



TELEVISION

AMANDA
CUDA

Doctor Jack a 'Lost' soul searching for meaning

As you might recall, for the past several months, I've been analyzing the songs used on the ABC TV series "Lost," and tying them to certain characters on the show.

For instance, fickle castaway Kate has been linked to the Patsy Cline ditty "Walkin' After Midnight," while enigmatic Other Juliet is associated with the Petula Clark chestnut "Downtown."

For this series, which I've dubbed " 'Lost' in the Music," I've parsed these songs for meaning, talked about how they relate to these characters and tried to use them to solve the mystery that is "Lost."

Yet my enthusiasm for this project has waned in recent months. I mean, it's hard to get excited about the connection between pop songs and fictional characters when the whole fate of scripted television is hanging by a thread.

I'm speaking, of course, about the ongoing writers' strike. Many scripted TV shows have run out of new episodes due to the strike, and there doesn't appear to be an end in sight.

And here we are, only a week or so away from the fourth season premiere of "Lost," which will air only eight episodes this season due to — you guessed it — the writers' strike.

Sigh. It's depressing, and, given that, it's hard for me to invest much energy in analyzing the music of "Lost." That's why this series of columns, which was supposed to appear monthly, has actually been quasi-monthly. I haven't profiled all the show's characters, either.

In fact, I considered not even writing my final " 'Lost' in the Music" column, which was to focus on Jack (Matthew Fox), arguably the show's most important character. But I must. After all, I've come this far. I need to start what I've finished.

Just consider this a warning that this column might not provide a lot of profound insights.

OK, so, let's talk about Jack. Before the plane crash that stranded him and the show's other castaways on that mysterious island, Jack was a spinal surgeon in Los Angeles.

His dad, Christian, worked with him and was a serious alcoholic. After Christian operated on a patient while intoxicated, Jack turned him in to the medical board.

Jack was also married, to Sarah, a patient whose life he saved after a serious accident. Eventually she left him for another man.

Once the plane crashes, Jack sets to work providing medical attention to the survivors. This causes them to look to him as their leader.

During his time on the island, Jack has developed some complicated relationships with its female residents. He is attracted to Kate, who is torn between Jack and bad boy Sawyer. Jack also seemed to have a flirtation with caustic survivor Ana-Lucia, but she was killed, thus eliminating her as a romantic option.

Probably his most complicated relationship has been with Juliet, also a doctor in her pre-island life, now working for the Others. She fed Jack sandwiches after he was kidnapped by the Others. Initially he was skeptical of Juliet's intentions but, for reasons we haven't fully learned, he now trusts her and is very protective of her.

When the show's third season ended, we saw snippets of what we now know was Jack's life following his rescue from the island. Oddly enough, he seems unhappy. He drinks, does drugs and contemplates suicide. Plus, he's grown a beard. And, as we all know, a beard is TV shorthand

► Please see ONCE on F3



Coming of age

5 women artists' exhibition celebrates late-life creativity

By PHYLLIS A.S. BOROS
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Some boors may regard women over 40 as "over the hill." But the five women artists who soon will participate in a new exhibition in Fairfield share a different perspective: they believe that wisdom and true beauty come with age and maturity.

That's the message of "Women of a Certain Age and Beyond," which opens next Sunday at Sacred Heart University's Gallery of Contemporary Art.

