

'24'

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conflicts. Bauer may lose some loved ones — and a lot of sleep — but in the end, he always saves the country.

"It gave us a sense that the United States can, and is, doing something to fight terrorism," said Sharp. "It gave us a hero."

Wish fulfillment is also a big component of Fox's new action series "Human Target," but with comic overtones. Christopher Chance, played by the unflappable Mark Valley, confronts terrorists with a gun in one pocket and a smirk in the other. In James Bond terms, he's Roger Moore to Sutherland's Daniel Craig.

"I think it would be pretty crazy to say, 'Woo, terrorism! Let's make a TV show!'" said Chi McBride, who plays Chance's beleaguered handler. "We don't try to juxtapose what we're doing on film with what's happening in the world. That's stuff's for real. This is just entertainment, escapist entertainment."

JJ Abrams, who co-created "Lost" and "Alias," is also planning to take a lighter approach with his next series.

"Undercovers," being planned for NBC's fall season, will look at a husband-and-wife spy team balancing international espionage with household chores. Abrams described it as "more escapist than heavy, intricate drama."

"The idea of grappling with anything that feels like real terrorism is not something I want to watch at the moment," he said.

The 9 million who still watch "24" may feel differently. But producers are providing some hope for another Jack Bauer adventure. A feature film is in the works, and it could be even more dramatic and dire than the TV series.

"We were certainly concerned about the conventional wisdom in that first season — that after 9-11, people wanted to laugh or have blue-sky dramas," said the series' executive producer, Howard Gordon. "The audience wound up being the arbiter on that. I guess they will continue to be."

FRIDAY PRIMETIME/LATE NIGHT MAY 28, 2010. Table with columns for time slots (3:00-1:30) and rows for Broadcast Stations, Pay Channels, and Cable Stations. Includes program titles like 'The Tonight Show', 'Jeopardy!', 'The Simpsons', etc.

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