mirror to our political reality. The image isn't always appealing, but it's often more entertaining than the real thing.

Steve Benen writes the *Political Animal* blog for the *Washington Monthly*. He covers politics and science fiction in his podcast, "Poli-Sci-Fi Radio."



Benen

Do Cylons hint at our own future?

Artificial intelligences have long fascinated science-fiction writers.

The original 1970s "Battlestar Galactica" series reveled in the dark side of artificial intelligence. The humans created the Cylons, a race of intelligent robots that eventually set out to exterminate humanity.

The new "BSG" made the same vision more sinister by introducing Cylons in human form, with all the powers of the mechanicals plus machine-aided resurrection.

Yet just when the Cylons seem to have the upper hand, we discover a flaw: They can't have children. They also struggle with the same issues we do: What is the meaning of my life? What does God expect of me? What is my relationship to others? It is no longer easy to hate the Cylons. They are too human.

Curiously, a similar convergence is happening in the real world. We are gradually building the capability of replacing our own aging body parts indefinitely and expanding our brains and muscles through implants.

Rather than create a race better than ourselves, we are re-creating ourselves. "BSG" is telling us that once we accomplish this, we will struggle with the same questions of the meaning of life that have plagued us since our beginnings.

Peter Denning is a distinguished professor of computer science at the Naval Postgraduate School and a past president of the Association for Computing Machinery.



DEEP SIX: As humans replace their body parts, we may come to have much in common with Cylons like Number Six, says Peter Denning.

A soldier's lesson about command

As a professional soldier, I find "BSG" a fascinating story of the challenge of military command and the soldier's choices in war.

In the episodes when Galactica meets the Pegasus we see the contrasting command styles of Admiral Cain and Commander Adama.

The role of the warrior in society is to protect society from the wolves. Admiral Cain will do anything to keep the wolves (Cylons) at bay — anything. Adama on the other hand, is restrained by his moral values and is the better commander.

The dilemma of war, and the lesson that must be constantly relearned, is to fight with all your might, skill and courage and yet not become the wolf. To me, this is what "BSG" is all about, the eternal struggle of remaining human in the midst of the horror of war. What I have found in today's military is that no matter how sophisticated your technology, it is still the human warrior, and particularly the human in command, who makes the difference. If the warrior becomes a razor, loses his moral compass, then he can no longer protect, only kill.

Col. John Antal, U.S. Army (retired), is a soldier, author, historian and executive producer of "Brothers in Arms" games (Gearbox Software).



Antal



Michelle Forbes as Admiral Cain

HELMER

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is what I want." TV directors say, "This is what they want..." Mostly this is true, "they" being the producers, the studio and the network. But on "BSG," I was given scripts weeks before prep and asked to weigh in with notes. I was encouraged to interpret scenes in new ways, to broaden the filmic and emotional language of the show.

But the heart of "BSG" has always been performance. We took for granted the fact that the scenes were always beautifully written, digging deeply into the darkest or most exalted emotions. But there was nothing ever rigid about the writing. We took out lines; we added lines. It became clear after a while that the show lived between the lines of dialogue. "BSG" was all about the moments. Once, tonight's

episode contained a 10-minute Baltar story dealing with whether it was proper for Cylons to worship with him. It was sacrificed to make room for other moments of human behavior and emotion — virtually silent filmmaking.

In this dramatic laboratory, a strange thing would happen: After weeks of prep and planning, we would arrive on the set and realize we knew nothing about the scene until the cameras rolled. Only then would it come to life and we could get to work.

Only in this singular atmosphere of creative freedom can this happen. Ron Moore and David Eick believe in hiring the right people and letting them do their jobs — a rare commodity in television. The results speak for themselves.

Michael Nankin directed eight episodes of "Battlestar Galactica" including tonight's midseason premiere.

SPACE

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occasionally the earthshine would light up the room with a faint blue glow.

Then I'd float up to the laptop which we used to watch the show. Holding on gently with my thumb and index finger I'd lose myself in the drama of the struggles of the humans and the Cylons. Surrounded by the sounds of the space station, the humming of the pumps, the whirring of the fans and the clicking of the valves, it was easy to blur the line between science fiction and science fact.

While my commander, Peggy Whitson, and I were in space, we had a video conference with Ron Moore and David Eick, the creators and producers of the show. I told them of one thing that suddenly had struck me as very strange about the show after viewing it from space: It was just wrong that all the characters were walking around the ship like there was still gravity up there. Floating is one of the most pleasurable and fantastic experiences of spaceflight and I cannot believe that any spacefaring people would deny themselves that joy. They explained that it would cost almost as much to simulate zero-gravity on a TV show as it would to go into space for real.

When I got back to



CELEBRITY CAMEO: *Reisman plays a Marine in a soon-to-air episode.*

Earth, Ron was kind enough to invite me up to Vancouver to visit the set. The coolest part was getting to be a Colonial Marine. I can't tell you about the story arc of my character or the complex development of his psyche because — spoiler alert — I get blown to bits about 10 seconds after first appearing onscreen (but not before one of the other Marines vomits all over me).

