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# New midweek sitcoms sizzle

## 'The Osbournes:' misunderstood but not dysfunctional



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Ozzy Osbourne's new family show premiered to record numbers on March 5. Osbourne's mainstream appeal has grown since he first appeared on MTV's "Cribs" and on VH1's "Behind the Music."

by Autumn Brown  
staff writer

Take the "Addam's Family," about 20 pets, a Beverly Hills mansion, and mix it with the cult known as reality television and what do you get? MTV's newest reality based series "The Osbournes."

Unlike its TV family predecessors, "The Osbournes" is a reality based docu-comedy, which airs Tuesdays at 10:30 p.m. after MTV's famous reality show "The Real World." The half-hour comedy is crammed with footage of this wacky family as they take on everyday life.

From their Goth décor to the reactions from the neighbors as they move in with numerous boxes labeled "dead things," the Osbournes are by far not your average family. The stars of this "dysfunctional" family show in-

clude the 53 year-old, heavily tattooed Ozzy Osbourne, his warm-hearted wife Sharon, and their two potty mouthed children. The children consist of a whiny, rebellious 17 year-old named Kelly, who sports pink hair, and Jack, the pudgy, smart and introverted 15 year-old son who wanders around the yard in combat gear while attacking cardboard boxes. The oldest daughter opted not to participate in the show.

"What is a functional family? I know I'm dysfunctional by a long shot, but what guidelines do we have to go by, "The Waltons?" Ozzy said about his family of rock-n-roll. "What I'm trying to say is what is the family that we should all take our inspiration from? Because what you see on this program is the way we are."

Maybe he's not your first thought of a "normal" father figure but Ozzy still manages to instill the fundamentals of life in his children.

"Don't drink, don't take drugs, please," Ozzy tells his kids. "And if you have sex, wear a condom." The foulmouthed children represent the stereotype of rich children who grow up in Beverly Hills.

By bleeping out the variety of bad words that fly out of the Osbournes' mouths, MTV sure has their hand full when it comes to editing. The children use foul language as if they were drunken truckers. After a while the steady bleeps might have you thinking that the truck is backing up in your dorm room. With so much bleeping throughout the half hour, 'bleep' becomes just another word.

And so what if the devil's face is mounted as decoration above the front door that lights up at night? There's so little sense in this show you can't help but laugh. This real-life version of "The Munsters" meets "The Beverly Hillbillies" gives famous TV families of the past, like the Huxtables and the Bradys, a run for their money. It's like watching a train wreck - you can't help but look. Give them a chance; under it all, the Osbournes are just plain folks who are "full of love and vinegar."

## 'Xiu Xiu The Sent Down Girl'

by Patty McGuire  
contributing writer

The film "Xiu Xiu The Sent Down Girl" is based on the novel written by Yan Geling. The story begins back in the days of China's Cultural Revolution, when millions of educated youth from the city were routinely sent into rural areas to learn the virtues of living like a peasant.

Xiu Xiu, the main character in the film, is sent to the Tibetan grasslands and ends up sharing a tent with a horse-herder named Lao Jin, who falls in love with her. He is physically not able to be with her for the fact that he was castrated several years before they met.

The real trouble for Xiu Xiu begins when her allotted six months with the peasantry are over. She soon begins to anticipate her return

to civilization, which is a return that never happens. Xiu Xiu becomes desperate to leave the isolation of the Tibetan grasslands, and begins to perform sexual favors to the sly-talking peddlers who promise to get her out of there. She is now in her own isolated hell because a stream of men keep coming to her tent promising help in exchange for sexual favors, but their promises are never kept.

"Xiu Xiu The Sent Down Girl" is visually beautiful. The cinematography of the movie is none like I have ever seen before. Though the film is not full of action, the use of the Tibetan landscape makes up for it by being visually beautiful and stimulating.

One film critic from Boston with the screen name of Elengja states, "'Xiu Xiu The Sent Down Girl' is one powerful movie." Some re-

viewers have put forth negative comments, but their reviews only skim the surface.

