

GH fans are sending out an "SOS!" to the TPTB at ABC

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Dana L. Meyer and Kecia K. Picard are the driving force behind the "SOS! - Save Our Soap General Hospital Campaign", in which fans of popular pairings Scrubs (Robin/Patrick), SKate (Sonny/Kate), Liason (Jason/Elizabeth), and CarJax (Carly/Jax) work together in sending out emails, letters, and calls to ABC in making changes of the Emmy-winning daytime soap, where the mob runs the town of Port Charles. They were gracious enough to answer my questions via email about their favorite couples, JaSam (Jason/Sam), and what needs to be done to revitalize *GH*.

With *Guiding Light* coming to an end and *Days of Our Lives* bringing back several of their popular actors with possible of cancellation, why do you think *General Hospital* is heading down that road, as well?

It is evident with the way the ratings have been dropping for General Hospital (GH) that it is not the 'flagship soap' of ABC that it used to be. GH has consistently lost viewers in not only total HH numbers, but in the key demographics as well. More than five times, GH has either tied or surpassed new lows in ratings since the beginning of 2009. While many believe that GH is the last soap that ABC would cancel, it currently seems to be the one those in charge are the least concerned with improving.

The writers have continued to kill off core characters or completely change their characteristics, and have brought on several new characters that many viewers not only care little about, but whose backstories destroy the historical integrity of other characters and storylines. All of these issues combined lead us to believe that GH could very well be headed to the same end as GL. Currently, the big difference between GH and DOOL is that DOOL's contract was extended and it is now actually gaining in ratings and viewers, while GH is dropping in ratings and viewers.

From defining the term "supercouple" with Luke & Laura to reinventing daytime with action-adventure, mystery, and legendary love stories to socially-relevant storylines like AIDS and the Nurses' Ball to the mob, where do you think the current direction of *General Hospital* is at now and where do you think it should be?

Currently GH is in a state of relative stagnation. Story lines are not moving forward, none provide emotional or intellectual intrigue, and there certainly are not any legendary love stories. In fact, many of the current storylines are actually tearing apart the very fabric of what defined GH.

One character, Ethan Lovett, has recently been introduced and has virtually spit in the face of 'the supercouple' Luke and Laura, while another, Rebecca Shaw, is simply an unwelcome reproduction of a character that was killed off for no apparent reason. Other characters confuse viewers as to why they are still on the canvas, including the characters of Olivia Falconeri and Claudia Zacchara.

Many viewers say they are sick of the mob storylines and that the mob should go away. We do not believe that. The mob is simply another version of the action-adventure that made the Luke/Laura/Robert/Holly/Sean/Tiffany era so appealing. However, it needs to be more balanced with the rest of the show and within itself. There should be more storylines that include the hospital that do not include the mob or any danger to Port Charles.

The writers could have written a great story using Epiphany's heart problems by incorporating Maxie Jones, Kate Howard, Bobbie Spencer, and Monica Quartermaine, but they simply dropped that story once heart health month was over. The writers should bring back the Nurses' Ball. It brought the community together for a common goal, it reminded the viewers of the history of many of the characters, and it added much needed humor while educating the public on a very real disease.

Where do we think GH should be? Obviously we think it should be at the top of the ratings, that's where it should be! It should return to being the more balanced, socially relevant, action-packed, family-oriented, humorous show that it once was. It should have character-driven story lines, greater character development, enduring couples that one can root for, and more romance with less sleaze. It should do all of this while maintaining character and historical integrity, giving fans a sense of heart and a sense of hope; GH used to do this and we think it can again.

Do you think *General Hospital's* centering on the mob may have something to do with HBO's *The Sopranos*, with mobsters are the "good guys" and the law "bad guys"?

