



GENERAL HOSPITAL WINS EMMY FOR 2008,  
BUT IS DISNEY ASHAMED OF ABC DAYTIME'S SOAP OPERAS?  
Will Disney Attempt to Improve its Product?

Recently GH was awarded the Best Writing Emmy for 2008. That award is given by a panel of judges who review submitted episodes of the various daytime dramas and then vote on the one they feel incorporated the best writing, creativity, and storylines. General Hospital's submission was an episode from April 7, 2008, that included an engagement, a child trauma with parental and other familial emotional situations, hospital and police drama, individuals and couples. As the ratings show, when comparing the current ratings for the week of August 24-28, 2009 (2,401,000/1.8 total viewers and 807,000/1.2 for the 18-49 female demographic) to those of the week of that episode (3,018,000/2.3 total viewers and 1,113,000/1.7 for the 18-49 female demographic), it is clear that the audience, particularly the 18-49 female audience, was more invested and interested in the storylines, characters, and couples being showcased at the time of that episode.

The characters included in that episode were Elizabeth and Jason individually and together for their engagement, Carly and Jax individually with Carly in Port Charles and Jax desperately trying to get back home to her from a business meeting, Sonny and Kate individually and together as a couple, Patrick and Robin individually and as a couple, Lulu with Johnny as a couple, Michael, Spinelli, Alexis, Jerry, Claudia, Dr. Devlin, Epiphany, Cassius, Leyla, Det. Harper and Lucky.

While many viewers complain that there is too much violence on GH, especially toward children, the aftermath of this particular episode and story resonated and affected much of the canvas. Sonny, after realizing that being in a position of power did not mean he was in control, decided to make a better life for himself and his children by leaving the mob. With the support of Kate, he was able to fight through some emotionally hard times immediately following Michael's shooting.

Carly, being scared for her other child, Morgan, with the support of Jax, had Sonny sign away his rights to both of their sons for their safety. She was completely committed to Jax and made it a priority to keep her children safe. At the same time, Alexis asked for Carly's assistance to get Sonny to do the same thing for their daughter, Kristina. While Sonny was involved with reputable fashion magazine editor Kate Howard and was out of the mob, they considered his life to be too dangerous for him to be around his children.

Jason and Elizabeth had realized that life was fragile and their love was everlasting. Jason professed that he wanted a life with Elizabeth, Cameron and their son, Jake and they became engaged. Sadly, mere moments afterwards, the news of Michael's shooting changed everything as Jason's guilt over introducing Michael into the mob life when he was an infant was more than he could bear. Elizabeth remained supportive during his emotional crisis and never let her love waiver.

Many of the characters who shared scenes to bring the Emmy home are no longer in scenes together or even mentioned to each other. Many of the couples that were together at that time are not only no longer together, but never even share screen-time, as if they never meant anything to one another.

Sonny and Kate were committed to one another in a relationship where they not only supported one another, but they challenged one another. Now, even though they still live next door to each other, a new viewer would not even know they knew each other, had been together with Michael when he was shot or

had a tragically interrupted wedding, much less a long and complex history. Jason and Elizabeth had just gotten engaged on that particular episode and were both extremely happy and now they rarely bump into each other in what appears to be the 'vastness' of Port Charles; when they do, there is nothing but pain and longing in their eyes. Johnny and Lulu were in the throws of young love, but Johnny was troubled by being involved in a violent lifestyle. Lulu reminded him that he was in a position to get out, but was choosing to stay in. Johnny eventually made the decision to get out of the mob and open a car repair garage, occasionally working for Crimson as Maxie's escort. Finally, Lucky and Sam were a happy, romantic couple both maturing and moving on from destructive relationships, however if you had not watched at that time, you would never know they had ever been involved in a loving relationship with the way they are not only no longer a couple but they never cross paths.

**Sadly, there have been many opportunities for the storyline from this very episode to resonate even more, but the writers have chosen to only use it when it suits them.** The writers had the opportunity, based on the story of Michael's shooting, to take the character of Sonny and the show in a new direction with opportunities for fresh, new storylines by having Sonny get out of the mob or be on the fringes of the mob. Due to the timing, it would have been organic and character-driven. Instead, they threw him "right back into a corner and have him running in circles" to pair him with Claudia, a decision that made no sense for where Sonny was at that point of his life.

In addition, now that Sonny is back in charge of the mob and married to Claudia, a member of the Zacchara family and the woman who is ultimately responsible for Michael's coma, Carly and Alexis have suddenly decided it is perfectly fine for him to be around his children. Sonny has gone so far as to consider letting Michael live under his roof with Claudia present.

Johnny has since rejoined the mob and is having a relationship with an older woman who supposedly made it her life's mission to stay far away from the mob, going so far as keeping her son's existence a secret from his father.

Jason decided his life was too dangerous to risk the lives of Elizabeth and their son, Jake, and her son, Cameron and once again pushed her away, in the name of safety and love. Since that time however, he has been directly interacting with Sonny's, Alexis', and Carly's children. He even showed up at the carnival, that is benefiting the foundation for children with head trauma and is full of children, going so far as to actually draw a real gun at a shooting gallery game in an effort to win a stuffed animal when his initial 'game' attempts failed.

