

# FALCON CREST



THE COMPLETE  ARTWORK STORY

# HOW THE ARTWORK FOR SEASON 2 WAS DEVELOPED

DFCF board members

INGO A. KÜPPERS,  
THOMAS J. PUCHER  
AND SASCHA KURZ

answer to interview moderator,  
series creator and executive producer

EARL HAMNER

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Distinguished novelist, award-winning screenplay and teleplay writer and creator and executive producer of *The Waltons* and *Falcon Crest*, EARL HAMNER, talks to the board members of the DFCF, the organization maintaining [www.falconcrest.org](http://www.falconcrest.org), the official *Falcon Crest* homepage, about the artwork of the season 2 DVD release.

**EH:**

Before we get to the subject at hand I would like to thank you folks for the diligence and devotion you have shown in developing and maintaining this website. Our production team always aimed for excellence and you have also maintained standards that are unusually high in a fan club homepage so we are most appreciative. Your professionalism is evident again in the new artwork for the season 2 DVD release. How did you get involved?

**SK:**

We were quite surprised that *Warner Bros.* asked us for help after the German *Warner* branch had said that the artwork was entirely designed at the headquarters in Burbank, California, and that the European *Warner* branches were only allowed to make changes as far as the language and country specific legal issues are concerned, such as age rating, for example.

**IAK:**

But that was all during the preparation of season 1, and there were some minor flaws in the artwork of the first season, such as flip-flopped pictures and publicity photos that did not belong there — the scene still of Laura Johnson and Lorenzo Lamas, for instance, because Laura joined the cast not until season 3. My guess is that *Warner Bros.* realized that the *Falcon Crest* fans out there are very critical, particularly after we provided them with a very detailed feedback overview that showed them the fans' reactions after season 1 had been placed on the market.

**TJP:**

We know it's difficult for *Warner Bros.* because the people who work there nowadays were not there when the show was in production, and hardly anybody knows much about the series today. We are happy *Warner Bros.* realized we could be an asset to them — and we are glad to play a part in enhancing the quality of the final product. To finally answer your question, we have been in contact with *Soul Media*, the company that produces and distributes *Falcon Crest* for *Warner Bros.* in Scandinavia, for a couple of months, and I received an e-mail from the guy who is in charge of the marketing there if we could comment on their first draft of the new artwork.

**EH:**

My impression was that the artwork was always done by the studio in Burbank.

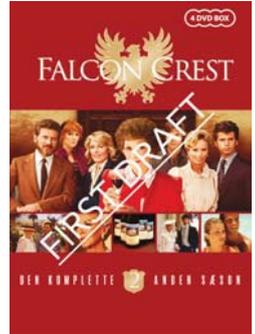
**IAK:**

Right, that was what they had done with the first box. Shortly after we had received the first draft for season 2 from *Soul Media*, we learnt that the art department at *Warner Bros. Studios* in Burbank was no longer involved. They now left all of it to the European *Warner* branches, and

the studios in Burbank provided the masters for the DVDs and a few publicity stills for promotional purposes only.

**SK:**

But most of those stills *Warner Bros.* sent to *Soul Media* were not appropriate for the use on the new DVD box. So the original draft *Soul Media* designed was almost identical with the first box because they simply did not have new photos in good quality. There was just one difference: the basic color of the package was red now.



**TJP:**

And we were shocked when we first saw it because we knew this wouldn't attract anyone to buy it. In particular, the character image compilation — you know, the front picture of the various cast members that was combined from a number of publicity stills — was still the same as on the season 1 package. How would that look for a different year?!

**EH:**

I find the evolution of this artwork almost as dramatic as a *Falcon Crest* episode. When did you let them know it was the wrong idea?

**IAK:**

We didn't put it that way. You have to be rather diplomatic in the beginning of a new and growing business relationship. But, yes, we let them know that we thought the first draft was inappropriate. Coincidence, I guess, helped, too. Because we were fortunate the Spanish *Warner* branch had decided to speed up their season 2 release and come out with it in October. So in the midst of all this, our contact at *Soul Media* introduced us to the marketing manager at *WB*, who is in charge of the Spanish release.

**TJP:**

That lady was not happy with the initial Nordic draft either, but she was in an extreme rush because all that happened on August 17 and her deadline for the preparation of the Spanish release was August 26. With all the people in the hierarchy at *Warner Bros.* who still had to be informed about the artwork and had to approve of it, we had less than

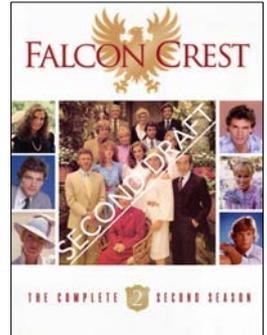
two days to create our own artwork as a suggestion to improve the first draft.

**SK:**

And so the same day we got that first draft from *Soul Media*, I went through our archives to see which photos were applicable. We have a huge archive of brilliant publicity stills that came from the days when *Lorimar* was still in business, and I singled out the best shots.