General Hospital often runs stories that parallel well-known shows, and it seems to model that hit show. It is not a novel idea to have bad guys with hearts of gold or moral standards and have the good guys less than perfect or productive. Where the model breaks away is in the area of family. On *The Sopranos*, the mobsters had families that they came home to, loved, protected, and stayed with. Since *The Sopranos* was on HBO, they dealt with more significant problems, more serious than what could be played out on daytime TV, but the fact remains there were married mobsters that remained married and had children and loving relationships.

What boggles the mind is why that can't happen on GH. Sonny, who has been married and has a family, is currently with a woman he loathes and suspects purposely intended him harm and caused his son to be placed in a coma for a year, while he is in love with someone else. When Sonny was involved with Kate, it was a breath of fresh air. Rather than letting Sonny and Kate explore the issues of being married while Sonny is in the mob, their story was torn apart for another replay of the dark, self-destructive Sonny that we had seen before he was diagnosed as being bipolar.

Meanwhile Jason Morgan has been the one to protect Sonny's family while always wanting one of his own. He was finally given a child with the woman he "thanks God for every day" only to sacrifice his happiness because of his fear that he can't protect them. All of Sonny's children are allowed to be around him while his own son is not. How does that even make sense?

Only Jax & Carly and Patrick & Robin are two of the 4 super couples that are still together. They've had their ups and downs (Patrick overcoming his fears of fatherhood and Robin's PPD, for instance), but found their way back to each other now that they're married and have a(n instant) family. How and where you'd like the writers to "redeem" Sonny & Kate and Jason & Elizabeth?

First let's be clear that we don't believe these four couples are the key to repairing all of GH's problems. However, our fanbases did decide to work together as a united front to bring attention to ABC/Disney of the problems confronting GH. That said, Patrick and Robin *have* overcome many obstacles and are currently together. They are now working on projects and through life issues together instead of being ripped apart. Jax and Carly are currently together and, likewise, working through issues *together*, but there is a dark cloud on their horizon since the writers seem to have sacrificed Jax as one of the "Claudia's secret" keepers.

As for Sonny and Kate, though they were reunited as a couple for only about a year, they have an established history. First, the writers need to help viewers understand why Sonny would undergo a 180-degree transformation in his personality. His behavior lately resembles his behavior before he was diagnosed as being bipolar. Many viewers have speculated that Claudia could be tampering with his meds or that he has quit taking them. We see him drinking a lot lately. He seems to be losing control of his life

and his organization, and now that Johnny Zacchara is dating Olivia, a part of his past, he seems to want to control that last thing he has left that is his own—his past.

Kate needs to be in Sonny's orbit enough to realize that there is a problem—that Sonny is spiraling out of control and about to hit rock bottom—and that Sonny needs her. We need to see the Dante reveal and have Sonny and Kate work through her keeping the secret of Dante and the secret of Claudia being culpable in Michael's shooting. The Dante secret was not hers to tell (though she seems to be better at keeping a secret for her cousin than her cousin is at keeping a secret for her). She lost the proof regarding Claudia's part in Michael's shooting when Olivia threw the DVD into the fire. Even now, Sonny does not seem receptive to holding Claudia responsible for the shooting until he has real proof, so it is possible that he would have thought Kate was just being jealous (though the 'real' Sonny would have believed her) or would have demanded proof. Sonny and Kate have shown that they love each other unconditionally and have been very forgiving of each other. Kate never tried to change Sonny, she only wanted him to have a better life. Sonny wanted to change for the better because of her. She gave him hope.

We would love to see Kate have a child with Sonny and see Sonny actually raise a child of his own with the woman he loves under his own roof. We would love to see how they handle raising a child while Kate, being in her early forties, first learns to juggle a career and a family.

The history between Jason and Elizabeth is long and complex. They've been friends, confidants, and heroes for and to one another. They've also been completely at odds, almost enemies sometimes, and caused each other pain and heartache. However, no matter what, they've always been supportive of one another and for one another when necessary, as evidenced when Emily had cancer. They've always understood exactly who the other was, never trying to change each other or make each other be or do something they didn't want to. Fans of this couple/non-couple for 10 years now, would love to see them finally be together as a family. Jason simply needs to realize that he and Elizabeth are stronger together than apart, and that he *can* protect his family better by being with them than by pushing them away and pretending they're not important to him.

