

watch!

LOVE BITES

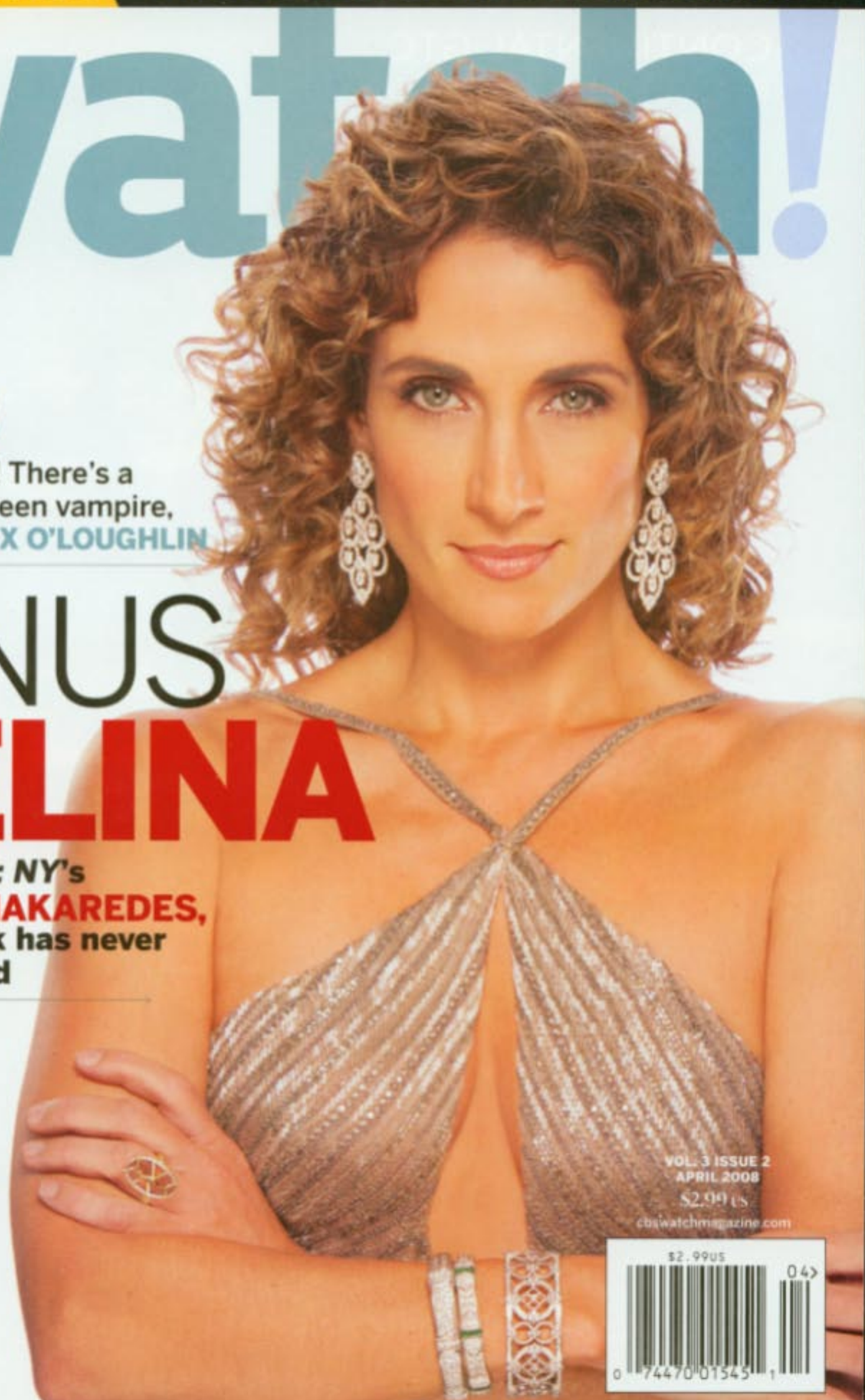
Look out, ladies! There's a HOT, new on-screen vampire, *Moonlight's* **ALEX O'LOUGHLIN**

VENUS MELINA

Thanks to *CSI: NY's* **MELINA KANAKAREDES**, detective work has never looked so good

Star Style!

From LASHES to LIPSTICK, makeup pros share their secrets



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Fade Out

A show's theme song may stand the test of time, but is this hummable tradition coming to an end?

They can tell the story of a lovely lady or of a nanny named Fran. They can be wordless tunes, so deeply ingrained in our psyches that just a few initial notes instantly remind us of *Mission: Impossible's* burning fuse or *Get Smart's* slamming doors. Or they can put us in the mood for love or breakup, for friendship or hard times. And in the process, they become hits in their own right.

"Just like a theater curtain prepares the audience for an entertainment experience, TV theme music announces and heightens expectations for the show and draws you into the mindspace you visit while watching," says composer Jonathan Wolff, whose landmark theme for *Seinfeld* featured vocal popping noises and gasps that revolutionized the field back in 1990. "A good series

theme has value. It can serve as a signature for the show, so when you hear it from another room, there's an almost Pavlovian response: "Let's watch!"

