

'Crumbs' leaves viewers unfulfilled

A new sitcom with a veteran cast, "Crumbs" (9:30 p.m., ABC, TV-PG, D, L) is smart enough to challenge viewers with a mix of easy yucks, genuine pathos and some insight and character self-discovery.



Kevin McDonough

It also provides Jane Curtin with a venue for a standout performance, a tour de force balancing act of rage, self-pity and comic zaniness that is a sight to behold.

Fred Savage stars as Mitch Crumb, a Hollywood scriptwriter with a paralyzing case of writer's block. He's also gay, a fact he thinks he has kept from his family. While this could be the whole subject of a lesser comedy, Mitch's life in the closet is but a minor theme in the "Crumbs" symphony of dysfunction and denial.

In the show's well-crafted pilot, Mitch returns home to escort his mother, Suzanne (Curtin), home from the psychiatric facility where she was held after trying to run down her philandering husband, Billy (William Devane), and his new girlfriend.

Eddie McClintock rounds out the cast as Jody, Mitch's brother, who took over the family restaurant after Billy's departure. Jody resents his father for deserting the family and the business, and he dismisses Mitch as a rich Hollywood jerk who turned their private tragedy, the drowning death of their brother, into a screenplay.

Unbeknownst to everybody, Mitch is broke and washed up. And, in the logic of television, his return to set things right with his family becomes a prolonged stay in which he tries to work out his own repressed emotions.

This is all pretty heavy stuff for a sitcom, but "Crumbs" leaves the talk of medication, repression, hospitalization, grief and abandonment with standard sitcom one-liners. And that's where "Crumbs" runs into trouble.

The complex story and the characters' emotional depth continually run into the limitation of the format. Jody's character is so underdeveloped and reduced to dumb one-liners that he often seems like he's in an entirely different show.

The loud laugh track, annoying under any circumstance, is particularly dreadful and distracting here. And when we're not told when to laugh, we're told how to feel by the inevitable use of maudlin pop music. "Crumbs" doesn't need these shopworn sitcom crutches.

But back to Curtin. She steals this show right from under her experienced co-stars. Hell, it is said, hath no fury like a woman scorned. And as the dumped Suzanne Crumb, Curtin gives one hell of a performance.

A child psychologist examines the special challenges of raising and educating young boys in the two-hour documentary "Raising Cain" (9 p.m., WFYI, WTU).

• "Flight Attendant School" (9 p.m., Travel) follows 40 trainees chosen from more than 600 applicants. A second episode (9:30 p.m.) follows.

Tonight's other highlights

• Tom Bergeron hosts "Dancing with the Stars" (8 p.m., ABC, TV-G).

• Karen throws a party on an episode of "Will & Grace" (8 p.m., NBC, TV-14), performed before a live audience.

• A casino owner's mysterious demise on "CSI" (9 p.m., CBS, TV-14, V).

• An act of karmic penance demands that our hero work at a fast food joint on "My Name is Earl" (9 p.m., NBC, TV-14).

• Dubenko pinch hits for Clemente on "ER" (10 p.m., NBC, TV-14).

• Scheduled on "Primetime" (10 p.m., ABC): a husband's deadly secret; conformity and the herd mentality.

Cult choice

The voices of Alison Lohman, Patrick Stewart, Uma Thurman, Shia LaBeouf, Chris Sarandon, Edward James Olmos and Mark Hamill are heard in the feature-length 1984 anime fantasy "Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind" (8 p.m., TCM).

Series notes

Swingers on "Four Kings" (8:30 p.m., NBC, TV-14) ... A new look on "Love, Inc." (8:30 p.m., UPN, TV-PG) ... Rita's deception on "Eve" (9 p.m., UPN, TV-PG) ... Accidents will happen on "The Office" (9:30 p.m., NBC, TV-14) ... Kevin's tonic on "Cuts" (9:30 p.m., UPN, TV-PG).

Late night

Kiefer Sutherland, Andy Samberg and Alicia Keys appear on "Late Show With David Letterman" (11:35 p.m., CBS) ... Jay Leno hosts Emma Thompson and Sugarland on "The Tonight Show" (11:35 p.m., NBC).

Terrence Howard, Emily Procter and J.W. Hart chat on "Late Night With Conan O'Brien" (12:35 a.m., NBC) ... Craig Ferguson hosts Tom Selleck, Connie Britton and Ian Edwards on "The Late, Late Show" (12:37 a.m., CBS).

Kevin McDonough is a TV columnist for United Features Syndicate.

ACCENT ON PEOPLE

The Associated Press

Report: Jolie, Pitt expecting summer baby

Angelina Jolie is expecting a baby this summer with Brad Pitt.

The announcement affirms the long-presumed relationship previously only glimpsed on beaches and in paparazzi snapshots.



JOLIE

Pitt's publicist, Cindy Guagenti, told The Associated Press on Wednesday that Jolie is pregnant and that Pitt is the father, confirming People magazine's earlier report.

