

Saturday Night reaches for past glory

By Don Strausburger

"Live from New York, it's Saturday Night."

Well, that's the way it used to be. After nine seasons and four entire cast changes, "Saturday Night" has attempted to become the radical hot-bed of controversy which originally brought the show to fame in 1975.

In the fall of 1975, NBC introduced the late-night viewing audience to the Not Ready for Prime Time Players, featuring the comedic talents of people like Chevy Chase, Gilda Radner, Dan Ackroyd and the late John Belushi.

The show featured guest hosts taken from the entertainment world and musical guests to add variety to the general insanity.

In the spring of 1980, "Saturday Night" executives removed the few remaining cast members and gave the show a new image. However, with the departure of the remaining original stars and its added attraction, Bill Murray, the show lost the spontaneity and comedic timing that kept the show exciting and fresh.

The second cast, which featured two of the writers

Television perspective

from earlier shows, was boring during the good scenes but otherwise terrible. The two highlights of those dismal seasons were the "Franken and Davis Show" featuring writers Al Franken and Tom Davis, and the "Rocket Report" with Chevy Chase's heir-apparent, Peter Rocket, who silently disappeared after using one of the "seven words you can't use on TV."

The entire second cast was relieved of active duty (yes, watching them was like doing time on the front line!) after two seasons of poor ratings and even worse reviews. So, in typical NBC fashion, the network executives hired a new cast of "comedians" for a limited season of even less funny shows. The only person of note in that season was Gail Mathias who went on to greater fame serving a soft drink to a hunchback in recent commercials.

While "Saturday Night" suffered through these frequent cast changes, they faced a serious problem, competition

from growing two comedy series: "Second City TV" and "Fridays." In 1978, "SCTV" joined the NBC late-night schedule, after several highly successful years in syndication, following Johnny Carson, and eventually became an occasional substitute for "Saturday Night."

ABC introduced "Fridays" in 1980 giving viewers their first chance to see how another network would handle the same type of humor. Luckily for NBC, "Fridays" never reached a consistent audience and was cancelled half way through its second season.

"Saturday Night" finally showed signs of improvement in 1982 with its fourth cast. The show introduced new talents who for the first time since the Not Ready for Prime Time Players worked as an ensemble rather than several comedians in the same scene. The days of Chase, Ackroyd, Belushi and Radner returned, but this time, with Tim Kazurinsky, Mary Gross, Joe Piscopo and Eddie Murphy.

This new cast marked first signs that Dick Ebersole, the producer, and his writing staff wanted to return to the original concept of being controversial.

Once again, SNL Newsbreak featured cast members playing crazy feature reporters, such as Kazurinsky playing Dr. Jack Badofsky, a medical quack who discussed different types of the same disease, and Julia Louis-Dreyfuss as Patti Lynn Hunsacker, a teenage valley girl who reported on the high-school scene.

"Saturday Night" officials shocked the viewing audience in the spring when they announced the release of Brad Hall, the SNL Newsbreak anchor, Christine Ebersole, Robin Duke and Gary Kroeger, in addition to Murphy and Piscopo leaving to pursue other careers.

For the fourth time, "Saturday Night" presented a new cast; however, this time, several cast members from the previous season remained. Gross, Louis-Dreyfuss and Jim Belushi, John's brother, were joined by four new comics all coming from various entertainment backgrounds. Billy Crystal, of "Soap" fame, Rich Hall, of "Fridays" and, more recently, "Not Necessarily the News,"

Christopher Guest from the film "This Is Spinal Tap," and Martin Short, from "SCTV."

The show has again become controversial but for a much different reason. Instead of trying to shock the public, "Saturday Night" is fighting with the comedy efforts of the unrestricted cable networks. With "SCTV" and "Not Necessarily the News" on cable, "Saturday Night" suffers from the censorship with which the network burdens the staff writers. But don't think the censors are holding the writers back too much.

In the most recent episode, Rev. Jesse Jackson spent much of the show poking fun at everyone from the presidential candidates to Jean Kirkpatrick, the American ambassador to the United Nations. Jackson, with the help of the show's writers, also offered a subtle but funny insight about the equal rights of minorities in television.

"Saturday Night" will probably never equal those insane episodes of the early years, but don't count them out yet. With each episode, the scenes improve and show the possibility of a return to being the controversial show it once was.

MID-TOWN PIZZA

Mid-town Plaza 450 E. Main St., Middletown, Pa.



PIZZA

	MEDIUM	LARGE	SICILIAN
Plain	\$4.25	4.75	7.00
Onions	4.75	5.50	8.00
Extra Cheese	5.25	5.75	8.25
Pepperoni	5.25	5.75	8.25
Sausage	5.25	5.75	8.25
Mushrooms	5.25	5.75	8.25
Green Peppers	5.25	5.75	8.25
Meatballs	5.25	5.75	8.25
Anchovies	5.25	5.75	8.25
Cheese Supreme	6.00	7.00	9.50
Special	7.75	8.75	11.25
Canadian Bacon	5.25	5.75	8.25
Black Olives	5.25	5.75	8.25
Ground Beef	5.25	5.75	8.25

Each extra item on whole Pizzas...\$1.00

SALADS

All You Can Eat.....	1.99
Large.....	1.99
Small.....	1.29
Chef Salad.....	2.25
Sm. Chef Salad.....	1.50

DINNERS

Lasagna - Stuffed Shells	
Manicotti - Ravioli.....	3.50
Spaghetti w/Sauce.....	3.00
Spaghetti w/Meatballs.....	3.50
Spaghetti w/Sausage.....	3.75
EXTRA:	
Mushrooms, Green Peppers..	0.75

PLATTERS

Meatball.....	2.70
Sausage.....	2.90
Meatball & Sausage.....	3.25
Green Pepper &	
Mushroom.....	3.00
Meatball, Sausage, Green	
Pepper & Mushroom.....	3.75

Call for delivery prices

944-2195

HOT SUBS

	Small	Large
Steak	2.40	3.40
Steak w/Cheese	2.65	3.65
Meatball	2.40	3.40
Meatball w/Cheese	2.65	3.65
Sausage	2.40	3.40
Sausage Cheese	2.65	3.65
Stromboli	3.25	4.25
Sausage Roll	1.70	
Beef Bar-B-Q	1.15	

COLD SUBS

	Small	Large
Regular Italian	2.40	3.40
Ham and Cheese	2.40	3.40
Capicola and Cheese	2.40	3.40
Salami and Cheese	2.40	3.40
Turkey	2.40	3.40
Turkey Cheese	2.40	3.40
Tuna	2.60	3.60
Chicken	2.60	3.60
Cheese	2.40	3.40
Roast Beef	2.65	3.65
Roast Beef and Cheese	2.65	3.65
Ham, Turkey and Cheese	2.40	3.40

Hours: Monday thru Wednesday -- 11-12
Thursday thru Saturday -- 11-1 a.m.
Sunday -- 11:30-9

10% DISCOUNT ON ALL FOOD WITH PENN STATE ID