But if the theme song truly has such value, why does it seem to be disappearing?

Often, the creative decision to theme or not to theme comes down to pure economics. Because opening credits are often cut down or cut out entirely to make room for more ads when a show is sold into syndication, they can be seen as a less-than-attractive investment to studios mindful of their checkbooks. And as networks try to squeeze more time into each prime-time show for more scenes or ads, theme songs have had to surrender some of their length. Now, a song needs to make a complete statement about the show in one or two phrases.

THIS IS THE TALE OF OUR CASTAWAYS

Sherwood Schwartz, who at 91 is still active in the TV industry, created two beloved sitcom hits in *Gilligan's Island* and *The Brady Bunch*, and is thought of by many as the granddaddy of the singalong theme song. As Schwartz told the Archive of American Television, if not for the catchiness of its timeless theme, *Gilligan's* would have been lost. Schwartz had pitched the program in 1963 to CBS president James Aubrey, "who insisted that he couldn't buy the show because it would take too much explanation each week why there were these seven people stuck on this island." No problem, Schwartz assured Aubrey. "I will have a song written which is entertaining ... so you're into the story immediately."

Schwartz's resulting theme, "The Ballad of Gilligan's Isle," accomplished exactly that, reminding viewers of the predicament still being faced by the castaways it then introduced. But Aubrey was not convinced until he heard it for himself. So Schwartz convinced the boss the best way he could think of: by singing. "When I got through, all he said was, 'I think you could work on the middle lyrics.' And that meant, 'OK,'" Schwartz says.

CBS HIT THEME SONGS ON THE **Billboard** HOT 100 SINGLES CHART



Mission: Impossible

Song: "Theme from *Mission: Impossible*"

Peak Date: March 2, 1968



*M*A*S*H*

Song: "Theme from *M*A*S*H*" (aka. "Suicide Is Painless")

Peak Date: Sept. 5, 1970



All in the Family

Song: "Those Were the Days"

Peak Date: Jan. 29, 1972

SHE WAS WRITING A TV THEME SONG SET IN FLUSHING, QUEENS

Jazz singer/composer Ann Hampton Callaway first met Fran Drescher through a mutual Broadway friend and composed theme songs for several of Drescher's ultimately unaired pilots before she was approached about *The Nanny*. The assignment: to tell the story of how Queens native Fran Fine became the caretaker of a wealthy Park Avenue theater producer's progeny, all in 42 seconds. "One of the missions in writing the song was to capture the fun, jazzy, retro sound I loved growing up," Callaway says.

In interviewing her leading lady, Callaway found the nugget of inspiration she needed to craft "The Nanny Named Fran," which she also performs over the show's opening cartoon credits. "At one point in the conversation, when Fran was describing herself, she said she's 'the lady in red when everybody else is wearing tan,'" Callaway remembers. "Thank goodness I caught that, because it really shows who the character is. And I built the rest of the song around that."

The Nanny ran for six seasons on CBS and still plays multiple times daily on cable network Lifetime; the show airs in foreign markets as well, and its premise, complete with tune, has even been adapted for new local versions in countries from



Just sit right back and you'll hear a tale, a tale of a fateful trip ... The cast of *Gilligan's Island* marched to a different tune.

Mexico to Hungary. With all that exposure, Callaway's little ditty has proven to be a big, fat international hit. "People in New York tell me that they love that I put Flushing on the map," Callaway says. "And once, when I found out that Berlin has *The Nanny* several times a day, I put the song in my show that night when I played at the Philharmonie. One of the funniest things I've ever heard was all those German accents singing the English words to *The Nanny*."

THE THEME SONG CIRCLE OF LIFE

With these classics and so many more still rattling around in the American psyche, Wolff says he's optimistic that the theme song

will never truly die. Like TV in general, he says, theme music is trend-driven; so whereas the success of *Murphy Brown* in 1988 ushered in an era free of themes, in 1994 *Friends* and "I'll Be There for You" brought their popularity right back.

Callaway hopes he's right. "I think everyone is a child at heart, and TV theme songs can help you get in touch with that delighted, noncynical part that keeps you happy," she says. "We hear so much depressing stuff on the news. So when something not particularly profound comes on, it really serves a nice purpose of bringing you a tiny dose of joy."

And who wouldn't want to sing along with that? **M**



The Young and the Restless

Song: "Nadia's Theme"

Peak Date: March 2, 1968



I Love Lucy

Song: "Disco Lucy"

Peak Date: April 9, 1977



The Twilight Zone

Song: "The Twilight Zone"

Peak Date: July 5, 1980



The Dukes of Hazzard

Song: "Good Of Boys"

Peak Date: Dec. 13, 1980



Magnum, P. I.

Song: "Theme from *Magnum, P. I.*"

Peak Date: May 29, 1982