

JADESPACE

everybody wonders if they have something to say

March 15, 2013

SMASHED

Was it just six years ago the modern day Nancy Drew left us? She walked off into the rain, having just voted for her father in his doomed campaign for sheriff of Neptune, California, never to be seen again, except for eight minutes of trailer. I remember it well, not for the bittersweet ending, but for the keening wail that immediately followed in the Jade house. My wife was bereft. In a televised landscape so lacking in female protagonists, *Veronica Mars*, the best and toughest since Buffy Summers, was gone forever, or so we thought.

Other than that pitch for a fourth season or movie featuring Veronica as an FBI agent, every potential road to her return became a dead end. Finding a venue for *Veronica Mars* had become a mystery not even Veronica Mars could solve. The case was ultimately closed, cue the music, fade to black, and that's when any mystery fan will tell you it's not over.

Almost every cancelled show elicits an online petition to save it, and almost every attempt fails. In 2007, fans of *Veronica Mars* sent a message with candy, thousands of Mars bars and other confections delivered to the CW network in protest. Not as meaningless as an online petition, but close, as it takes a lot more than \$2,500 of candy to make something happen. It takes \$3,814,779 and counting. That's how much *The Veronica Mars Movie Project* raised less than a month after it started, ensuring a proper finale to an unfinished story, but how about finishing the song?

Smash is a musical-drama about the production of a Broadway show that's clever, funny, filled with song—including original music—and dance. It is as entertaining as *Glee* was during its first thirteen episode story arc, before it became simultaneously thematically diffuse and a fingernails-on-chalkboard series of social statements. Nonetheless, *Glee* is in its fourth season, fifth guaranteed, while *Smash* in its second season has moved to Saturday night, the hospice of television viewing where shows go to live out their contracted episodes and die. How can this be?

Looking at the top ten shows this year, five are about people singing and dancing in competition. How is it shows like *American Idol* and *Dancing with the Stars* can be so popular, and *Smash* not? One explanation could be people watching those reality shows project themselves into the roles of the competitors. At the very least one would think that kind of sad delusion would engender similar feelings for a fictional story about singers and dancers struggling to make it big, but apparently it does not.

That's why I heard again that lament for a better thing ended before its time when I told my wife *Smash* was effectively canceled. The last episode of the season will reportedly be written as a series finale. I suppose there could be a crowd-sourced reprieve, but it seems unlikely. If only people were so indifferent to the many cloned competition shows. Reality always seems to beat fantasy, even when the former seems so paltry in comparison.