

Huge cast eclipses 'Sons and Daughters'

Is the sitcom dead? I prefer to think we live in interesting times, when modest hits like "The Office" and since-canceled series like "Arrested Development" serve as laboratories for comedy experiments.



Kevin McDonough

The new series "Sons & Daughters" (9 p.m., and 9:30 p.m., ABC, TV-14) bears the genetic footprint of both series.

Fred Goss ("Significant Others") stars as Cameron, the middle-aged, middle-class father and stepfather at the center of this sprawling series.

While not presented as a documentary, "Sons" shares a loose, improvisational style with "The Office." And in many scenes Goss appears to be channeling Steve Carell's rather brittle, loopy manner.

"Sons" will appeal to fans of the unhealed cast of immature characters on "Arrested Development." As on that series, both the adults and adolescents meet on the same emotional level, and nobody can keep a secret or repress their most mortifying instincts.

In the first episode, Cameron and his pretty, young second wife, Liz (Gillian Vigman), throw a party for his mother, Colleen (Dee Wallace-Stone), and his stepfather, Wendal (Max Gail).

Things get complicated when Cameron's surly teen son threatens to invite his "real mother," Cameron's feared ex-wife. But that crisis recedes when Wendal confesses that he might want to leave Colleen after 25 years of marriage.

In the second episode, Cameron's efforts to get the family together for a bowling party run into emotional headwinds.

Juggling overlapping stories of Cameron's family as well as those of his two very different sisters and their respective broods, "Sons & Daughters" has an enormous cast that demands considerable attention from its audience.

With so much going on, it would be better if the action didn't go over the top nearly all of the time. If the demise of "Arrested" taught us anything, it's that it's difficult for a large audience to develop much sympathy for characters who speak (or care) only about themselves.

Dennis Haysbert's character President Palmer was recently bumped off "24," but don't go looking for him on the unemployment line.

He returns as a key member of a special anti-terror squad on "The Unit" (9 p.m., CBS, TV-14, V). Robert Patrick ("Terminator II") portrays the no-nonsense head of the unit.

Filled with plenty of nail-biting

action, commando raids and shoot-'em-up scenarios from Afghanistan to Idaho, "The Unit" also concerns the wives and families of these secret agents.

They live, like Desperate Housewives in the Witness Protection Program, in a picture-postcard cul-de-sac, with no one but each other to confide in. This touch of domestic claustrophobia provides an interesting diversion from all of the derring-do.

For those keeping track, "Joey" (NBC, TV-14) returns tonight, if only to serve as ratings cannon-fodder opposite "American Idol." On back-to-back episodes: feelings for Alex (8 p.m.), down Mexico way (8:30 p.m.).

Other highlights

Loose dog tags on "NCIS" (8 p.m., CBS, TV-PG, V).

The ladies sing to survive on "American Idol" (8 p.m., Fox, TV-G).

The return of Jess on "Gilmore Girls" (8 p.m., WB, TV-PG).

A dead patient may hold life-saving clues on "House" (9 p.m., Fox, TV-14).

Competitive globe-trotting on "Amazing Race 9" (10 p.m., CBS).

Cult choice

Werewolves take on a team of commandos in the 2002 shocker "Dog Soldiers" (7 p.m., Sci Fi).

Series notes

On two episodes of "According to Jim" (ABC, TV-PG), neighbors (8 p.m.)... paternity woes (8:30 p.m.) ... Tyra Banks hosts "America's Next Top Model" (8 p.m., UPN, TV-PG) ... On back-to-back episodes of "Scrubs" (NBC, TV-14), a favorite patient fades (9 p.m.), wooing Molly (9:30 p.m.).

Late night

Rachel Weisz and the Beastie Boys appear on "Late Show with David Letterman" (11:35 p.m., CBS) ... Jay Leno hosts Kristin Davis, Ang Lee and Kris Krimmelferson on "The Tonight Show" (11:35 p.m., NBC) ... Amanda Bynes, Chuck Lidell and Jamie Cullum appear on "Jimmy Kimmel Live" (12:05 a.m., ABC).

Kevin McDonough is a TV columnist for United Features Syndicate.

TUESDAY EVENING

MARCH 7, 2006

Table with columns for time slots (7 PM, 7:30, 8 PM, 8:30, 9 PM, 9:30, 10 PM, 10:30, 11 PM, 11:30) and rows for various TV channels (WTTV, WRV, WISH, WTHR, WFYI, WNDY, WTIU, WHMB, WCXI, WCLJ, WJIM, WIPX, WTBU, A&E, AMC, AP, BET, BRAVO, CNBC, CMT, CNN, COM, DISC, E!, ESPN, ESPN2, FAM, FNC, FOOD, FOXMV, FOXSM, FX, HALL, HGTV, HIST, LIFE, MSNBC, MTV, NICK, OXY, SCIFI, SPIKE, TBS, TCM, TLC, TNT, TOON, TVL, USA, VH1, WE, WGN, DISN, ENC, HBO, SHOW, MAX, TMC, STARZ). Each cell lists the channel, show title, and any relevant notes.

