

New CBS legal eagle doesn't quite soar

Jenna Elfman returns to prime time comedy in "Courting Alex" (9:30 p.m., CBS, TV-PG), as Alex Rose, a workaholic lawyer. Her name may be an anagram for Axel Rose, lead singer for "Guns N' Roses," but she's not ready to welcome you to any jungle.



Kevin McDonough

Alex's day is scheduled to the smallest detail. She hasn't purchased groceries or cooked a meal since 2002, and her dates consist of cell phone interruptions followed by protracted legal wrangling. She doesn't have a life, but she's got a wacky, lusty neighbor, a British painter with designs on her.

In the first episode, her father, a lawyer (Dabney Coleman in the role of a corporate shark he's played far too many times), sends her to negotiate with a tavern owner whose reluctance to sell the family business is holding up a big real estate deal. She's both intrigued and repelled by his young, hunky, blue-collar charms. So of course she kisses him. It's the first impulsive thing she's done since the turn of the century.

The pilot for "Alex" leaves it unclear whether this relationship is going to be the basis of the show or merely one romantic event in a series. And that's rather key to the future of the highly derivative "Alex." If they are an item, then "Alex" becomes "Dharma & Greg" in reverse, with Elfman in the uptight "Greg" role. If she moves on to other guys, then "Alex" can just throw its hat into the air and join the parade of comedies in the "Mary Tyler Moore" mold.

Given the friendly confines of the CBS Monday-night schedule, this pleasant if innocuous comedy doesn't have to stand out to survive. And the fact that it isn't "Out of Practice" will be a source of celebration to many.

"American Experience" (9 p.m., WFYI, WTIU) profiles "John & Abigail Adams." The two-hour joint biography emphasizes Abigail's calming influence on her often-impetuous husband. Looking back on his early days in the Continental Congress, John calls his behavior "obnoxious." The profile makes much of the Adams' friendship and subsequent bitter feuds with Thomas Jefferson, and John's fears that his pivotal role in the Revolution and the nation's founding would be forgotten by posterity or distorted by his enemies.

Judy Davis stars in "A Little Thing Called Murder" (9 p.m., Lifetime) as Sante Kimes, the head of a creepy mother-son con-artist team.

Based on a true story, the Sante case was also made into a CBS TV movie in 2001 starring Mary Tyler Moore.

Tonight's other highlights

• Unexpected legal woes on "Las Vegas" (9 p.m., NBC, TV-14).

- An awkward time for Jack and Audrey on "24" (9 p.m., Fox, TV-14, V).
- A random killing may be the work of a gang on "CSI: Miami" (10 p.m., CBS, TV-14, V).
- After rescuing a child, Allison suffers dark visions of his future actions on "Medium" (10 p.m., NBC, TV-14).
- Liberté, Egalité, Absurdité on "The Bachelor: Paris" (9 p.m., ABC). A second hour (10 p.m.) is "new," but it's the same old song and dance.

Cult choice

Well known for drowning in "The Poseidon Adventure," actress Shelley Winters played characters who met watery fates in "A Place in the Sun" (10 p.m., TCM) and "The Night of the Hunter" (12:15 a.m., TCM). TCM has revised its schedule to present an all-day film tribute to Winters, who died Jan. 14.

Series notes

Corporate collaborators on "Surface" (8 p.m., NBC, TV-PG) ... The competition continues on "Skating with Celebrities" (8 p.m., Fox, TV-PG) ... A fashion follower trades spaces with an Earth Mother of eight on "Wife Swap" (8 p.m., ABC, TV-14) ... A pumpkin deception on "One on One" (8 p.m., UPN, TV-PG, L) ... A bias attack on "7th Heaven" (8 p.m., WB, TV-G) ... Repercussions on "How I Met Your Mother" (8:30 p.m., CBS, TV-PG) ... A different shade on "All of Us" (8:30 p.m., UPN, TV-PG) ... Charlie's challenge on "Two and a Half Men" (9 p.m., CBS, TV-PG, D) ... Brutal litigation on "Girlfriends" (9 p.m., UPN, TV-14) ... Rose's choice on "Related" (9 p.m., WB, TV-PG, D, L) ... Joey Lawrence guest stars on "Half & Half" (9:30 p.m., UPN, TV-PG).

Late night

Anthony Hopkins appears on "Late Show With David Letterman" (11:35 p.m., CBS) ... Jay Leno hosts Ladysmith Black Mambazo and Sarah McLaughlin on "The Tonight Show" (11:35 p.m., NBC) ... David Gest and Feist appear on "Jimmy Kimmel Live" (12:05 a.m., ABC) ... Caroline Rhea and Mick Foley appear on "Late Night With Conan O'Brien."