Joan Chen has crafted a masterpiece that cuts to the heart of the issues at hand: the sexual use and abuse of the young and innocent, governmental corruption, empty bureaucracy and the lustfulness of males who are devoid of the conscience, given to self-seeking pleasure and blind to the suffering of others. In fact, these men focus on enjoying the act of inflicting pain on others. This movie gets to the root of evil and exposes its slimy underside. Chen indicts the system magnificently.

The film will show Tuesday at 7p.m. in the McGarvey Commons in Room 117.

## 'Wednesday' gives the day a lift

by Emily Linendoll  
staff writer

"Wednesday," a new sitcom on ABC, is a comedy about a television network that takes a behind-the-scenes look at how the corporate world really works.

The main character, David Weiss (Ivan Sergei), is the new guy at the television network, IBS. Red (John Cleese), the owner of the network, hired Weiss hoping that his normal and sensible characteristics will help ratings and that his presence will overall improve the success of the company. Weiss may think he understands the company and its employees, but soon finds out that he has a lot to learn.

On Weiss' first day, he meets his fellow co-workers, and learns maybe a little too much about how the company runs. Mike McClarren (James McCauley), the senior vice president of programming, tells Weiss he will not go through the week without lying. Joanne Walker (Sherri Shepherd), a former assistant who is now the vice president of programming, tells Weiss in a rather comical way that she got the job because she is a black woman. Lindsay Urich

(Melinda McGraw), who is the senior vice president, is a pushy, sarcastic woman who takes any comment in a sexual manner, and knows the game to being on top in her profession.

Meanwhile, the president of IBS, Paul Weffler (Ed Begley), is hoping that Weiss' Midwestern sensibility will revive the company and give the ratings a boost. The first day on the job gives just a taste of the corruption that goes on in the corporate world, giving Weiss an opportunity to turn things around his own way.

Because the employees think that the network is centered around New York and Los Angeles, Weiss hopes to bring some normalcy to the network. He knows what the average American wants to watch, and knows that his employees have got it all wrong. Though Weiss has a lot to learn about the corporate world he has just entered, he is also dumbfounded on how people can rise in a network by just relying on the right moves to work around the system. Weiss is startled when his own moves put his job in danger.

This comedy sheds some light on what is going on in the business

world, and how employees really climb the corporate ladder. Weiss is the naïve person, the type of worker that every company needs. He proves himself on his first day of work, and the ratings rise for the network.

"Wednesday" is a comedy about a fictional company, but incorporates real life situations in a humorous way. IBS cares about its ratings, success, and production, and its employees will do whatever it takes to achieve this, even if that means lying or using sex. Weiss, whom at first seemed like an unlikely candidate for the job, is just whom IBS needs to revive their company.

Each character's personality is unique and, in my opinion, Urich stands above the rest. Her sense of sarcasm, wit and charm is very appealing.

The humor in this program is very entertaining, and gives real life situations on the ways of cut-throat television business. "Wednesday," which airs at 9:30 p.m., is an outstanding comedy show on how to make it in the real world and how to beat the system (which is something college students might find useful).

## Sally's place is 'The Court'

by Nicole Charsar  
staff writer

Sally Field has taken on a new and challenging role on the CBS Thursday night drama, "The Court." Trading in her motherly instincts that we have seen in "Fried Green Tomatoes," "E.R." and "Eye for an Eye," Field is up to the task of opinionated and insightful Kate Nolan.

The pilot, a one-hour episode, keeps you on the couch with strong storylines that move quickly, ensuring the plot is anything but dry. Day-to-day events and political agendas shadowed by the personal sagas of each character keep the tables turning on each cast member.

"The Court" begins with Nolan, a governor of an unnamed state, with an Ohio background. After arriving in D.C. for a presidential meeting, Nolan discovers her name is the only one on a list of replacements for a judge who died in a car accident. As she weaves her way through meetings, conferences and a nomination hearing, Nolan is established as a "one vote at a time" judge, the sort of politician who is neither liberal nor conservative. During the pilot episode, it's clear she's the only Supreme Court justice like this

who does not carry an agenda.

Meanwhile, a local TV political head, Harlan Brandt (Craig Bierko), heads to Ohio to recount Nolan's privileged life and contrast it with that of Charlene Grissom (Cynthia Ettinger). Grissom is sentenced to a lengthy prison stay after stealing a credit card to buy lingerie.