With the inconsistent writing, one has to wonder if the characters even remember that Michael was shot. Reveal after reveal has been made about Claudia's culpability in Michael's shooting, sacrificing the integrity of many characters in the process, with no payoff for the viewers. It feels like any lessons learned by those most greatly affected by the whole experience have been ignored and the impact of the tragedy of a child being shot in the head and remaining in a coma for a year has been lost. How sad to lose such an awesome storytelling opportunity.

Obviously the break up of all of these couples and the derailment and inconsistency of the storylines in which they were involved has not been taken well by the audience and has taken its toll on the ratings. Since the week of that episode, April 7, 2008, and in the coveted 18-49 demographic, GH has lost 29% of its audience. One has to wonder if management at ABC/Disney realizes that the audience that is no longer there is made up of individuals who are no longer watching the advertisements paid for by their sponsors as well as the advertisements for their very own nighttime programming. Many fans have reported that now that they no longer watch GH, they really have no idea what shows are on at night on ABC or what shows are being promoted for the new season, nor are they really missing them since they have found replacements on other networks.

Many viewers have also stated that they are so frustrated with GH, they find it hard to invest in it or any of the other ABC soaps. For the week of August 24-28, 2009, All My Children (AMC) and One Life to Live (OLTL) had the fewest viewers in their respective 39- and 41-year histories. GH's total viewers also declined and were only 3% higher than its all time low.

SOS began its campaign in June of 2009 and, since that time, the only increases in viewership have been one or two day spikes resulting from Michael waking up from his year-long coma and the very well directed car crash scene where Claudia's car was driven off the road.

While the SOS campaign is dedicated to working with ABC/Disney to fix its leading soap, GH, there is concern that The Walt Disney Company is so embarrassed by ABC Daytime's soap operas that they are not interested in improving their products for customers. Evidence for this realization is The Walt Disney Company's decision today to highlight its ABC Primetime shows and allow time for autographs with its Primetime stars, while ABC/Disney excluded ABC Soaps and Daytime from the Disney 23 Expo which is occurring this week in California. D-23 is promoted as the single largest gathering of all things Disney ever assembled with almost every part of The Walt Disney Company being represented. GH has been on the air for 46 years, OLTL for 41 years and AMC for 39 years. These are long-running shows in any industry, yet ABC/Disney makes no mention of them in their promotions for D-23! **Is Disney embarrassed by its ABC Daytime Division or is it simply the red-headed stepchild of the Disney Family?**

Though GH just received an Emmy win for 2008, stagnant storylines and lack of integrity and creativity in writing for 2009 have left viewers unhappy, causing many to turn away. Viewers are left literally begging ABC/Disney to step in and make changes at GH by delivering character-driven storylines, being true to the characters, respecting the rich history of the show, creating an emotional balance for the characters, focusing on families, promoting enduring couples that viewers can root for, heightening romance while minimizing sleaze, and creating an enjoyable escape. Viewers have tried to communicate their concerns through different campaigns, even going so far as to schedule boycotts and "spike the ratings" days to get the attention of those in charge. These viewers, though they express their concerns in different ways, all want ABC/Disney to know that they want to return to watching GH or continue watching GH. They want Disney to know that soaps are a viable genre and, if presented with integrity, can be a draw to many viewers.

This week many viewers have been concerned by what they consider to be the lack of professional behavior on the part of ABC Daytime management. This concern is focused on what appeared to be management's decision to acknowledge a large fan base, but it essentially boiled down to making fun or baiting in a recent GH promotion on Soapnet. GH star Carolyn Hennessey was included in this promotional spot which told Liason fans (fans of characters Elizabeth Webber and Jason Morgan) to basically cool it while she was also promoting her own upcoming Primetime show.

Disney's corporate policy states "throughout the years, our guests, audiences, consumers and shareholders have come to depend on us for quality, creativity, innovation and integrity...people trust us because of our commitment to them and to the standards to which we hold ourselves. We alone are responsible for upholding our excellence and our integrity. This means acting responsibly in all our professional relationships, in a manner consistent with the high standards we set for our business conduct." GH viewers are depending on Disney to save their soap. When will Disney step in and uphold its policy?

More fans keep joining together with fans of Sonny and Kate, Jason and Elizabeth, Patrick and Robin, and Jax and Carly as part of the SOS/Save Our Soap! General Hospital Campaign. All share in a common goal of asking ABC/Disney to listen to the viewers by making the changes needed to make GH the quality show it once was and can become again, as evidenced by its Emmy win for 2008, as well as making it a viable show that Disney and its fans can be proud of! For more information regarding the campaign, contact Dana L. Meyer or Kecia K. Picard at [saveoursoapgh@gmail.com](mailto:saveoursoapgh@gmail.com), visit the SOS/Save Our Soap! General Hospital page on Facebook, follow on twitter @SOS\_GH or visit the SOS/Save Our Soap! General Hospital website at [www.saveoursoapgh.com](http://www.saveoursoapgh.com).