Fox's '24: Redemption' Doesn't Win Back All Former '24' Viewers

Rash Report: Some Bright Spots, but Sunday Was Down Overall

By John Rash

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MINNEAPOLIS (AdAge.com) -- After a lackluster November sweeps, the broadcasters put on their Sunday best, with music and movie specials joining NBC's "Sunday Night Football" and CBS's "60 Minutes." Everything, it seemed, was big.

Except, that is, where it most counted -- in the cumulative Nielsen ratings. True, there were great individual performances, both on the stage of ABC's "American Music Awards" and in the ratings, as the annual awards show had its best showing in four years, delivering a 5.1/12 rating and share in the ad-centric adult 18-49 demographic (based on Nielsen fast-affiliate ratings, with final live-plus-same-day data released Tuesday).

Back from limbo
And Fox's "24" movie, "Redemption," was redeemed in its own right, as the show skipped last season due to the writers strike. "Redemption" rated a 4.0/9, 11% over the animated comedies that ran during
the two hours last week.

But overall, the five-network cumulative ratings were actually down from last Sunday's fast-affiliate ratings by 7%. This is mostly due to a two-thirds drop for "60 Minutes" (2.7/7), which missed last week's NFL lead-in and the country's new quarterback. President-elect Barack Obama, who gave the network an exclusive interview and the best ratings in nine years.

And tomorrow's release of live-plus-same-day data will detail gender splits per program, but it's likely to show that Jack Bauer not only always gets his man, but his show, "24," gets a whole lot, too, which is probably why "Sunday Night Football" (4.6/11) was down 25%, as well. (It was also a less marquee matchup, as Indianapolis vs. San Diego doesn't quite evoke "Big Game" like Dallas vs. Washington.)

For the night, comparing last night's fast-affiliate data to last week's, NBC was down by the same 25%, as the game combined with "Football Night in America" (2.4/6) scored a third-place 4.0/10.

CBS was down more dramatically, as the overall fourth-place 2.6/6 was 41% lower than last week. Beyond viewers clocking out of "60 Minutes," "The Amazing Race" (2.7/6) fell 23% to its lowest level this season. And "Cold Case" (2.6/6) and "The Unit" (2.5/6) each slipped 7% compared to last week.

ABC was second with an overall 4.3/10, as many more were interested in listening to the big winner of the "American Music Awards," Chris Brown, than watching the red-carpet show that preceded it with a 1.9/5.

CW ditches partner
No red carpet, however, for Media Rights Capital. Indeed, the rug just got pulled from under the independent studio that was programming the CW's Sunday schedule, and with good reason. Sunday brought just the latest (and now to be its last) low-rated night, as "In Harm's Way" (0.3/1), "Valentine" (0.2/1) and "Easy Money" (0.1/0) combined for a fifth-place 0.2/1.

As for Fox, "Redemption" helped it finish first with an overall 4.6/11, up 48% from last week. But the big jump wasn't necessarily due to tough guy Jack Bauer, but to tough guys in the NFL. Unlike last week, Fox had an NFL overrun, which was the highest-rated prime-time program last night with a 6.5/18 from 7 to 7:30 (all times approximate). Post-game show "The OT" (4.9/13) was up 7%.

As for "Redemption," despite the hype of one of the decade's defining characters coming back to prime time, it actually indexed at 85 compared to the last full "24" season in 2007.

This may be just one of the ratings reflections the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) needs to keep in mind when considering asking members for a strike vote. Because while Jack Bauer may be able to take torture better than anyone, another strike just may kill him off.

WHAT TO WATCH:
Monday: There's perhaps no day that evokes family more than Thursday's Thanksgiving holiday. But "family" is a relative description, as sometimes bonds are strongest between those not related by blood, such as boxer Maggie Fitzgerald (Hilary Swank) and trainer Frankie Dunn (Clint Eastwood) in Oscar-winner "Million Dollar Baby," which runs tonight on AMC.

Tuesday: And Thanksgiving -- or any other holiday -- is not complete without Charlie Brown. ABC runs "A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving" and "This Is America, Charlie Brown" starting at 8 p.m.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR:
With the competition almost over, is it time for a ratings rise for ABC's "Dancing with the Stars"?
NOTE: All ratings based on adults 18-49. A share is a percentage of adults 18-49 who have their TV sets on at a given time. A rating is a percentage of all adults 18-49, whether or not their sets are turned on. For example, a 1.0 rating is 1% of the total U.S. adults 18-49 population with TVs. Ratings quoted in this column are based on live-plus-same-day unless otherwise noted. (Many ad deals have been negotiated on the basis of commercial-minute, live-plus-three-days viewing.)

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