MINNEAPOLIS (AdAge.com) -- After the great gridiron victory by the Pittsburgh Steelers over the Arizona Cardinals, Super Sunday's superlatives have been mostly about what happened on the field. But now the accolades can be extended to onscreen as well, as Nielsen now estimates that Super Bowl XLIII was the most-watched TV program in history, with 151.6 million total viewers tuning in for all or part of the game, and an average viewership of 98.7 million. This tops last year's giant rating for New York's upset of New England, which averaged 97.5 million.

Super Sunday was followed by a manic Monday of keener competition (albeit much lower total ratings) between networks. NBC -- which may have enjoyed even higher ratings had the game gone into overtime -- went into its own version of O.T. with 3-D, showing a special "Chuck" episode that viewers could watch with their 3-D glasses they used for some Super Bowl commercials.

The 3-D technology, which brings the picture to life, did the same with the ratings, as the 3.0/7 rating...
and share in the ad-centric 18-to-49 demographic was 20% higher than its original episode average.

Despite the positive ratings results for the Super Bowl stunt, NBC's super agent dramedy faced super series "House" on Fox, the medical drama which with surgeon-like skill wins against whatever is scheduled against it. It just about matched its season average, delivering a 5.6/14.

But it was a good hour -- and a pretty good night -- for CBS as well, as the return of original episodes returned viewers as well. "The Big Bang Theory" (4.1/10) was up 24% from last week's repeat and 8% over its season average and was followed by "How I Met Your Mother" (4.3/10), which jumped 39% from last week and 2% over its average.

CBS corporate cousin The CW didn't have as much success with an original episode of "Gossip Girl," however, as the 1.1/3 was up 57% from last week's rerun but was 31% below its season average.

And ABC began the night with a two-hour episode of "The Bachelor" (4.1/10), which gains viewers as it loses suitors, as the reality show was up 17%.

The impact of the Steelers' heroics didn't extend all the way to "Heroes" at 9 p.m., however, as the beginning of a new story arc matched its season average of a 4.0/9. But the young male appeal of "Heroes" appears to have hurt Jack Bauer, the hero of Fox's "24," as its 3.7/8 was down 10% from its season average. Either that or it was anti-hero Charlie Harper (Charlie Sheen), who returned in a new episode of "Two and a Half Men" (5.5/12), which was up 34% from last week and 6% from its season average. Lead-out "Worst Week Ever" had a so-so week, just about matching its season average with a 3.1/7, while The CW's "One Tree Hill" (1.3/3) soared 86% over last week's second showing but was still off 19% from original episode averages.

For the night Fox was first with a 4.6/11. CBS (4.3/10), ABC (3.7/9) and The CW (1.2/3) were second, third and fifth, respectively. NBC, smartly using Sunday's Super Bowl to re-launch Monday, had a better night than recent weeks. But just like the NFL itself, this network league is tough, and it finished fourth with a 3.3/8.

WHAT TO WATCH:

**Tuesday:** With CBS's "The Mentalist" again a repeat, it's an opportunity to again get caught up on Fox's "Fringe," which is one of the only other few freshman successes this year.

**Wednesday:** After getting her media mojo back with her consequential interview of Gov. Sarah Palin, it's hard to think of Katie Couric as a warm-up act. But she'll do just that with "Katie Couric: All Access Grammy Special" on CBS, just a few days before Sunday's "Grammy Awards."

WHAT TO WATCH FOR:
"Fringe" to continue the ratings rebound it began last week when "The Mentalist" was also a rerun.

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*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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