
Subject: "Shatterday" to be first new TWILIGHT ZONE story

Posted by [psc](#) on Mon, 23 Sep 1985 14:03:19 GMT

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On Friday, the 27th of September, 1985, CBS's "new" series THE TWILIGHT ZONE premiers with two half-hour stories. The first is "Shatterday", which is presumably an adaptation of Harlan Ellison's terrific short story. Knowing HE's reputation, he probably wrote the teleplay (he of the three Writer's Guide awards for best teleplay of the year).

Yeah, yeah, yeah, I was the one who told you to keep an eye out for the PBS adaptation of "Overdrawn at the Memory Bank", and look what a turkey that turned out to be. But I have faith that Ellison will fight the good fight for freedom, justice, the Mutant way, and good Story on the glass teat.

--

-Paul S. R. Chisholm The above opinions are my own,
{pegasus,vax135}!lzwi!psc not necessarily those of any
{mtgzz,ihnp4}!lzvn!psc telecommunications company.
(*sigh* ihnp4!lzwi!psc does *NOT* work!!! Use above paths.)

"Of *course* it's the murder weapon. Who would frame someone with a fake?"

Subject: Re: "Shatterday" to be first new TWILIGHT ZONE story

Posted by [karn](#) on Sun, 29 Sep 1985 06:33:10 GMT

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Article-I.D.: petrus.610

Posted: Sun Sep 29 02:33:10 1985

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References:

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Organization: Bell Communications Research, Inc

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As a fan of the original Twilight Zone, I guess I expected to be vaguely disappointed by the season premiere of the (new) Twilight Zone.

It did not take long in either episode to recognize the original episodes from which the two new ones were drawn. The first half, "Shatterday", plagiarizes its theme from "Nervous Man in a Four-Dollar Room", a far better show. The original character, Jackie Rhoades, is a small-time hoodlum holed up in a cheap flophouse waiting for orders from his boss. When his boss does call, he is ordered to murder a tavern owner who has refused to pay protection money. For most of the one-man show, Jackie goes through a breakdown, arguing with his alter-ego in mirrors -- a reflection of himself as he'd be if he had been able to take control of his own life. At the end, Jackie and his mirror image are finally able to trade places. Joe Mantell did an excellent job playing Jackie, unlike the character of Peter Jay Novins in "Shatterday". Bruce Willis plays the two halves of this character so unsympathetically that instead of wishing for the "good half" to replace the "bad half", you're almost hoping that they'll just kill each other and get it over with. The inevitable ending was obvious long before it happened and was totally devoid of the ironic surprise twist that made the original Twilight Zone episodes so satisfying.

The second story, about a housewife who unearths a sundial pendant which enables her to freeze the world (and give her peace and quiet) whenever she says "shut up!" is stolen even more directly from "A Kind of a Stopwatch".

The original Twilight Zone seldom had an unhappy ending unless the main character strongly deserved some poetic justice. In the original story, Patrick McNulty is locked into a frozen world because of his greed. He uses his ability to stop time in order to rob a bank, and in doing so accidentally breaks the stopwatch that he needs to start the world going again. The housewife in "A Little Peace and Quiet" does little to deserve her fate, trapped in world she freezes the moment before a Soviet ICBM lands on her town. It seems a bit much to hold her responsible for Armageddon because she declined to watch a debate on arms control. On the other hand, perhaps she's now supposed to find a fighter airplane, learn to fly it, and go up to destroy the missile that's frozen in midair over her town? We aren't even given a hint. (Technical flaw: it seems unlikely that the Russians have launching points so close to their US targets that their missile boosters wouldn't even have a chance to finish burning, much less stage and deploy their warheads before they land on their targets. But I suppose it's all artistic license.)

I suppose the new Twilight Zone is better than 95% of the shows on TV these days, but judging from the opening episode it will be no competition for reruns of the Rod Serling originals.

Phil Karn

Subject: Re: "Shatterday" to be first new TWILIGHT ZONE story
Posted by [Wmartin\[1\]\[2\]\[3\]\[4]](#) on Tue, 01 Oct 1985 19:32:53 GMT
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Posted: Tue Oct 1 15:32:53 1985
Date-Received: Thu, 3-Oct-85 06:29:01 EDT
References:
Reply-To: wmartin@brl-bmd.UUCP
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Well, I guess I'll throw in a few comments on the first Twilight Zone, also... One interesting point I noticed -- Harlan Ellison is listed in the ending credits as a "technical advisor" or some such job title, yet he did NOT do the teleplay for his story "Shatterday" (anybody know why?).

(By the way, the character in "Shatterday" is certainly an idiot! I'd be delighted to be duplicated -- I could go to work only half the time, letting my alter ego go every other day; I could get a lot of stuff done that requires an extra helper that my wife can't or won't do; I could be in two places at once, practically! Also, I bet two *really identical* persons would be able to communicate telepathically, so I could actually experience all this stuff my alter ego does... anyway...)

As for "A Little Peace and Quiet", the all the supporting characters were such wretches that one welcomed the pending nuclear attack as a way of exterminating them. The main technical failure here, though, was an old one, for which there is no excuse after all the publicity, news programs, etc., on nuclear war -- they showed the Soviet missile coming down in full take-off configuration instead of just a warhead, the way it would really be. That is, they showed a multi-stage missile, fins and all, with exhaust flames coming out of the end, heading down toward the target, when they should have showed an ablative warhead with a shock wave around it. Very annoying, and such technical blunders spoil shows for anyone who knows enough to be interested in the first place.

Will

Subject: Re: "Shatterday" to be first new TWILIGHT ZONE story

Posted by [sas](#) on Wed, 02 Oct 1985 20:15:58 GMT

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Article-I.D.: leadsv.635

Posted: Wed Oct 2 16:15:58 1985

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References:

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Organization: LMSC-LEADS, Sunnyvale, Ca.

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Xref: linus net.sf-lovers:9279 net.tv:3099

In article , karn@petrus.UUCP (Phil R. Karn) writes:

> As a fan of the original Twilight Zone, I guess I expected to be vaguely
> disappointed by the season premiere of the (new) Twilight Zone.

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> It did not take long in either episode to recognize the original episodes
> from which the two new ones were drawn. The first half, "Shatterday",
> plagiarizes its theme from "Nervous Man in a Four-Dollar Room", a far better
> show. ...

I thought I read somewhere, perhaps in net.sf-lovers, that "Shatterday" was based on a Harlan Ellison story, and that he wrote the screenplay. To say that the episode was drawn from an original one is being a little unfair to the author, unless he stole his idea straight from the earlier episode. To me, the stories weren't really the same. In "Nervous Man in a Four-Dollar Room", the main character in the end is redeemed and becomes a better person. In "Shatterday", I don't really feel that the Peter Novins that is left at the end is a great deal better than the original, just different and possessing some good traits. He still seemed to be somewhat unlikable.

I too recognized the the second episode immediatley. I did not expect the ending though. Instead of having someone trapped themselves permantly in suspended time by destroying the device, the person has to remain by choice, even though the choice to get out of suspended time is not a choice. She has to live her life in the agony of solitude while knkowing that she can get out of solitude, but only briefly, before the world is destroyed. Sure she doesn't deserve her fate, but then do any of us deserve our current fate if the bombs to go off. I agree that there was no ironic twist, as in Serling's stories, but at least they tried something new.

Scott A. Stewart
LMSC - Sunnyvale