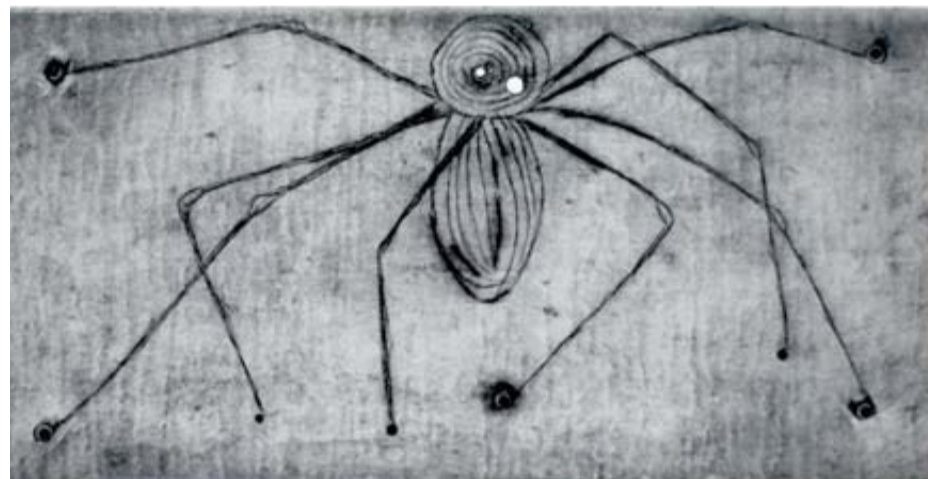
On view through Feb. 28, the exhibit — which focuses on society's view of women by women — celebrates the undiminished "late-life creativity" of the veteran artists, explains art historian and gallery director Sophia Gevas, adding that the phrase, "women of a certain age," traditionally refers to women over 40.

The five artists began their distinguished careers decades ago "when few female artists were taken seriously," Gevas points out.

Featured will be works by Ann Chernow of Westport; Manhattan artists Dotty Attie, Nancy Spero and Louise Bourgeois; and Selina Trieff, of Wellfleet, Mass., and New York City.

An artists' reception next Sunday from 1 to 3:30 p.m. will kick off the show; jazz music will be provided by the Carol Sudhalter Duo of New York.

► Please see EXHIBIT on F3



Contributed photos

"Women of a Certain Age and Beyond," featuring the works of five accomplished veteran women artists, opens next Sunday at the Gallery of Contemporary Art in Fairfield. On view will be (clockwise from top) Nancy Spero's "Marlene" (2002), Selina Trieff's "Wise Goat" (1982), Louise Bourgeois' "Ode a Ma Mère" (1995), Ann Chernow's "Bad Girls — Vendetta" (2001-02) and Trieff's "Pastorale" (2005).

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SUPER EATS

Did you know, Americans will consume about 15,000 tons of chips and 4,000 tons of popcorn on Super Bowl Sunday, Feb. 3? They will spend \$55 million and 10 million man hours preparing all the snacks and goodies. If you're planning a big bash — or small one — and plan to serve more than chips and dip, we want to hear from you. Contact food editor Eileen Fischer at efischer@ctpost.com or 330-6481 and talk about your Super Bowl menu. Deadline is Jan. 23.

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She's frustrated by faraway beau's lack of responsiveness

HI, CAROLYN: I met someone nine months ago when living in Africa and am trying to continue the relationship even though I'm in the U.S. and he's still there.

We've been apart for about six months now. The problem is that he doesn't try to contact me as much as I would like. He says it's expensive to call, but I counter that he could text or e-mail from work at least once a week.

He'll do it for a while when I put up a fuss, but then stop.

Basically, I'm frustrated that I feel I'm putting more into the relationship than he is. My friends say men aren't very communicative, and I know that he isn't. And since we are not physically together, if he doesn't make an effort to talk, I figure



CAROLYN HAX

what's the point in this relationship? Since I've brought this up with him a few times with no results, should I just give up now and tell myself he really isn't too into me, or is there something I can do to really show him how much this bothers me? — Frustrated in Maryland

You mean, shave your head, write it in blood, stage a musical number? There's a two-word, one-expletive answer to this:

"three (stinkin') months." However, you ask a question rhetorically that I'd like to see you (and many others who write in) answer: What is the point of this relationship? Will you share a location eventually? Is there a firm date for that? If not, are you actively trying to figure that out? Together? Or is this arrangement enough to satisfy you both, provided you work out the kinks? Capital-L Love may make the world go round by lending purpose, inspiration, hope and selflessness to a species rather inclined to lying around on the couch. But Love's engine is love in the lower case, the day-to-day companionship, the intimacy, sex and communal laundry-folding, the countless small rewards for countless small sacrifices.