Kevin McDonough is a TV columnist for United Features Syndicate.

MONDAY EVENING JANUARY 23, 2006

	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30
WTTV	NBA Basketball Indiana Pacers at Atlanta Hawks. From Philips Arena in Atlanta.						Pacers	7th Heaven "GOT MLK?" (N)	Related "The Godmother" (N)	
WRTV	The Insider (N)	Be a Millionaire	Wife Swap "Wiggins/Felix" (CC)	The Bachelor: Paris (CC)	The Bachelor: Paris (CC)	The Bachelor: Paris (N) (CC)	The Bachelor: Paris (N) (CC)	News (CC)	Nightline (11:35)	
WISH	Inside Edition	Ent. Tonight	King of Queens	How I Met	Two-Half Men	Courting Alex	CSI: Miami "Silencer" (N) (CC)	News (CC)	Late Show	
WTHR	Wheel-Fortune	Jeopardy! (N)	Surface (N) (CC)	Las Vegas (N) (CC)	Las Vegas (N) (CC)	Las Vegas (N) (CC)	Medium "Raising Cain" (N) (CC)	News (CC)	Tonight Show	
WFYI	Business Rpt.	Across Indiana	Antiques Roadshow "Tampa, FL"	American Experience "John and Abigail Adams" (N) (CC)	American Experience "John and Abigail Adams" (N) (CC)	American Experience "John and Abigail Adams" (N) (CC)	Tavis Smiley	Time Goes By		
WVXI	That '70s Show	That '70s Show	One on One	All of Us (CC)	Girlfriends (CC)	Half & Half (CC)	News	Access H'wood	South Park	South Park
WTIU	The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer	Antiques Roadshow "Tampa, FL"	Antiques Roadshow "Tampa, FL"	American Experience "John and Abigail Adams" (N) (CC)	American Experience "John and Abigail Adams" (N) (CC)	American Experience "John and Abigail Adams" (N) (CC)	Tavis Smiley (N)	Charlie Rose (N)		
WHMB	The 700 Club (CC)	Harvest (CC)	Harvest (CC)	Lester Sumral	This Is Your Day	Life Today (CC)	In Spirit-Truth	Van Impe Pres	Inside Indy	
WCJL	Kirk Cameron	Bishop Jakes	Behind Scenes	Mark Chironna	Jentezen F.	Jesse Duplantis	Praise the Lord (CC)			
WXIN	The Simpsons	Seinfeld (CC)	Skating With Celebrities (N) (CC)	24 "Day 5: 11:00AM - 12:00PM"	News (CC)	Geraldo Large	Seinfeld (11:05)	Drew Carey		
WIPX	Pyramid (CC)	Family Feud	Sue Thomas: F.B.Eye (CC)	Early Edition "Pinch Hitters" (CC)	Doc (CC)		It's a Miracle	Paid Program		
WTBU	Manna-Fest	John Hagee	Rod Parsley	Joni Lamb	Celebration	Jesse Duplantis	Hill Song (CC)	This Is Your Day	Believer's Voice	