Lindsay Lohan 'appalled' by Vanity Fair article

Lindsay Lohan is "appalled" by the Vanity Fair article released last week in which she confessed to dabbling in drug and battling bulimia.

The Vanity Fair story made headlines for the 19-year-old actress' acknowledgment that she had battled bulimia.

In a statement, Lohan denied having bulimia and said, "The words that I gave to the writer for Vanity Fair were misused and misconstrued, and I'm appalled."



LOHAN

Vanity Fair, in a statement of its own, stood by its story.

Eminem, ex-wife apply for marriage license

Eminem and his ex-wife are going to get married again.

Kim Mathers has applied for a license to marry Marshall Bruce Mathers III, aka Eminem, a Michigan county clerk's office said Wednesday.

Eminem and his ex-wife, who married in 1999 and divorced in 2001, reconciled in late 2004 after a custody battle over their young daughter.

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THURSDAY EVENING

JANUARY 12, 2006

Table with 11 columns (7 PM to 11:30) and multiple rows listing TV programs, networks, and times for various channels like WTTV, WRV, WISH, etc.

Actor finds versatility with three TV series CALENDAR

By FRAZIER MOORE THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK For years, Seth Green has been popping up across the media horizon like Bugs Bunny from his countless rabbit holes.

Here's a guy as hard for the audience to get a bead on as Bugs is for poor Elmer Fudd, and arguably he's no less inventive.

Right now Green's work is in the sights of TV viewers on no fewer than three shows.

• On the animated "Family Guy" (9 p.m. Sunday on Fox), he furnishes the quavery whine of slothful teen Chris.

• On "Robot Chicken" (11:30 p.m. Sunday on Cartoon Network), his handiwork is evident as a creator, producer, director, writer and voice artist on this kookie stop-motion-animated sketch-comedy series populated by dolls and action figures.

• And on his new sitcom, "Four Kings" (8:30 p.m. Thursday on NBC), Green plays one of a quartet of twentysomething chums who cohabit a Manhattan apartment that serves as their zany halfway house between college and adulthood.

Green joins Josh Cooke (last



Seth Green stars in the new NBC series "Four Kings."

year's sitcom "Committed"). Shane McRae ("One Life to Live") and Todd Grinnell ("The Dangling Conversation") as the titular "Four Kings," which premiered last week.

But for Green, who in February will turn 32, these are just the latest credits in a quarter-century-long career.

Consider that at 10 he landed his first film assignment, in "Hotel New Hampshire" with Jodie Foster. He starred in Woody Allen's "Radio Days" as the boyhood version of

the Woody-inspired character.

Other film roles include "Knockaround Guys," "Can't Hardly Wait" and all three "Austin Powers" comedies. On TV he was Oz, a sometime werewolf on "Buffy, the Vampire Slayer," and costarred with an ill-tempered puppet on the zany "Greg the Bunny."

Now on "Four Kings," the 5-foot-4 Green stands tall as irrepressible Barry, a loudmouthed redhead given to boasts like, "Some lucky lady is gonna get herself a slice of Barry pie." (Which spurs the retort: "Really, more of a short bread.")

"I love it!" says Green, savoring the characters' give-and-take. "It's a lot of fun."

With shooting wrapped on "Four Kings," Green is halfway through filming the second year of "Robot Chicken," which should be finished by the time his sitcom resumes production, should it win a pickup for next fall.

Even if it doesn't, Green is pleased with his career.

"I love having gotten this far and having nobody label me too specifically," he says, "and without being the prey of the paparazzi. Nobody cares about my private life."

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Today Meetings

- Christian Businessmen of Franklin, 11:30 a.m., Ann's Restaurant, downtown Franklin. Women's Big Book Meeting, noon, 50 N. Home Ave., Franklin. 50 Plus of Greater Whiteland, 1 to 3 p.m., New Whiteland Town Hall, 401 Mooreland Drive, euchre. Woodmen Club, 6 p.m., Calvary Lutheran Church, Shelby Street, Greenwood. Edinburgh Lions Club, 6:30 p.m., Lions Club building, South Walnut Street. National Osteoporosis Foundation Southside Support Group, 6:30 p.m., Greenwood Public Library, 310 S. Meridian St. Xi Zeta Sigma chapter, 7 p.m. Sertoma Club of Greenwood, 6:45 p.m., Southern Dunes clubhouse, State Road 37 and Wicker Road. American Sewing Guild, 7 p.m., Franklin Public Library, 401 S. State St., salad pitch-in, fair show and tell. Family Alcohol and Drug Education, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., Tara Treatment Center, 6231 U.S. 31 South, Franklin. Free Greenwood Community Band, 7 p.m., Greenwood Community High School band room. Atterbury 12-Step Group, 8 p.m., building behind Johnson County Park Office. Franklin Men's Closed Discussion Meeting, 8 p.m., 50 N. Home Ave., Franklin.

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