Without it, Love loses its connection to reality, and becomes wistful memory, wishful thought or, worst case, a delusion.

People in Love can do without love for very long stretches of time. Couples do better if they're deprived of each other by forced separation — as with deployments, detentions, expired visas — than if the day-to-day closeness just dries up. But either way, the strain of doing without is notorious, and relationships often succumb to that strain even when they're built on years of shared happiness.

You knew him for *three months*, of ... probably not even Love ... let's say three months of warm feelings, and you've asked it to carry you through double that time. That he's been in touch at all means he probably does care. But it's hard to ask

anyone to value your companionship *without your companionship*, not indefinitely, not unless you have either a concrete commitment, or substantial history, or genuine promise thereof.

Which teases out my next question for you: not whether he's into you, but why are you into him? I think people drag around these phantom relationships because they remain attached to the idea, long after the person is gone.

But ideas won't ask how your day went, or, apparently, send even one weekly e-mail from work.

E-mail Carolyn Hax at telme@washpost.com or chat online with her Fridays at noon at www.washingtonpost.com.



Contributed photo

Bryan Cranston plays a middle-aged chemistry teacher who is dying of cancer and turns to making crystal meth to raise some extra cash in the new AMC series "Breaking Bad," which premieres tonight.

Exhibit celebrates 5 women artists' creativity later in life

Continued from F1

A panel discussion with Attie, Chernow and Trieff will immediately follow the reception, moderated by Gevas.

Both events are open to the public free of charge. The exhibit, Gevas explains, offers "a small sample of distinctive women's voices in figurative contemporary art" and explores the use of the female form to represent "a mother, a goddess, a seductress, an angel or an everywoman."

Gevas points out that each artist has a different focus; Chernow explores the "wanton women" of Hollywood's *film noir* period of the 1940s-50s, while Attie focuses on middle-class women, Bourgeois on female spiders, Spero on goddess-like figures and Trieff on "mysterious, tender" creatures.

"These artists have been creating visual imagery that has become a central feature of their identity. Each woman has a distinct voice that is clearly recognizable and has developed her vocabulary over a long period of time, despite the changing trends of the art market or art movements," Gevas writes in the exhibit brochure.

In a recent chat with Chernow, the artist said that she has been fascinated by female movie stars of the golden age since childhood.

"I grew up rather poor in a small New York City apartment, with one bathroom for the family ... and a bedroom that I shared with my two sisters," Chernow, 71, recalled.

"I'd escape to the beautiful movie palaces in our neighborhood that had air conditioning, wonderful bathrooms with gold fixtures and beautiful lounges. And I was hooked on mostly women's movies, what they called 'weepies.'"

Years later, Chernow would explore this interest in the movies in her art as a way to examine "the dark side" of human nature, "the side we're taught not to let come out," she said, laughing.

On view will be works from her "bad girls" series, which were inspired by the sensationalism of the tabloids of the time.

"Every woman has the potential to identify with, or become, the [revenge-seeking] woman in 'Vendetta' (2001-2002) or 'Strangled Witness' (2001-2002)," Gevas writes of Chernow's etching, aquatint and photogravure works.

Dotty Attie will be represented with examples from her "Skin Deep" (2007) oil-on-linen series that combines text with images taken from book illustrations, magazines and photographs.

The series begins with a message: "Sometimes a traveler in foreign lands where customs and mores are unfamiliar will find to his surprise that in certain places and in certain times persistence and perusal mean consent."

"Skin Deep," Gevas explains, explores the "varied

and torturous things women will submit to and endure in the name of attractiveness: perms, exercise, pedicures and manicures, donning makeup and struggling into girdles."

On display from Louise Bourgeois — renowned internationally for her massive spider sculptures — is a 1995 suite of nine small dry-point etchings that depict spiders and their webs that was meant as an ode to her mother.

Bourgeois has always maintained that spiders are to be revered for their protective nature: weaving webs, providing for their young, entrapping enemies and gathering food.