It makes no sense that the Jason Morgan we've watched protect everyone else for years would think his family would be safer without him than with him, knowing that people know Elizabeth is or even once was important to him. Jason is simply more logical than that.

It would be wonderful to see Elizabeth stop settling for the safe life with Lucky, the man she loved once but doesn't any more, the man who has cheated on her, been abusive to her, and repeatedly unsupportive of her. She needs to realize that it isn't good for the boys to grow up around 'roommates' as parents when a loving relationship is possible. Fans remember the fire Cameron started, the bomber in the hospital, Elizabeth's aneurysm from Ric, and even her rape, and understand that life isn't safe, and that it can have nothing to do with Jason's business. Why can't she? We want Elizabeth and Jason to both remember Emily's death, and realize they should be with the ones they love because life is too short. Do we want the writers to throw them together next week or even next month? No, we want them to reunite them correctly, building their relationship back up like they did in '06-'07.

How can these couples be redeemed? Simply, we want to see Sonny and Kate and Jason and Elizabeth, along with Patrick and Robin and Jax and Carly, face trials and tribulations together rather than see them split apart every time there is a little angst.

There's still a majority of fans that is loving Jason & Sam reconnecting this summer and hoping it leads to more. What makes Liason stand out and different from JaSam?

This can only be answered as fans of Jason and Elizabeth since 'Lucky's death' and, as such, we believe they have a strong base for their relationship. Liz hasn't asked Jason to change or to stop doing what he does since the day she found him in the snow. She has admitted she doesn't like his job, but she knows 'he is not his job.' She has nursed him after gunshot wounds, she has hidden him when he needed it, no questions asked, she has lied to protect him, she has even helped those she didn't like simply because he

asked. She accepts Jason and she loves him as he is, unconditionally, and unselfishly. Likewise, Jason has always been the one to let Liz be who she needed to be and feel what she needed to feel when she needed to, never making her apologize for her emotions. He has supported her when those that 'loved her' didn't, he has protected her, even making deals with people he'd sworn to never make deals with (Edward and Det. Taggart) just to help her, and he has admitted to her on several occasions over the years that she "saved him." He has accepted her and loved her unconditionally and unselfishly.

As for the Jason and Sam relationship, we'd never say we think Jason never loved Sam. He probably did. But we just don't see the same connection between them. They began out of obligation, grew together over an intense emotional situation and continued their relationship through a series of intense situations. Sam supposedly can handle herself, yet when she is with him she is always getting into trouble and needing Jason to save her. She purposely caused the Metro Court hostage situation by pressing the alarm, she betrayed him with probably his number one enemy in town, who happened to be her mother's husband at the time, she purposely hurt his child and the woman he loves by watching the kidnapping and then repeatedly lying about it, and then hired gunmen to threaten them just to prove a point. Though she has 'apologized' for those actions, which many fans don't feel could ever be made right, we don't believe that Jason Morgan, the real Jason Morgan, would ever be involved with her, nor do we find it believable that he is even friendly with her now. Even if she did 'save Jake,' she had betrayed him so much and so badly, the 'real' Jason Morgan would treat her as he has treated Ric Lansing, who saved his 'bff' Carly's life when she was unconscious in the harbor, so that logic doesn't hold.

In short, Jason and Elizabeth have always been there for each other and, even when they were at odds with each other, never purposely did anything to harm the other out of spite or retribution. The same cannot be said of Sam. Additionally, it is not plausible that Jason would be with a woman like Sam, or any woman really, when he repeatedly professed his love for Elizabeth and that if he can't be with her, he'd rather be alone. The same holds true for Elizabeth as she just recently professed her love for Jason even though they've agreed to stay apart.

