



Jack (Kiefer Sutherland) contemplates his next move in the climactic two-hour "24" series finale episode "2:00-4:00 PM" airing at 8 p.m. Monday, May 24, on FOX.

Courtesy of Kelsey McNeal/FOX

Will '24,' 'Lost' join short list of series finale successes?

The series finale for a long running show is probably the toughest thing to pull off in the world of television. After all, there's so much to be done. You have to wrap up all your storylines while also satisfying the fans. And I would say there are way more shows that have failed than have succeeded.

A common mistake is that a show tries to do too much with its finale. I consider "Seinfeld" to be one of the worst finales of all time. After all, "Seinfeld" was known as a show about nothing and the final episode was jam-packed with all kinds of things, including one of the worst endings I've ever seen. I mean, they all went to jail? Seriously?

Some shows have tried a little too hard to be clever with their final moments, angering longtime fans. The finale of "St. Elsewhere," in which the whole show was revealed to be only in the mind of the autistic Tommy, is usually always on critics' lists of worst finales. Personally, I loved it, but I can see why fans were so upset. A similar situation occurred in the finale of "Roseanne" when the show was revealed to be a figment of the imagination of housewife Roseanne Conner and that she had altered the true events for her stories. Fans were not happy to find out that Dan had actually



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died and Darlene and Becky ended up with different guys.

The biggest mistake shows make with a finale, though, is that they try so hard to do something special that they forget the thing we want most—closure. That's why fans were so riled up by the ending to "The Sopranos." As Tony and his family sat at a diner jamming to Journey, the screen suddenly went black just as it appeared Tony might be in trouble. Because it was so abrupt with no indication as to what happened to Tony or his family, fans didn't get the closure they felt they deserved.

After all, we want to know that our favorite couple got together or that our favorite hero saved one more person before retirement. And sometimes it's just enough to know that our favorite characters are still doing their same old thing wherever they are. In my opinion, one of the best series finales of all time was the end of "Everybody Loves Raymond." It was basically just a regular episode that reinforced

the bonds of the Barone family as they all dealt with the possibility of losing Ray (Ray Romano). It didn't try to do anything special or clever. It just gave us the people we loved exactly the way we loved them.

This week, we say goodbye to two of TV's best—"24" and "Lost." With "Lost," we just want answers. What is the island? Why is everyone there? And what is the deal with this sideways world? Do I think we'll get all the answers? Honestly, no I don't—especially since the show's producers have said we will still have questions. With "24," we want to see Jack Bauer live to fight another day. We'd probably like a happy ending, too, but that's not going to happen, especially in light of recent events. I'm guessing that however these two end, we'll be talking about it for years to come. But I would like to put them both in the success column. Wouldn't you?

The series finale of "Lost" will air at 9 p.m. Sunday, May 23, on ABC. The "24" series finale will air at 8 p.m. Monday, May 24, on FOX. Be sure to visit my blog after each one for my thoughts.

Angela Henderson writes about television on her "Stay Tuned" blog at www.herald-dispatch.com.