Nancy Spero borrows figures from ancient cultures — such as the Egyptian Sky Goddess, erotic Greek vase paintings and fertility figures — and contemporary sources, Gevas explains.

"As an artist concerned with politics and social change, she has concentrated on the depiction of women, in varied states of joy or pain," Gevas writes.

In the collage on paper, "Marlene" (2002), for example, "Spero has appropriated an image of Marlene Dietrich, known the world over as a movie star and cabaret singer.

"Although only 21 inches high, the work is six glorious feet across, depicting

approximately 25 collaged and printed repetitions of the actress — in different colors, or slightly off register, some printed lighter than others. The repetition stresses the implicit motion of the figure. Dietrich is depicted here in the Weimar days, slightly heavier, dressed in male attire, striding full of confidence," according to Gevas.

Selina Trieff's "paintings of groups of simplified figures, in twos or threes, often depicted in a kind of dancer's leotard or costume, are carefully observed for those few details that describe exactly their most salient characteristics.

"They are uniquely her own invented figures, with firmly outlined bodies that stand in balletic poses yet appear other-worldly. Although androgynous, they seem to interact as women, with facial features that resemble Trieff's," the gallery director writes.

"The figures inhabit an abstract, mysterious world ... Whispering to one another, or standing close, they are introspective and live in a solemn, quiet place," Gevas points out.

Of the five featured artists, Gevas adds: "Their dedication to their work has been the pivotal theme of their lives."

The Gallery of Contemporary Art is at Sacred Heart University's main campus at 5151 Park Avenue in Fairfield (off exit 47 of the Merritt Parkway). Gallery hours are Monday through Thursday from noon to 5 p.m. and Sundays from noon to 4 p.m. The gallery will be closed Feb. 17-18 in observance of Presidents Day weekend. Admission is free. For more information, call 365-7650 or visit <http://artgallery.sacredheart.edu>.

'BAD' ACTUALLY VERY GOOD

Troubled, likable character drives new series

By AMANDA CUDA
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If you're a middle-aged man with an unfulfilling career, a family to support and a diagnosis of terminal cancer, what are you supposed to do?

In the twisted world of Vince Gilligan, you start making crystal meth in a recreational vehicle in the desert. Gilligan is the creator of the darkly hilarious drama "Breaking Bad," which premieres at 10 p.m. today on AMC.

The series features Bryan Cranston (who played the goofy dad on "Malcolm in the Middle") as Walter White, a chemistry teacher whose life takes a turn after he's diagnosed with lung cancer and told that he has, at most, a year or two to live. To raise some extra funds for his pregnant wife and teen son, Walter becomes a crystal meth dealer, joining forces with a former student (played by Aaron Paul).

"Basically, we take Mr. Chips and we turn him into Scarface," said Gilligan, previously best known as a writer and executive producer for the iconic sci-fi series "The X-Files."

During a recent conference call, Gilligan, Cranston and others associated with the show discussed the series, the elements of good drama and the pitfalls of centering your show around a character who only has a short time left to live.

Gilligan said he first came up with the concept for "Breaking Bad" during a phone conversation with a friend about what they would do if, one day, work dried up and they had to find an alternative way to make a living. When Gilligan joked that he would end up cooking crystal meth, lightning struck. "This guy kind of popped into my head," he said.

"This guy" was Walter, a troubled, yet likable, man who did the right thing all his life and, one day, opts to go completely in the other direction. The character is a clear departure for Cranston, best known for the manic comedy of "Malcolm" and other sitcoms, such as "Seinfeld" (he played randy dentist Tim Whatley).

But that's exactly what drew Cranston to the part. "I wasn't interested in doing any series necessarily unless it really knocked me out," he said. "It's all about the writing." With "Breaking Bad," the actor said "I got into the story and it took me away. I related to [Walter]. I understood him. There's a tremendous amount of regret there."

Gilligan agreed that Walter's pain is part of what

makes the character interesting. "The essence of good drama isn't happy people having their dreams come true," he said.

