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Thursday, May. 13, 2010

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Dolly sings of hope, 'Final 24' details last hours

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This week's column mostly concentrates on the visual side, with three-fourths of the April wave of a drama/documentary series that aired on Canadian TV. A great collection of Dolly Parton's early gospel recordings winds things up.

'Final 24: Janis Joplin-Her Final Hours,' (MVDvisual, HHHHH)

GALLERY: [Dolly sings of hope, 'Final 24' details last hours](#)

'Final 24: Keith Moon-His Final Hours,' (MVDvisual, HHHHH);

'Final 24: Nicole Brown Simpson-Her Final Hours,' (MVDvisual, HHHH)

Most readers know of celebrities who died untimely deaths. This April 20 DVD series, with other releases coming in June, August and October purports to "unlock the hidden secrets, psychological flaws and events that result in the tragic deaths of global icons."

Each episode, subtitled "a dramatization," weaves the star's back story from childhood to the moment of death, using a twenty-four hour time clock interwoven with a smidgen of acting plus interviews with friends, associates and others who knew the person and something about their story.

The Janis episode recounts her childhood and teenaged years in Port Arthur, Texas, where she encountered rejection by "establishment" school mates before finding acceptance with fellow outsiders, including musicians. Her college career ended with Joplin hitch-hiking to San Francisco and eventually hooking up with her first and most familial band, Big Brother & The Holding Company. The downward spiral started with great individual recognition at Monterey, and ended with an overdose of too-pure heroin after a session on what would be her most successful album.

The Keith Moon DVD is most fascinating to me, not only because of his reputation as "Moon the Loon" but because of his amazing drum technique, which eschewed early-1960's stolid time-keeping for a theatrical Gene Krupa-like style. The beginning dwells on Keith's childhood as an early poster child for what would later be known as ADHD. He dropped out of school, began drumming, and then joined The Who at age 17 by auditioning/destroying their drummer's kit at a show. The ups and downs, behavior and insecurities are recounted by Kenney Jones, Pamela Des Barres and more. Keith's life ended with a heart attack caused by over consumption of the anti-alcohol drug hemineverin along with minimal-for-Moon amounts of champagne and cocaine.


The case of Nicole Brown Simpson differs from that of the rock icons above. She had been the trophy wife of a retired NFL superstar, but wasn't a celebrity in her own right. Nicole's "final 24" deals with compelling but circumstantial evidence about her violent death. I recommend this series highly, including the volume about Gianni Versace that completes this wave of releases.

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