

A nutty return

'Jericho' star is glad that viewers helped bring the show back to TV.

By Rick Bentley The Fresno Bee

LOS ANGELES — Call Brad Beyer an optimist. Back in May, he was convinced that CBS was going to renew his series "Jericho."

On the drama, Beyer plays a good-natured farmer who is one of the many citizens of the small town of Jericho, Kan., who face a new world when a nuclear attack on American soil leaves the community isolated.

The problem was the actor didn't factor in the huge midseason ratings dip the show had taken when CBS executives moved the series to a different time and day.

Viewers were left with more questions about the show than a Senate subcommittee hearing. A campaign by those fans has given the show new life.

"It took me about a week for it to sink in that we had been canceled," Beyer says at a CBS party in July.

"Just as it was sinking in, I began to hear about this buzz on the Internet."

That buzz was the campaign to save the show. Picking up on a reference in what was going to be the series finale, fans began to bombard CBS executives with 20 tons of peanuts, which were mentioned in the last line of the finale.

Beyer calls the effort by the fans "incredible."

So the 34-year-old Waukesha,

Show info

'Jericho': 10 p.m. today on KGPE, Channel 47

On the Web

Go to fblinks.com/fd1 to hear Brad Beyer talk about the cancellation and renewal of "Jericho."

Wis., native returned to work. He has been a working actor for years, but mostly in an episode or two of such shows as "CSI: Miami," "Hack" and "Third Watch."

"Jericho" brought with it a host of questions for Beyer because it deals with such a near-apocalyptic situation.

He admits that he thought about how he would react if such a scenario actually occurred. Beyer just hopes that he would do what all of the citizens of Jericho have done: They have just done the best they could.

The characters have dealt with that situation through emotional meltdowns, physical conflicts and loads of fear of the unknown.

"One of the things I love most about this show is the character I get to play," Beyer says.

"He is very multidimensional. And you don't always get those kind of roles in television."

There have been no guarantees made as to whether these seven episodes will be all for the series. That means Beyer and the rest of the cast are counting on those loyal peanut-mailing fans one more time.

"I am just hoping when we do come back that all the fans who mounted the campaign and did everything to get us back on will watch," Beyer says.

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Absinthe: Drink's alcohol content is high

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absinthe kits and spoons and special sugars to use."

Marcel Numis, Fresno playwright and founder of the Rogue Festival, first tried absinthe six years ago.

"The theater of the whole thing is attractive," he says. "When you have to burn something, it just looks illegal."

For nearly a century, it was. According to Robert C. Lehrman, the attorney who represented Swiss absinthe manufacturer Kùbler in its effort to reverse the ban, the drink made a convenient scapegoat early in the 20th century, both in Europe and the United States.

"Lots of people were drinking lots of absinthe," he says. "It was also a time of economic troubles. You had people lying in the street, drunk. They may have been plain alcoholics, or unemployed, or this and that. But absinthe got scapegoated because it was so hugely popular."

When a Swiss man killed his pregnant wife and two children in 1905 after drinking absinthe — and Creme de Menthe, cognac and soda, more than six glasses of wine and a cup of coffee with a bit of brandy, as it turned out — absinthe took the fall. The Swiss soon banned it, with other countries following suit the next few years. The United States outlawed it in 1912.

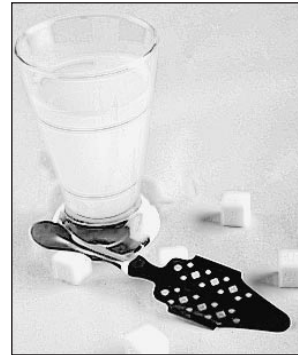
The ban happened almost effortlessly. But if absinthe doesn't make the heart go plunder, what made it such an easy target?

Lehrman says French winemakers were struggling to control many diseases afflicting their grapes. To compete with absinthe, they waged a disinformation campaign.

"You can see a lot of posters from the era where the grape growers are saying on their propaganda, 'Wine and milk are good for you, absinthe is the devil's brew,'" he says.

The hysteria surrounding absinthe often involved one of its ingredients, wormwood, which contains thujone. For many years, thujone was considered a hallucinogenic. Recent scientific tests indicate that it's not. Wormwood itself was never illegal and can be purchased at many health food stores.

Mike Newton of Fresno has added a



A special spoon and glass are used to make a cocktail with Lucid.

DARRELL WONG/THE FRESNO BEE

touch of wormwood extract to Pernod for years in an effort to create his own absinthe.

"For many years, Pernod was what was left of absinthe," he says. "The ban originally wasn't based on anything close to reason and science."

Lehrman concurs: "It's pretty much just alcohol. That is the predominant thing that would affect your behavior: You don't get too much more of an effect beyond what's in vodka."

Nevertheless, the ban stood for nearly a century. Absinthe persevered, available mostly in Czechoslovakia and Spain. The years deepened its mystery, a secretive forbidden fruit, until the Internet came along.

Connecting cultishly small but devoted audiences to one another is one of the things the Internet does best. Lehrman says absinthe benefited tremendously. Online communities gathered (www.wormwoodsociety.org is a particularly good example), and absinthe became available on the black market throughout Europe and North America.

"Absinthe was coming in large quantities," he says. "There was a thriving trade, even two years ago, right before the change in U.S. policy."

So the federal agencies lifted the ban. But such was absinthe's notoriety that one of the requirements to sell it in this country is that the brand name must be printed larger on the bottle than the word "absinthe."

