

'Shannon's Deal' makes long-awaited return

Lawyer pays more than his bar dues

By Amy Schmidt

"Shannon's Deal," NBC's perennially-reincarnated drama series makes its third return this week on the network. The series began as a two-hour movie way back in June of 1989. It won its time period, scored in the top 10 for the week and was praised by the critics. Tom Shales of the Washington Post wrote that the show "is about as prime as prime-time gets." CBS "Sunday Morning" critic John Leonard added, "good acting, snappy direction, cracker-jack entertainment."

Subsequently, NBC decided to make "Shannon's Deal" into a full-fledged series. The following spring, the show made its debut and garnered good ratings. Because not enough episodes had been filmed, the network passed over the series in the fall, vowing to bring it back in the spring.

Now the show is back along with its stars, ruggedly handsome Jamey Sheridan and perky Elizabeth Pena. Tony-winner Sheridan ("Stanley and Iris," "Distant Thunder") plays corporate lawyer Jack Shannon. Shannon's gambling debts and moral debts have cost him both his marriage and his self respect, and now he's trying to turn his life around. He decides to set up his own practice in a dingy walk-up office and to recruit Lucy Acosta (Pena) as his secretary. Jack Shannon's new practice champions the causes of the poor and the indigent.

"Shannon's Deal" was created by Stan Rogow, an attorney and producer. "I was a radical hippie lawyer coming out of the sixties," says Rogow. "I would never take a

poor person into court. The courts and the law aren't set up in a way that they could win," explains Rogow. "I always tried to make a deal with someone of authority and discretion to get what I wanted. That's what Jack Shannon does. He tries to make justice happen where there often isn't any." The 1984 theatrical film "The Verdict," starring Paul Newman, also provided him inspiration for "Shannon's Deal," Rogow admits. The producer's other credits include NBC's "Fame" series and the 1984 feature "Clan of the Cave Bear."

Rogow hired as creative consultant and writer for the series John Sayles. Sayles is the writer and director of the critically-acclaimed films "Matewan" and "Eight Men Out" (in which, incidentally, he also cast himself as sportswriter). "I knew that a lot of legal cases never went to court," says Sayles. "I liked the notion of a main character

having a second chance at putting his life back together with some kind of ethics — both legal and moral ethics."

This season, "Shannon's Deal" will begin as it did two years ago, with a two-hour movie. Titled "Shannon's Deal: Wrongful Death," the premiere involves two policemen in a bizarre pawn shop shoot-out that nearly kills Lucy. Shannon files a wrongful death suit against the pair, and butts heads with a tough detective (Ronald Joseph) when he suspects the cops responsible have something to hide. Tony winner B. D. Wong ("M. Butterfly") guest-stars.

Elizabeth Pena and Jamey Sheridan reprise their roles as Lucy Acosta and Jack Shannon in the long-awaited return of the NBC drama "Shannon's Deal." The series debuts with a two-hour movie, Sunday, and regular episodes begin airing Friday on the network.



ABC has launched *Baby Talk* without Connie Sellecca. The comedy series is now being telecast Fridays on the network. Julia Duffy (*Newhart*) is the star.

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