A&E	Cold Case Files (CC)	Flip This House (CC)	Bounty Hunter	Bounty Hunter	Rollergirls "Warriors" Chola leads.	Crossing Jordan "Missing Pieces"
AMC	The Three Stooges (6:15) '00) **	The Blues Brothers (R) '80) ***	John Belushi, James Brown. Musical Comedy.	Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior (R) '81) *** (CC)		
AP	The Most Extreme "Gluttons"	Animal Cops Houston "Trouble"	Animal Cops Detroit "Cold as Ice"	Animal Cops Houston (CC)	Animal Cops Houston "Trouble"	
BET	106 & Park	Harlem Nights (R) '89) **	Eddie Murphy, Richard Pryor, Redd Foxx. Comedy-Drama.	The Parkers	The Parkers	In Living Color
BRAVO	The West Wing "No Exit" (CC)	The West Wing "Gaza" (CC)	Project Runway (CC)	Project Runway "On Thin Ice"	Inside the Actors Studio (CC)	
CNBC	On the Money	Biggest Loser: Special Edition	Mad Money	The Big Idea With Donny Deutsch	Biggest Loser: Special Edition	
CMT	Dukes of Hazzard "Gold Fever"	Three Wishes "Sonora, California"	Greatest Miss America Moments	The 2006 Miss America Pageant	Las Vegas.	
CNN	The Situation Room	Paula Zahn Now (CC)	Larry King Live (CC)	Anderson Cooper 360 (CC)		
COM	George Lopez: Why You Crying?	Daily Show	Colbert Report	Chappelle's	Premium Blend	Daily Show
DISC	Rough Racing: Driver X (N)	Biker Build-Off Russ Mitchell.	Monster Garage (CC)	American Chopper (N) (CC)	Rough Racing: Driver X	
EI	EI News (N)	EI News	Reese Witherspoon: Golden Girl	Dr. 90210 (N)	Saturday Night Live (CC)	
ESPN	College Basketball Syracuse at Pittsburgh. (CC)	College Basketball Tennessee at Duke. (CC)	College Basketball Oklahoma State at Texas. (CC)	Tennis Australian Open -- Men's and Women's Quarterfinals. From Melbourne, Australia.		
ESPN2	Quite Frankly	Women's College Basketball Tennessee at Duke. (CC)	Tennis Australian Open -- Men's and Women's Quarterfinals. From Melbourne, Australia.			
FAM	Smallville "Phoenix" (CC)	Wildfire Wildfire gets loose. (N)	Gilmore Girls (CC)	Whose Line? Whose Line?	The 700 Club (CC)	
FNC	Fox Report With Shepard Smith	The O'Reilly Factor (CC)	Hannity & Colmes (CC)	On the Record-Van Susteren	The O'Reilly Factor	
FOOD	Good Eats	Unwrapped	Emeril Live Salmon dishes.	Unwrapped (N)	Unwrapped	Secret Life of
FOXMV	When-Wholes	Fox Originals	Without a Trace (PG) '83) **	Judd Hirsch, Stockard Channing. Drama.	Ghost in the Machine (R) '93) **	Karen Allen, Ted Marcoux. Horror.
FOXSM	The Sports List	Totally Football	Poker Superstars Invitational	Best Damn Sports Show Period	Totally Football	Sports Report
FX	That '70s Show	That '70s Show	Daddy Day Care (PG) '03) **	Eddie Murphy, Jeff Garlin, Steve Zahn. Comedy.	That '70s Show	That '70s Show
HALL	JAG "Bridging the Gulf"	Walker, Texas Ranger (CC)	A Perry Mason Mystery: The Case of the Grimacing Governor '94)	M*A*S*H (CC)	M*A*S*H (CC)	
HGTV	Curb Appeal	House Hunters	Cash in Attic	Dream House	Extreme Homes	House Hunters
HIST	Modern Marvels "Silver Mines"	UFO Files "Deep Sea UFOs" (N)	Digging for the Truth (N) (CC)	Decoding the Past (N) (CC)	Six Degrees of Francis Bacon (N)	Will & Grace
LIFE	Love's Deadly Triangle: The Texas Cadet Murder '97) **	Drama. (CC)	A Little Thing Called Murder (NR) '06)	Judy Davis. Docudrama. (CC)	Will & Grace	Will & Grace
MSNBC	Hardball (CC)	Countdown With Keith Olbermann	Rita Cosby Live & Direct	Scarborough Country	The Situation With Tucker Carlson	
MTV	Direct Effect	Made "Skateboarder" Skater.	R. Wrd Chal.	R. Wrd Chal.	R. Wrd Chal.	There & Back
NICK	Oddparents	Jimmy Neutron	SpongeBob	Zoey 101 (CC)	Full House (CC)	Fresh Prince
OXY	Living Single	Living Single	The Secret of My Success (PG-13) '87) **	Michael J. Fox. Comedy.	Campus Ladies	Campus Ladies
SCI FI	Surface "Episode 5" (CC)	Stargate SG-1 "Cold Lazarus"	Stargate SG-1 "The Nox" (CC)	Stargate SG-1 "Cold Lazarus"	Battlestar Galactica "Epiphanies"	
SPIKE	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation	UFC Unleashed	
TBS	Every-Raymond	Every-Raymond	Friends (CC)	Friends (CC)	Friends (CC)	Friends (CC)
TCM	Winchester '73 (6:15) '50) ***	A Patch of Blue (NR) '65) ***	Sidney Poitier. Drama. (CC)	A Place in the Sun (NR) '51) ***	Montgomery Clift. Drama. (CC)	
TLC	Little Girl Burned (CC)	The Girl Who Turned to Stone (N)	Untold Stories of the E.R. (N)	Untold Stories of the E.R. (CC)	The Girl Who Turned to Stone	
TNT	Law & Order "Vendetta"	Law & Order "Publish and Perish"	Law & Order "Shrunk"	Law & Order "Blood Money"	Without a Trace "Risen" (CC)	
TOON	Foster's Home	Ben 10	Grim Advent.	Codename: Kid	Puffy AmiYumi	Foster's Home
TVL	Good Times	Good Times	Little House on the Prairie (CC)	Andy Griffith	Sanford & Son	Good Times
USA	Law & Order: Special Victims Unit	Law & Order: Criminal Intent (CC)	WWE Monday Night Raw (CC)		Law & Order: Criminal Intent (CC)	
VH1	Embarrassing Moments 2	Awesomely Bad Freakouts	Show Us Tats	Fabulous Life	Fabulous Life Of...	Celebrity Fit Club
WE	Dharma & Greg	Ever After: A Cinderella Story (PG-13) '98) ***	Drew Barrymore. Romance.	Style Me with Rachel Hunter	Ever After: A Cinderella Story '98)	
WGN	America's Funniest Home Videos	America's Funniest Home Videos (CC)		WGN News at Nine (CC)	Sex and the City	Becker (CC)