"They're sort of testing the waters," Lehrman says. "Will people be alarmed about this? Will people criticize them?"

Absinthe is available at a few liquor stores in the Valley. Lucid, Kùbler and St. George's (an Alameda distillery)

absinthes all have been approved for sale in this country.

But few, if any, of Fresno's popular bars have begun serving it. Partly, that's because the liquor is expensive (more than \$60 for a 750-milliliter bottle). It's also because serving absinthe is time-consuming.

Tim Stookey, bar manager at the Presidio Social Club in San Francisco, says few places have yet to embrace it, even in his city.

"It's going to take a bit of consumer education before you see it emerging as something that's in high demand," he says. "The absinthe drip requires a certain amount of equipment. We got the absinthe before we got a lot of the equipment."

Instructions for a traditional serving of absinthe begin with an ounce or so of the aperitif poured into a parfait glass.

A special spoon — Stookey described it as a trowel with holes in it — is placed across the top of the glass, and a sugar cube set on that. Then chilled water is poured slowly over the sugar, letting it drip into the alcohol.

That creates a cloud, or louche, in the glass. Absinthes are judged on their louches, which should be neither too thin nor opaque. Between 5 and 7 ounces of water is typically poured into the glass before it's drunk.

The alcohol content in absinthe is very high — 60% or more. So it's not consumed straight. As a writer for Mixologist: The Journal of the American Cocktail put it, "Both the alcohol and the anise oils are too strong and will immediately disable your palate."

Stookey compares the taste to the scents one experiences on a nature hike, "the same kind of smell you'd get if you went through a snowfield in the Sierras, that real sagey, bright sort of smell."

He's as interested in adding absinthe to old-fashioned cocktails as he is in drinking it by itself.

"It's a nice ingredient," he says. "You add a sweetness and a bitterness and a vegetal note. A little dab will do you."

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Table with columns for time slots (5:00-11:30) and various TV shows/programs.

BEST BETS

'Nova,' 8 p.m. Ch. 18: Star wars, indeed. The new episode 'AstroSpies' tells the fascinating story of another space race that was unfolding behind closed doors while we watched the Apollo astronauts conquer the moon.

'NCIS,' 8 p.m. Ch. 47: The NCIS team is called in to stop a Navy lieutenant from jumping to his death, but just when it looks as if he'll change his mind, he's shot. Gibbs (Mark Harmon) and his team learn that the dead man had been trying to expose a mole, and they guess that if they can find the mole, they'll have their killer. But there are several possible suspects, including the dead man's doctor and estranged wife, in 'Leap of Faith.'

TALK SHOWS

Today, 7 a.m., 24: The Georgia Aquarium; actresses Natalie Portman and Scarlett Johansson ('The Other Boleyn Girl'); Ferras performs; Lou Manfredini discusses do-it-yourself flooring makeovers; the Scoito family cooks; retirement scams.

tell how they turned tragedy into triumph. Dr. Phil, 3 p.m., 24: The doctor puts engaged couples to the test to find out if they are ready to get married. Rachael Ray, 3 p.m., 30: Actress Mary-Louise Parker ('Weeds') reveals her best beauty secrets; a liquid face-lift; a flavortful dish.

The Early Show, 7 a.m., 47: A tour of the 'Big Brother: Till Death Do You Part' house.

The Ellen DeGeneres Show, 3 p.m., 47: Supermodel Elle Macpherson; Keyshia Cole performs.

Live With Regis and Kelly, 9 a.m., 30: Actor Samuel L. Jackson ('Jumper'); Maroon 5 performs; announcement of the five finalists in the beautiful baby contest.

Mauri, 4 p.m., 53: Singers compete for a chance to record a song at one of the best studios in New York.

The View, 10 a.m., 30: Actress Sarah Michelle Gellar; actor Charles S. Dutton 'Racing for Time'.

Tyra speaks with women from the TV shows 'The Bad Girls Club' and 'Wife Swap.'

IN BRIEF

No lie: The Fox network has ordered an additional 13 episodes of 'The Moment of Truth.' Hosted by Mark L. Walberg, the game show airs at 9 p.m. Wednesdays after 'American Idol.' It will move to its regularly scheduled time period of 8 p.m. Wednesdays on March 5.

The Moment of Truth gives participants a lie-detector test to reveal whether they are telling the truth for a chance to win half a million dollars. Players try to answer 21 increasingly personal questions honestly, as determined by a polygraph, to win.

Host named: Idris Elba, of HBO's 'The Wire,' has agreed to serve as the host of 'AfroPop: The Ultimate Cultural Exchange Program,' scheduled for broadcast on public television in June.

AfroPop is a new series featuring six one-hour documentaries that celebrate Africa's cultural and historical growth over the past generation.

Park it: The DIY Network's fifth annual 'Great Garage Giveaway'

presents viewers with a chance to win \$50,000 in cash to build a dream garage and a new 2008 GMC Sierra Denali to park inside. In addition, viewers can get some great ideas for their garage from the 'Wasted Spaces' Marathon airing on the cable channel 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Feb. 23.

Starting Monday, entries can be made at diynetwork.com. The giveaway runs through 2 p.m. March 17. The winner will be announced at the end of March.

I do: DeAnna Pappas, 26, suffered through a last-minute rejection by Brad Womack on the last season of 'The Bachelor.' Now, Pappas gets to choose from among 25 bachelors in her own bid for true love when 'The Bachelorette' returns to the ABC lineup this summer. This is the fourth edition of the female version of ABC's popular romance reality series.