Port Charles is now full of crime, corruption, scandal, and moral depravity. Back then, Anna Devane, Robert Scorpio, Luke & Laura, and even Duke Lavery were several that protected the town against organized crime and world threats. What needs to be done to bring light into this dark city as well as to right its wrongs?

As we've said, the show needs more balance and for the writers to remember the history of the show and the characters. The mob storylines are viable, but there is so much more to Port Charles. Whatever happened to corporate espionage and ELQ? They need to bring back the Quartermaines and ELQ. They need to add Couture Magazine and Jax's companies to the mix.

Whatever happened to simpler, more humorous storylines revolving around events like the Nurses' Ball? They need to plan another Nurses' Ball or another large charity event with a comedy of errors and social awareness woven in for the fans to embrace. They need to utilize the treasure they have in Megan Ward by having Kate be on the hospital board and be the hostess of the Nurses' Ball.

What happened to storylines that built over time and maintained relationships? Those are the things that would bring light back to GH.

They need to bring together couples and families and have them stay together. Sure, they should have problems and angst, but they should stay together. Monica and Alan are still one of THE favorite GH couples of all time. No matter what, fans always rooted for them to get back together and for them to be together. They had a special connection. There was love, understanding, fight, and humor. Lucy and Kevin were also a couple fans loved to watch. Sonny and Kate have that quality; Jason and Elizabeth have that quality. Patrick and Robin and Jax and Carly have those qualities. The GH writers need to capitalize on the storyline opportunities.

Also, sleaze, moral depravity, crimes without consequence, ignorancy and re-writing of history needs to stop. Most viewers are tired of watching sleazy woman. They are tired of watching sex used in anger or as

a means to an end 90% of the time. They are tired of crimes being committed, but the perpetrator never pays for the crime in any meaningful way. It is a soap opera, and while the fans understand that it is fiction, certain crimes are not the kind that can be swept under the rug with an "I'm sorry," "It was a lapse in judgment," or "I did this, so now it's o.k."

Most viewers are tired of Jason being the only person in town who can solve a crime. There is an entire police force! They need to utilize them for a storyline that doesn't involve the mob and let them solve the crime. Most viewers are tired of watching history being re-written to accommodate a storyline that is either boring, repetitious or simply implausible. Yes, fans realize things may come up that change an aspect of a character's history in some way, but only if it truly adds to the character and all of those involved. Simply changing the facts to accommodate an idea and thereby changing the entire history or context of a historical event breaks trust with the viewers and does nothing but antagonize and anger them.

Do you think daytime has changed for better or worse? Why or why not?

We think it has changed for the worse overall. From what we have seen on GH and other soap operas, those behind them seemed to have forgotten that they are creating a product for consumers. It is apparent by the ratings that the consumers are not buying the product being produced. As evidenced by both Y&R and DOOL (which was almost cancelled, but granted a reprieve and is now gaining in the ratings), soaps can be written and produced that people actually want to watch. The fans are still there.

In the case of GH, there seem to be too many personal agendas--too much backstage politics involved in the production of the show. Even the average viewer seems aware of the politics due to what is on-screen. Those behind the production need to stop doing what THEY think will work and really look at what WAS working before, and what IS working now on other shows, while listening to the audience. The ratings are dropping because the product is sub-par, so those in charge simply need to create a better product. It can be done.

The argument that daytime is outdated is possible, but not so much so that shows should be given up on. There are many people in the key demographic either home during the day, or with TiVos and DVRs, that still watch soaps, even with 120 other channels available. The fact is, most of daytime programming consists of reruns of nighttime shows, which begs the question, why can't daytime soaps be more like nighttime dramas if nighttime dramas are allowed to be rerun during the daytime on multiple channels and networks?

Currently, the economy is down and unemployment is up, which means many people are at home. It also means that people are cutting back on non-necessities like expanded cable and satellite. Why are the daytime numbers going down when more people are home with fewer channels to watch, and the channels that are available are the Big 3 (ABC, CBS, NBC)? Under these circumstances, soap operas should be fairing much better. More people will tune in if a quality product is offered.

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