Of course, good drama doesn't always translate into huge enthusiasm from networks, and Gilligan said it wasn't easy getting the show on the air. Once he started pitching "Breaking Bad," Gilligan said, he ran into a number of obstacles.

One was the show's title, a Southern phrase that means "to raise hell." A native of Richmond, Va., the expression is something Gilligan grew up with, but he quickly realized that not everyone was familiar with it. "So many folks haven't heard of it and don't know what 'breaking bad' means," Gilligan said.

An even bigger problem was the series' close resemblance to another show in development at the time — "Weeds." That series, now a hit on Showtime, centers on a suburban marijuana dealer.

Gilligan wasn't aware of "Weeds" when he began pitching his show, and was a bit taken aback when executives brought the other show up.

Eventually, though, "Breaking Bad" was picked up by AMC, a cable network that's recently reinvented itself as a home for interesting original programming. Its freshman series "Mad Men" recently won a Golden Globe for best dramatic series. AMC Executive Vice President and General Manager Charlie Collier, also on the conference call, said "Breaking Bad" fit in well with the network's new direction.

"We're truly looking for great stories well told that will make the most cinematic television," Collier said.

"Breaking Bad" fit the bill. And, in the end, Gilligan said, its similarities to "Weeds" weren't a huge problem. After all, he said, a crystal meth dealer is far less sympathetic than a pot dealer, which ups the level of drama.

"I think ['Weeds' is] very different from our show, thank goodness," Gilligan said.

However, his problems weren't over once "Breaking Bad" got picked up. Gilligan said the show's very concept presents a huge obstacle: how do you develop a show around a character who is going to die?

"Yeah, we've sort of painted ourselves into a corner," Gilligan admitted, laughing.

But Cranston is confident that the show can still work. "M.A.S.H." was able to stretch the Korean War out to 10 years," he pointed out.

"Breaking Bad" debuts at 10 p.m. today on AMC.

to the island. Why? Well, we don't know.

But what we do know is that Jack listens to the Nirvana song "Scentless Apprentice" on his way to the funeral.

Looking at the lyrics to "Scentless Apprentice," I'm guessing that the song was used on "Lost" because it's just as odd and indecipherable as the show itself. Take a gander at these lyrics:

"Like most babies smell like butter/his smell smelled like no other/ he was born scentless and senseless/ he was born a scentless apprentice."

I'll be honest. I have no idea what that means. Actually, I wasn't aware that most babies smell like butter. Do they? I've never noticed.

Anyway, the song does seem fitting for Jack or, at least, the haunted shell of a man that he's become. It juxtaposes the image of a new baby with those of death, alluded to in the song's final verse: "I lie in the soil and fertilize mushrooms/leaking out gas fumes are made into perfume/you can't fire me because I quit!/throw me in the fire and I won't throw a fit."

Of those lines, the lyric "You can't fire me because I quit" jumps out. Could this be a reference to suicide? Possibly. Clearly the song's narrator is tormented by something, and Jack is nothing if not tormented.

Even before he grows the breakdown beard, Jack is a tortured soul with a compulsive need to rescue everyone. Why is he like that? Where did he develop his savior complex?

I don't know, and the song provides few answers. But it does offer a nice musical accompaniment to Jack's anguish.

But will we learn more about what caused Jack's pain? What about the other characters? Will we gain insight into them in the coming season?

Possibly. However, I still haven't gotten over the impact the writers' strike had on this and other shows.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I have some moping to do.

Staff writer Amanda Cuda can be reached at acuda@ctpost.com. Visit her blog at forum.connpost.com/turnedon.

Once again trying to get insight into 'Lost's Jack, and bemoaning writers' strike

Continued from F1

for "nervous breakdown."

Jack's suicide attempt is brought on after he sees an article in the paper. In typical "Lost" fashion, we don't know what that article is about, but we assume it's linked to a funeral Jack attends later in the episode.

Throughout the episode we see Jack making frantic phone calls to someone, and we eventually learn that it's Kate, who has also made it off the island. Suddenly, Jack adamantly insists that they have to go back