**TJP:**

That very same day, I called in a conference of our Board of Directors at very short notice so we could develop our artwork for season 2 together — which was sort of a problem because a personal meeting was out of the question. You see, Ingo, Sascha and I, we all have full time jobs and live in different cities all over Germany. So the only thing we could do was a conference call and, thanks to the Internet, exchange the various stages in the development of our artwork via e-mail. With the photos Sascha had singled out, I created an artwork draft for the sleeve of the new box.



**EH:**

I'm amazed at the improvement that is already evident. How did you manage it in such a short time?

**SK:**

Well, the first thing was we advised them neither to reuse the season 1 character compilation nor any of the publicity photos that were pictured on the first box, and we wanted to include the new main cast members, David Selby and Ana Alicia. We also opted for keeping the white background color of the package, which we thought was a good choice for season 1 because it appears ageless and elegant in style.

**IAK:**

And since there was no new character compilation available, we suggested using the official season 2 cast group portrait on the front.

**TJP:**

We worked on our draft for more than half of the night and sent it to *Warner Bros.* (Spain) and *Soul Media* so they would have it the following morning — along with all the other photos Sascha had selected and which they might have wanted to use on the inlay with the episode overview.

**EH:**

And did they follow all your instructions?

**IAK:**

Well, we didn't really expect them to. We hoped they'd seriously consider the basic guidelines we set.

**SK:**

Which they did! I mean their final drafts contain photos from season 2 only, which was our major goal, and none of them are flip-flopped.

**TJP:**

And the text on the back of the package was written by us, and so were all the episode synopses on the inlay card in the Nordic edition. *Warner Bros.* asked us to provide them because the original program synopses *Lorimar* sent out to the press were too long.

**EH:**

But the packages in the Nordic and Spanish markets look slightly different...

**SK:**

Yes, that has to do with the fact that Burbank did not create the artwork this time, but that it was left to the European *Warner* branches. However, they all use our catchy line and summary we wrote for the back of the sleeve — each in their language, of course.

**IAK:**

The fact *Soul Media* and the Spanish *Warner Bros.* branch did not want to have exactly the same artwork also has its positive aspects. I am sure the different boxes will make great collector's items.

**EH:**

After your first recommendation how to change *Soul Media's* original draft, when did you get the next artwork draft from them?

**SK:**

August 19. The art department at *Soul Media* decided against the cast group shot, but created a new character compilation to keep the design line that season 1 had set.

**TJP:**

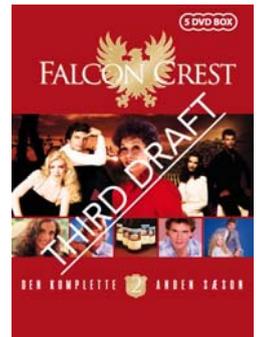
That new artwork showed Angela, Lance, Melissa, Richard and Diana with a vineyard at sunset in the background. Everybody was dressed in black and white except Angela. That created an interesting effect.

**IAK:**

The only thing about the character compilation we were not really happy with was Shannon Tweed. They had put her next to David. But since she just had a recurring guest rôle in season 2, we strongly advised *Soul Media* to delete her from the compilation and place images of Susan Sullivan and Robert Foxworth there as we felt the compilation, as the core element of the package, should feature members of the main cast only.

**EH:**

I am sure Susan and Robert would have appreciated this. So how did you get Shannon eliminated from the compilation?



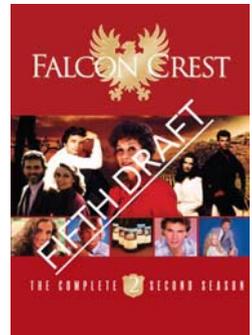
**SK:**

We had almost given up on that topic because *Soul Media* intended to keep her there. But then the artwork draft from the Spanish *Warner Bros.* office came in one day before their deadline. Their arrangement of all the photos we had provided was a little different, but they had designed a beautiful inlay card for the episode list. The major difference was that the package was basically in green color and that they used no character image compilation, but the original cast group shot. There were lots of discussions about the cast group picture looking too old and so forth. Anyway, they decided to change the basic color to red after we suggested both markets coming out in the same color so people could identify the season better; and the Spanish *Warner Bros.* branch decided to make use of the character compilation from *Soul Media* also.



**TJP:**

I realized that was our chance. Again, I emphasized that Susan Sullivan and Bob Foxworth had to be included and sent the lady at the Spanish office a mockup I had created hastily to illustrate the changes I imagined. We were fortunate she had watched the series when she was young so she knew about the characters, and we shared the same vision of improving the image compilation.



**EH:**

But that draft did not become the final version, did it?

**IAK:**

No, it was not approved by someone on the executive side at *Warner Bros.* They thought the key element was too dark and that enlightening the right half of the picture was not good enough.