I was having so much fun that I stayed on the set until 1 a.m. This was a bit of a problem since I had a 6 a.m. flight out of Seattle. I drove through the night and went straight to the airport. About 24 hours later after two flight connections, I found myself in a bar in New York City.

Suddenly it hit me that I had come back to Earth; that trip used to take me about 10 minutes.

A PEEK AT 'CAPRICA'

Prequel aims for broader demo

By DANIEL FRANKEL

Caprica," next year's prequel series to "Battlestar Galactica," will be set a generation earlier than the events of "BSG," as an advanced but decadent human society gives birth to the cybernetic technology that will one day destroy it.

"It's about a society that's running out of control with a wild-eyed glint in its eye," says "Galactica" mastermind Ron Moore, who penned the "Caprica's" two-hour pilot with Remi Aubuchon.

"There's doom in the air, but not doom in terms of the human spirit," Moore says.

Set for production in the middle of this year and due to bow early next year, "Caprica" — named for the home planet of many of "BSG's" human characters — is more family drama than sci-fi/action skein, Moore says. The show's stories and settings will be more congruent with Earth in the very near future than "BSG" has been.

Moore and the Sci Fi Channel are hoping

that will help "Caprica's" appeal.

"We want people to come to this who've never heard of 'Battlestar Galactica,'" explains Sci Fi prexy Dave Howe, whose network has ordered 20 hours of the new series. "I think there was a barrier to entry for some viewers (for "Galactica"), since it had the backdrop of space and spaceships."

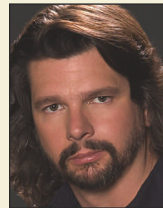
But with the name "Battlestar Galactica" "screaming science fiction," Moore adds, "there was just such a high hurdle to get female viewers to even try it."

That's one reason Moore and his "Galactica" producing partner, David Eick, only toyed with spinoff possibilities for several years.

Discussions only got serious when Aubuchon, a former "Chicago Hope" and "24" scribe, entered the picture.

Aubuchon had earlier made a cybernetics-themed movie pitch to Universal. U execs didn't bite, but they did put him in touch with Moore and Eick across the lot.

"That started us talking about it in earnest," explains Moore, who believes "Caprica's" more ethereal brand will engage a broader audience.



Moore

WRITERS

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The best personal example is when my writing partner, Bradley Thompson, and I turned in the first draft for "Maelstrom" — the season-three episode in which Kara Thrace experiences a hallucinatory flashback to the last day she saw her abusive mother. In that encounter, she discovers a vital clue about her greater cosmic destiny.

When Brad and I turned in our first draft, Moore turned to us in front of all the writers and said, "That's the best first draft you two have ever written for me." My heart pounded and tears stung my eyes.

Then our director, Michael Nankin, asked for a conference call with Ron. I got a sick cold feeling deep in my stomach. In our first draft, in the flashback Kara's mother had suffered a stroke and could not speak. So the scene was a monologue by Kara — a torrent of bitterness, hurt and longing delivered to a pair of unblinking eyes.

Michael said, "I don't understand her relationship with her mother — why it's so powerful for her, what she wants from her mother, and how it ties in with her greater destiny."

Ron defended the script for a while, then he turned on us. "Maybe Michael's right. Maybe we need to see the lion roar one more time. Maybe Kara should visit her mother on the day she found out her mom had terminal cancer. They have a huge, bitter



SWIRLING EMOTIONS: *Writers Weddle and Thompson struggled to make "Maelstrom" go from a good script to a great one.*

argument. We can see the dynamics of the relationship and you can tie it into Kara's cosmic destiny. What do you guys think?"

I tried to swallow, but the membranes of my throat stuck together. "Sounds great, but I don't know if we can do it in four days."

Nankin laughed, "Sure, you can."

And so began an eternal day of an all too familiar hell. Brad and I walked through the backlot of Universal, floating one bad idea after another.

That night, I was coated in cold sweat. Frakking great! The best script we ever wrote and now we have to tear it apart. What if we ruin it? What if Ron takes it away from us?"

But as dawn broke over the Universal backlot, Brad and I came up with the shape and content of the scenes with Kara and her mother. And we hit upon the idea of Kara opening a grade school scrapbook and discover-

ing that as a young girl she had drawn the very mandala Galactica's crew found in an ancient temple. I walked into Ron's office, bleary from lack of sleep, but riding an adrenaline rush. I told him all the pieces had fallen into place, but we weren't going to tell him about them because we wanted to surprise him when he read the next draft. He smiled warmly. "Good."

That's what I am going to miss, now that "BSG" has wrapped: doing the best work of my life, then being challenged to do even better — to reach deeper and dare to attempt something I am not sure I have the ability to pull off.

I am not alone. Everyone in every department had the same drive, and because of that, "Battlestar Galactica" is a show not just for this season, but for the ages.

David Weddle is a writer/supervising producer on "CSI." He was a writer/supervising producer on "Battlestar Galactica."