ACCENT ON PEOPLE

The Associated Press

Presenters get laughs with getups at Oscars

He'd already been through a body wax for his role in "The 40 Year-Old Virgin," so donning false eyelashes and pancake makeup to present Sunday's Oscar for make-up probably wasn't a big deal for Steve Carell.



CARELL

"What are you wearing?" asked Carell's co-presenter, Will Ferrell, also plastered in orange makeup. "It's called pineapple bliss," the actor joked.



FERRELL

Coming in a close second in the unusual attire category were co-directors Nick Park and Steve Box, who were wearing big striped bow ties when they walked on stage to accept their animated-feature Oscars for "Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit."

They must have been counting on winning because they brought along smaller bow ties, which

they quickly dressed their Oscar statuette with.

Not to be outdone, the makers of the Antarctic nature tale "March of the Penguins," came on stage carrying stuffed penguins — matching their tuxedos— when they accepted their Oscars for best documentary.

LOS ANGELES

Statue winner celebrates with baby

Rachel Weisz is eating for two these days, and both of them were celebrating her best supporting actress award at Sunday's Oscars.



WEISZ

"The baby was going crazy. Poor baby. I think it was from the adrenaline," said the actress, who is seven months pregnant.

If her acceptance speech wasn't coherent, Weisz, who won for her role in "The Constant Gardener," said to blame it on the baby.

"I couldn't hardly have told you my name," she said backstage.

Weisz said she would attend two after-parties, but only after trading in her heels for a pair of flat shoes.

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Advertisement for Canary Creek Cinemas 8 and Greenwood Park 14. Lists showtimes for Monday-Thursday and Friday-Sunday.

By Rick Kushman
SACRAMENTO (CALIF.) BEE

Let's start with the biggest part. Jon Stewart took control of the Kodak Theatre at the 78th annual Academy Awards, not so much by being wildly funny, but with a penetrating wit and with his humanity.

Yeah, yeah, "Crash" and "Brokeback Mountain" won big, George Clooney got his first Oscar, and Wallace & Gromit joined the ranks of Hollywood immortals.

But the real force was Stewart, that ironic outsider and wise against pomposity who, instead of being too smart for the room, made the room a smarter place.

If you're a Stewart fan, you know there was never reason to worry about his hosting performance. He is a rare talent. And he pays attention. And if you're a Stewart fan, you also know he was subdued Sunday night.

But that was still his basic act — and it's one a lot of people in and outside Hollywood could stand to learn — it all starts with Stewart not taking himself too seriously. If you make fun of yourself, you can say almost anything. "Tonight is the night we cele-



AP PHOTO

Oscar host Jon Stewart opens the Academy Awards telecast Sunday. He helped keep the show interesting.

brate excellence in film," Stewart said. "With me. The fourth male lead from 'Death to Smoochy.'"

Then he got rolling on some of his usual topics: the media, politics and, of course, Hollywood. He talked about a similarity in best

picture nominees "Capote" and "Good Night, and Good Luck."

"Both films are about determined journalists defying obstacles in a relentless pursuit of the truth," Stewart said. "Needless to say, both are period pieces."

Or his note that Steven Spielberg made both "Schindler's List" and "Munich": "I think I speak for all Jews," Stewart said, "when I say, I can't wait to see what happens to us next."

Or this: "Bjork couldn't be here tonight," Stewart said. "She was trying on her Oscar dress and Dick Cheney shot her."

All and all, it was a generally entertaining show on an Oscar night without the usual lineup of blockbusters.

There were no huge moments, no one-armed pushups or kings of the world. But the show rolled well, in big part because of Stewart's astuteness and wit.

As the show moved forward, Stewart's intelligence, his sense of playfulness and his attention to detail asserted themselves.

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Advertisement for ShowPlace 16. Promotes movies with magic and lists showtimes for Matinee Movie Magic.

CALENDAR

Today Meetings
Professional Referral Exchange of Indy South, 7 a.m., German-American Club, 8602 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Information: 902-6538

Franklin Rotary Club, noon, Franklin College student center

Greenwood Kiwanis Club, 6 p.m., Jonathan Byrd's Cafeteria, Main Street and Interstate 65, Greenwood

Trafalgar Weight Watchers, 6:30 to 7 p.m., Trafalgar Christian Church (next to elementary school). Information: 878-5161

TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), 6 p.m. weigh-in, 7 p.m. meeting, Morgantown Fire Station, 269 N. Highland St. Information: (812) 597-1535

Compulsive Eaters Anonymous, 6:30 p.m., Christ United Methodist Church Room 12, 8540 U.S. 31 South, Indianapolis. Information: 736-6234

TOPS (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), 7 p.m., Smith Valley Baptist Church. Information: 535-7468

Nineveh Group, 8 p.m., Johnson County Park Office

Serenity Group, 8 p.m., Johnson County Community Corrections, 1071 Hospital Road, Franklin

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