

Falcone delivers a gritty, gritty tale of divided loyalties

If you're a network developing a TV series, you usually invest millions of dollars into the project. If the show turns out great, well, you're laughing. If it doesn't go quite the way you planned, you do one of two things. You either: (a) axe the show completely, or (b) try to recoup at least some of your investment by burning off the episodes just as fast as you can.

CBS did that last month with the return of *Twitch City*. And now, CBS is doing it with a new series called *Falcone*.

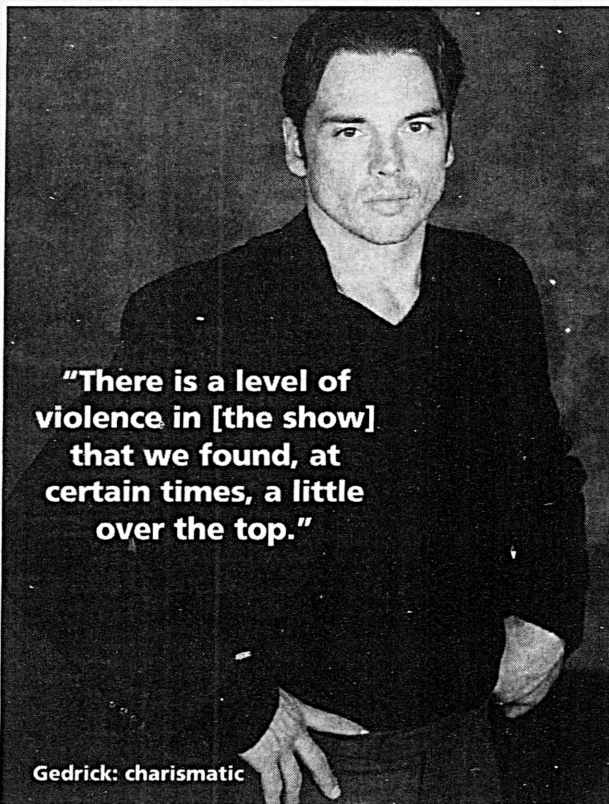
Inspired by the theatrical movie *Donnie Brasco*, *Falcone* is based on the true story of FBI undercover agent **Joe Pistone**, who led a dangerous double life as an ambitious mobster named Joe Falcone.

The success of a hit pay-TV series called *The Sopranos* (seen on HBO in the U.S. and on The Movie Network in eastern Canada) prompted CBS to jump on *Falcone*. The series was originally meant to premiere last fall, but its violence stirred up a lot of controversy among media watchdogs. It also made CBS president **Les Moonves** uncomfortable.

"We screened the pilot about a week after Littleton, Colorado," Moonves explained back in July, referring to the high-school shootings which had taken place last year. "There is a level of violence in [the show] that we found, at certain times, a little over the top."

However, CBS was undoubtedly eager to get something out of its huge investment, and to showcase what it basically still believed was a strong drama.

The solution? The big burnoff: CBS is now airing all nine



episodes of the series over eight nights, beginning on Tuesday.

Falcone is a moody, violent show. However, along with the grit, the series offers compelling drama, too, as it explores the conflicting loyalties that tear away at the main character.

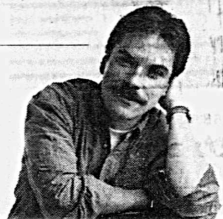
Jason Gedrick – perhaps best remembered this season as **Calista Flockhart's** car-wash lover on *Ally McBeal* – delivers a charismatic turn in the main role. **Titus Welliver** also handles himself well as a mob underling named **Sonny Napoli**. Watch for **Eric Roberts** and **Patti LuPone** to put in a pair of good

recurring appearances, too.

Although he acknowledged *Falcone's* violence, Moonves said it was tough to elude that element, given the subject matter. "The show is what it is," Moonves stressed. "It is about a cop who goes underground in the Mafia. We're not going to be able to avoid the issue."

In the end, maybe the quick burnoff will make *Falcone* all the more memorable.

FALCONE
Beginning Tuesday;
CBS, ONtv, WIC



ERIC KOHANIK

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

Some notable entries as you do your channel-surfing this week:

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■ **Go, Granny, go:** Into the bubbling realm of cooking shows, there lurks a new menu item: *Loving Spoonfuls* (premiering Monday; WTN) is a clever and irreverent entree that finds host



David Gale hanging out with some of the best cooks in the world – grandmothers. The 13-part series gets

Gale, Hauer rolling this week with guest **Barbara Hauer**, who claims to make the best German dumplings in the country. She does a mean little polka in the kitchen, too.

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■ **Tough opponents:** *On the Ropes* (Tuesday; TLC) paints an intriguing portrait of three young boxers and their struggles inside and outside the ring. "Their stories were very inspiring," producer **Nanette Burstein** told reporters in Los Angeles. "It was amazing to me that there were



Walton

these dramatic, compelling narratives that were happening that were about the underdog really trying to achieve. I wanted to capture that."

The most promising in the trio: **George Walton**, a 26-year-old pugilist with 6-0 record as a pro.

OTHER FINE TUNING

■ **Complex couple:** *Biography* serves up a special, two-hour edition called *Charles & Anne Lindbergh: Alone Together* (Sunday; A&E). It's a fascinating chronicle of one of the most revered – and reviled – couples in U.S. history.

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