'Idol' and Football Dominate Top 10

Rash Report: Even '24,' 'Golden Globes' Fall Behind

By John Rash

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MINNEAPOLIS (AdAge.com) -- It was a good week for idols, American and otherwise. First was the return of Fox's "American Idol," the most culturally and commercially influential network series this decade. Its two-part season premiere perched in the top two spots on this week's top-10 list of programs based on the ad-centric 18-to-49 demographic.

The 11.8/30 rating and share for Wednesday's encore actually eclipsed the 11.7/28 for Tuesday's show, the first time in five years the premiere week's second night out-rated its first. Facing almost as much scrutiny as the contestants themselves, "Idol" has added a judge and reduced the "mean season" of off-key crooners being humiliated (or humiliating themselves). Tuesday was off 15% from last year's first episode, but Wednesday improved to only a 6% slide.

Football fragments
Next were the idols in American football, which continued its run in the top 10. As usual, more football fragments than games scored top-10 positions: CBS had two "Post-Guns" in the third (Saturday's "AFC Divisional Game Post-Gun," 10.8/33) and fourth (Sunday's "Post-Gun," 9.3/24) slots for the week.

Post-"Post-Gun," CBS ran two "Post-games" (confused yet?), which were ranked seventh (Sunday, 7.0/18) and eighth (Saturday, 6.3/19). Fox's "Kickoff" on Saturday scored sixth, with a 7.0/21.

There was an actual game played in prime time on the list: Fox's "NFC Playoff" finished fifth, with an 8.9/25, showing that, yes, people do watch TV on Saturday night, assuming a network shows something worthwhile.

CBS's "CSI" (about 6.0/15 in last night's fast-affiliate ratings) said goodbye to top cop Gil Grissom (William Peterson) and probably will be ranked ninth once the final live-plus-same-day ratings are released.

The CBS sitcom "Two and a Half Men" once again made the list, this time in 10th, with a 5.6/13.

**Out of the top 10**

One telecast that orbited but did not enter the top 10 was NBC's "Golden Globe Awards," which was 13th, with a 4.9/12. That was up 182% from last year's dreary, writers-strike-struck press conference that announced the winners but down 26% from the last star-studded event, in 2007.

While many, including an investigating Federal Communications Commission, may remember this year's event for the gritty speech by "The Wrestler's" Mickey Rourke and the guttural gesture the film's director shot back in return, it was a celebration of international idols as much as American ones. Most notable were the U.K.'s Kate Winslet, a double winner for "Revolution Road" and "The Reader," as well as her countrymen behind the camera, and the intriguing Indian actors in front of it, for the night's big winner, "Slumdog Millionaire."

The other notable network return that didn't make it back to the top 10 was Fox's "24," which made it only to 17th for Sunday's starter (4.3/10) and 18th for Monday's follow-up (4.1/10). Compared with its most recent openers, in 2007, "24" fell 31%.

Cumulative network ratings results aren't yet available for President George W. Bush's farewell speech last night, but current polling indicates he's far less an American idol than in the wake of Sept. 11, when Jack Bauer first burst onto the scene. History, he hopes, will judge differently.

**WHAT TO WATCH:**

**Friday:** Catch it while you can: The low-rated but highly honored "Friday Night Lights" makes its season premiere on NBC.

**Saturday:** Considering the small-screen schedule, get out and go to the big screen to see one of the many movies that was Golden Globe- and maybe also Oscar-worthy.

**Sunday:** The NFC Championship Game between the Philadelphia Eagles and the Arizona Cardinals runs on Fox, while the AFC Championship Game between the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Baltimore Ravens kicks off later on CBS.

**WHAT TO WATCH FOR:**

A really low-interest Super Bowl if it's Arizona vs. Baltimore.

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NOTE: All ratings based on adults 18-49. A share is a percentage of adults 18-49 who have their TV sets on at a given time. A rating is a percentage of all adults 18-49, whether or not their sets are turned on. For example, a 1.0 rating is 1% of the total U.S. adults 18-49 population with TVs. Ratings quoted in this column are based on live-plus-same-day unless otherwise noted. (Many ad deals have been negotiated on the basis of commercial-minute, live-plus-three-days viewing.)

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