**SK:**

Another draft was designed that featured Angela, Richard, Melissa, Chase and Jacqueline in the compilation. The arrangement of the people looked nice, but the art department at *Warner Bros.* in Spain had flip-flopped the pictures of David Selby, Robert Foxworth and Lana Turner, which resulted in an awkward effect — it was kind of bizarre if you know how their faces really look like. What we did was we convinced the art department to rearrange the characters and place them the right way round on the image compilation.



**TJP:**

It was revised very hastily in the afternoon of September 8. They were already behind in their schedule and wanted to start printing. But we finished it that day. What came out was the final package design. We basically like the darkness in the character compilation. The background shows a vineyard at dawn. Those clouds, sort of a cumulonimbus, are kind of a symbol of the dark shadows over the Tuscany Valley this season — the Carlo Agretti murder mystery and Richard Channing's mysterious past... Oh, and speaking of Richard Channing and "dark shadows", another connection comes to my mind as David Selby previously starred in a very successful old series entitled *Dark Shadows*. Doesn't that make a great inside joke if you think of those dark shadows on the front image just the season when David joins *Falcon Crest*?!



**EH:**

I think you have very subtly reminded the audience of the fact that David will always be associated with the huge success of *Dark Shadows*. Also I wanted to ask another question. I remember you guys took lots of photographs on your visits to the set. Is it true *Warner Bros.* even used location photos you took yourselves?

**TJP:**

Yes, for the back of all the boxes and on the inlay card. *Soul Media* first wanted to use the same vineyard photo on the back as in season 1, but we said that a new season should get a new vineyard picture as well. So I provided them with a photo I took myself in 2004. It is a view from the vista point on the top of what is known from the show as River Road. It is a view over the *Gioberti Estate* with the walnut tree lined driveway to *Falcon Crest* in the center — that driveway where the prop gate with the falcon sign was installed when the show was in production. Another photo is from a 2007 trip to the Napa Valley; it shows the front of the *Falcon Crest Victorian Mansion*. The Spanish box makes use of a photo of the *Mansion* Sascha took in 1997, and their episode overview features my photos of the *Gioberti House*, the *Agretti Residence* and the vineyard panorama.

**EH:**

Are you happy with the way the artwork turned out?

**IAK:**

With so many people being involved, it always has to be a compromise. But we are really happy with it because all our suggestions were considered very seriously.

**TJP:**

The red background of the new box is something we had our problems with in the beginning, to be honest. It's not because of the color itself — that's fine because the colors go back to the color scheme of the first box with the red from the lettering now being put in the background and the lettering now being white, which was the background color of the preceding edition. So it's kind of an inverted color scheme.

**SK:**

But we are wondering how this will affect future volumes because, at this point, *Warner Bros.* intends to use a different background color for each season to make the boxes as distinct as possible. And we simply cannot imagine colors like yellow or turquoise, for instance.

**TJP:**

Such colors simply do not seem to fit into the basic visual identity of the product line. We would love to see a consistent design line in future volumes to enhance the visual identity. One idea I had was to alternate between boxes with the white background for the odd seasons and boxes with the red background for the even seasons. That would also keep the colors associated with wine.

**SK:**

My idea, in contrast, would be to use the third color in the existing scheme — the golden color that is in use for the logo and the coat of arms with the seasonal numbering. Season 3 could be an entirely gold-en package with red lettering and the falcon and the coat of arms in white. Then, they could repeat the color scheme so season 4 would be the same white as season 1, etc. That would make a perfect match with the number of seasons: three colors used in three different ways — multiplied by three, which makes nine packages.

**IAK:**

The customers out there are welcome to send us their comments. Who knows? Somebody might have a great idea for the future colors and will be credited for playing a part in the design. So everyone is welcome to drop us a line. The address is [production.office@falconcrest.org](mailto:production.office@falconcrest.org).

**EH:**

I hope you will serve as creative consultants for the release of season 3 again?

**SK:**

Certainly. We've already been invited.

**EH:**

Do you think you can have any influence on bonus material for future DVD packages?

## IAK:

We enjoyed our cooperation with the production company and feel flattered *Warner Bros.* and *Soul Media* consulted with us. With this release, I guess, we proved once more that we are not a bunch of weirdoes...

## TJP:

You see our goal is to enhance the quality of the final product to keep the memory of this great show alive — and certainly to enhance *Warner's* sales to make sure all seasons will be released, also in Germany, which is not in the same schedule with the current release, but will hopefully put it out soon, too! Anyway, we provided them with a list of bonus materials we think might be a viable idea, among other suggestions for further improvements of the DVD collection. It certainly depends on *Warner Bros.* whether they want to listen to more of our suggestions. At this time, what we have achieved is more than we had imagined, and it was a great pleasure to work with such considerate, thoughtful and understanding people at *Warner Bros.* and *Soul Media*.

## SK:

Anyway, we are here and we are ready for more...

Image compilation on front page (from left to right):  
SASCHA KURZ, THOMAS J. PUCHER, EARL HAMNER and INGO A. KÜPPERS.

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