DISN	That's So Raven (CC)	That's So Raven (CC)	Monsters, Inc. (G) '01) ***	Voices of John Goodman, Mary Gibbs. Comedy. Animated. A blue behemoth and his assistant scare children.	The Suite Life of Zack & Cody	The Suite Life of Zack & Cody	That's So Raven (CC)	That's So Raven (CC)
ENC	Navy SEALs (6) (R) '90) **	Charlie Sheen. Adventure. (CC)	The Notebook (PG-13) '04) **	Ryan Gosling, James Garner. Romance. A man tells a story to a woman about two lovers. (CC)	The Alamo (10:15) (PG-13) '04) **	Dennis Quaid, Jason Patric. War. Outnumbered Texans fight to secede from Mexico. (CC)		
HBO	Men in Black (7:15) (PG-13) '97) ***	Tommy Lee Jones, Will Smith. Comedy. Secret agents monitor extraterrestrial activity on Earth. (CC)	Real Sports (CC)		Miss Congeniality 2: Armed and Fabulous (PG-13) '05) **	Sandra Bullock, Regina King, Ernest Murciano. Comedy. (CC)		
SHOW	Mermaids (PG-13) '90) ***	Cher, Bob Hoskins. Comedy-Drama. A teen deals with her first love and an unconventional mom. (CC)	The L Word "Lobster" Jenny brings Moira home. (CC)	HUFF "Lipstick on Your Panties" Huff deals with the legal fallout.	Sleeper Cell "Target" Shopping mall attack. (CC)			
MAX	Along Came Polly (6:30) (PG-13) '04) **	Ben Stiller. (CC)	Spanglish (PG-13) '04) **	Adam Sandler, Tea Leoni, Paz Vega. Comedy-Drama. A housekeeper works for a chef and his neurotic wife. (CC)	50 First Dates (10:15) (PG-13) '04) **	Adam Sandler, Rob Schneider. A man falls for a woman who has short-term memory loss. (CC)		
TMC	Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights (6:30) (PG-13) '04) **	Diego Luna.	The School of Rock (PG-13) '03) **	Jack Black, Joan Cusack, Mike White. Comedy. An unemployed guitarist poses as a teacher. (CC)	National Lampoon's Going the Distance (NR) '04) *	Christopher Jacot, Shawn Roberts. Comedy. (CC)	Boyz n the Hood (11:35) '91)	
STARZ	The Little Rascals (6) (94) **	Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle (R) '04) **	John Cho, Kai Penn, Paula Garcés. Comedy. (CC)	13 Going on 30 (PG-13) '04) ***	Jennifer Garner. An uncool girl magically becomes a successful adult.	Hostage (10:45) (R) '05) **	Bruce Willis. A former hostage negotiator tries to help a captive family. (CC)	

ACCENT ON PEOPLE

The Associated Press

MIAMI BEACH, Fla. Maybe singer needs more room to shimmy

Shakira wants more space and has put her 6,500-square-foot Florida mansion on the market, her real estate agent said.



SHAKIRA

The waterfront property in an exclusive area of Miami Beach has views of Biscayne Bay.

The asking price is \$5.9 million. The singer bought the home in 2001 for \$3.38 million, said Jorge Uribe of Sol Sotheby's International Realty.

The house has five bedrooms, six-and-a-half bathrooms, a pool and a dock.

Uribe said Shakira plans to stay in the swanky neighborhood, which also is home to singer Ricky Martin and actor Matt Damon.

PALM SPRINGS, Calif.

Actor's jab at lobbyist strikes bad chord

The father of disgraced lobbyist Jack Abramoff says George Clooney's off-color joke about his son's name during the Golden Globe Awards made the lobbyist's 12-year-old daughter cry.

