

'Lost' tries to get its mojo back



By CARRIE OSGOOD, Associated Press Writer
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NEW YORK - Flash back to last fall: With intense buzz surrounding "Lost," ABC split Season Three in two, hoping to launch new shows "The Nine" and "Day Break" and eliminate grumbling about reruns.

Cut back to the present: Not only has ABC canceled both new shows (which got good reviews but few viewers), but the resulting "Lost" mini-season deflated the island drama's momentum, leaving many fans and critics disappointed, discouraged and worried that "Lost" may have lost its way.

The formerly white-hot drama about plane crash survivors on a remote island returns Wednesday at 10 p.m. EST for 16 new uninterrupted episodes. ABC bumped it an hour later to steer clear of Fox's "American Idol" juggernaut and CBS's solid "Criminal Minds."

Part of what had made "Lost" so extraordinary was the gradual unveiling of new information that unlocked the secrets behind each character and the surreal island as a whole. But during last fall's six episodes, "Lost" hastily compressed too much into too little time.

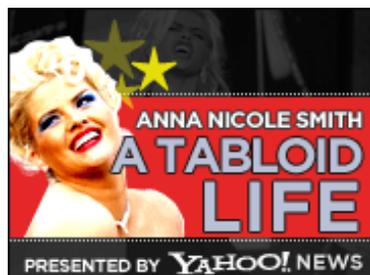
The first three episodes of the mini-season began in true "Lost" fashion. As multiple cliffhangers from the explosive Season Two finale were resolved, new questions surfaced for every question answered.

Soon, however, the eagerly anticipated unveiling of The Others' compound and the extraneous introduction of additional plane crash survivors became a bombardment of too many new faces and foreign environments.

Familiar favorites were suddenly lost in a convoluted crowd.

Also, the fates of those who did receive considerable air time were rather difficult to digest. It was disconcerting watching Jack, Kate and Sawyer, three of the show's most

AP Photo: This 2006 photo, provided by ABC, shows the primary cast of the network's dramatic series...

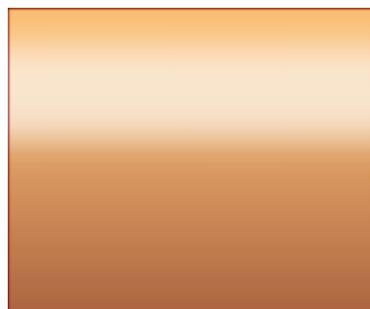


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beloved characters, suffer as powerless, manipulated lab rats in cages.

It's hard to be optimistic with the all-too-frequent reminder that favorite characters can be tortured or killed at any time. Consider the rapid demise of Mr. Eko. He was the only survivor with the strength and conviction to stare down the island monster. So it was disheartening to witness the amorphous black smoke mortally toss the powerful Nigerian around like a rag doll.

This felt especially drastic since Eko was killed almost immediately after twice cheating death — first by surviving the hatch explosion, then by escaping a carnivorous polar bear.

None of the protagonists are saints, but viewers still cheer for their imperfect heroes to succeed in overcoming obstacles. The current story lines of retribution and undue punishment merely reinforce the miseries of defeat.

Just like cast members constantly reminded of their lack of job security, "Lost" fans are now aware that they have to enjoy the ride while it lasts. Serialized television can abruptly change course — or end — at any time.

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