However, what Nolan and Grissom's two lives have in common is never quite clear. Brandt stumbles into a skeleton that may be in Nolan's closet. Soon thereafter word gets back to her that he's started an investigation on Nolan, and all members of Nolan's camp are confident nothing will come of it. Certainly, Brandt's investigation will be a running theme through the show.

The characters are almost all by-the-book judges as Pat Hingle, Miguel Sandoval and Chris Sarandon play various aspects of the political spectrum. They engage in dogmatic arguments, and it seems that only Kate can get them to stop and reflect. There is little care and concern among the players, and when it does get a little personal, things turn sudsy.

If you are a fan of drama-filled reality, then it's an hour well worth your time. The fast pace and quick wit the writers brought to this show includes terminology and jargon. It helps clear the formal vibe that the show carries with it. "The Court" will air every Thursday at 10 p.m. on CBS.

### CRITIC'S CRITIQUE BY DANIEL J. STASIEWSKI

## 'Death to Smoochy' is a rare comedy

Since I've lambasted practically every teen comedy released in the past two years, it's probably a little hypocritical to say I loved "Death to Smoochy."

The jokes are as vulgar as they come, the humor is completely over-the-top, and the characters thrive on being outlandish and cartoony. But, when you throw a fuchsia-colored rhino and a rainbow-clad maniac together in the seedy world of children's television, it's no surprise the animated nature of every character is flaunted like a yokel's sixth grade diploma.

After the children's show host Rainbow Randolph (Robin Williams) is busted for bribery, KidNet goes looking for a decent host to take his time slot. The producers go through a long list of former kid's show hosts, all whom turn out to be smack addicts or sex offenders. They finally have no choice but to hire the idealistic, but ethical Sheldon Mopes, a.k.a. Smoochy the Rhino (Edward Norton).

When Smoochy becomes a big time hit, everyone from the unrelenting Irish Mafia to sadistic children's charities wants a piece of him. Rainbow Randolph, however, just wants his time slot back, and the only way to get it is to cancel the purple rhino, permanently.

"Death to Smoochy" isn't comic genius; it's more like comic madness. This

film is the kind of sick, twisted, dark, and hilarious comedy no one really expected to come out of children's television. Writer Adam Resnick must have had some trauma involving his favorite kid's show because there is no other way to explain the perversion of the childhood staple.

However, it's the way he wraps the crude comedy around the insanity of Smoochy that makes the movie. In any other movie, the spouting of profanities and euphemisms for the male genitalia just wouldn't cut it. When directed at an overstuffed rhino, the vulgarities have an inappropriateness that's hard not to laugh at.

Williams is the main perpetrator of the foul-mouthed antics. While wearing his flamboyant rainbow coat and shouting, "I'm Rainbow f\*\*\*ing Randolph," he makes the most sinister character in the film, as well as the brightest one. Not one actor out there today could play Rainbow Randolph to the dark comic perfection achieved by Williams.

On the other side of the soundstage is Norton's Smoochy. Norton is hilarious as the often understated idealist. Like a character right out of a Coen brother's film, Smoochy's utter stupidity is what make this purple rhino tick. The subtlety of Norton's performance

works in wonderful contrast to Robin Williams' in-your-face humor. While Smoochy's "Stepdad Song" isn't necessarily low-key humor, Norton's clueless delivery makes an otherwise ridiculous song laugh-out-loud funny.

Much of the material in "Death to Smoochy" could be easily satirized. Luckily, the television industry jokes are limited to Danny De Vito's character as a slimy talent agent. Satire would have only added unnecessary baggage to a film that relies on its complete absurdity.

I could only imagine how bogged down the Irish Mafia or the even more mob-like children's charities would be if they actually had a reason to be anything more than crooked clowns in this twisted three ring circus.

"Death to Smoochy" is a rare comedy where the quantity of laughs is evenly matched with the quality. I haven't laughed so much and so hard in years. Occasionally a joke does fall flat, but this film is pure sick fun. After all, it's not everyday you get to see a guy in a rhino suit get beat with a lead pipe.

★ ★ ★  
out of 4

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