In a letter to Clooney posted Friday on the Web site of The Desert Sun newspaper in Palm Springs, Frank Abramoff said he was astonished by the actor's "glib and ridiculous attack" during Monday's televised program.

"Your words were deeply hurtful to many innocent and decent people," Abramoff wrote.

"One day the truth about my son will come out and there will be a lot of people in your industry

and others lined up to apologize for their efforts to destroy him and our family."

He said the lobbyist's daughter, who was watching the show, was in "a fit of tears" after hearing Clooney's remarks.

"Are you proud of that?" Abramoff wrote. "Shame on you."

Clooney's father, Nick Clooney, told the newspaper: "I understand what it is like to have one's son criticized in a very public way. It's very painful, and it's very difficult."

Clooney took a jab at Abramoff after accepting a supporting actor trophy for the thriller "Syriana."

HONG KONG

Director: Asians not as critical of homosexuality

Director Ang Lee says Asian audiences are generally more accepting of gay subject matter than Americans.

"I think there's pressure to condemn (homosexuality) in their (Americans') religion which causes their homophobia," Lee said Saturday at an event to promote his new film, the gay cowboy romance "Brokeback Mountain."

Lee noted one of his previous movies about a gay couple, "The Wedding Banquet," received a less restrictive rating in his native Taiwan than in the United States.

A movie theater in Utah recently canceled showings of "Brokeback Mountain." The theater was owned by Larry H. Miller, a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which has spent millions of dollars campaigning against gay marriage and considers homosexual acts grounds for excommunication.

'Idol' premiere hits high note with viewers

By LYNN ELBER

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES

The return of Fox's "American Idol" captivated viewers, drawing its best-ever season premiere ratings.

The first episode of the talent contest's fifth season was watched Tuesday by an audience of 35.5 million, a 6 percent increase over last year's debut, according to preliminary Nielsen Media Research figures.

A total of 33.6 million viewers tuned in last year.

The final rating for the new season's two-hour opener was expected to vary slightly, if at all, from the preliminary figure, according to a Fox TV spokesman.

It was the most-watched entertainment program of the TV season so far, Fox said.

"To say we are surprised and pleased by last night's numbers would be a major understatement," Fox Entertainment President Peter Liguori said in a statement Wednesday.

Ken Warwick, one of the series' executive producers, said most TV shows have a sell-by date.

"There comes a time when people get fed up with them," he said.

He attributed the continuing success of "American Idol" to several factors, including the quality of the production and its ability to attract younger and older viewers.



AP PHOTO

Kelly Clarkson, the first winner of "American Idol," sold 5 million copies of her album "Breakaway," and was named favorite female performer at the 2005 People's Choice Awards.

Then there are the contestants. "Every time you see it (the show), just when you think nobody crazier or better or worse can walk through the door, there is someone who's crazier or better or worse," Warwick said. "That keeps it interesting."

As usual, "American Idol" began with host Ryan Seacrest

introducing the auditions — the good, the bad and the ugly — and equivalent reactions from judges Simon Cowell, Paula Abdul and Randy Jackson. Chicago was the site of the first tryouts, while Wednesday's show was to feature auditions in Denver.

After the judges voted to send one plump singer on to compete in Hollywood, the acerbic Cowell inquired whether the stage was larger this year.

He unsettled another by calling her tan and taste into question, and quickly silenced a man dressed as the Statue of Liberty.

Abdul, looking mildly uncomfortable, was serenaded by some male singers apparently trying to woo her vote.

The first "Idol" winner, Kelly Clarkson, has become a star in the past year, with huge sales for her hit "Since U Been Gone."

Her refusal to allow her songs to be used by new "Idol" contestants was criticized by Cowell, who said she was snubbing the show and its audience.

Clarkson has since relented and is allowing the show's contestants to use her songs.

CALENDAR

Today

Meetings
Greenwood Rotary Club, noon, Jonathan Byrd's Cafeteria, Main Street and Interstate 65, Greenwood

Overeaters Anonymous, 5:45 p.m., Greenwood United Methodist Church, 525 N. Madison Ave. Information: 889-0272

Divorce and grief support groups, 7 p.m., Greenwood Christian Church, 2045 Averitt Road. Child care provided. Information: 881-9336

Al-Anon, 8 p.m., Community Hospital South, first-floor conference room. Information: 357-9607

Tara Group, 8 p.m., Ann's Restaurant, 77 W. Monroe St., Franklin

Tuesday

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 Napolitan 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

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SHOWTIMES FOR JANUARY 23 - 26

END OF THE SPEAR (PG-13)
1:40 4:20 7:00 9:40

THE NEW WORLD (PG-13)