

'Monk,' show's star at their persnickety best

Tonight's "Monk" (10 p.m., USA) episode begins with a clever, neurotic twist.

It seems the picky detective buys only one brand of shirt from one particular shop. And not just any shirt, but only garments approved by Inspector No. 8.

Her dedication to perfection has inspired Monk (Tony Shalhoub) to write fan letters. So when she approves a few flawed shirts, he suspects that there may be trouble in her life. And he is correct.

Her son stands accused of the bloody murder of a fashion model. This plunges Monk and his police entourage into the flighty, fabulous world of the fashion business. And who better to play a despotic design mogul than Malcolm McDowell ("A Clockwork Orange")?

While we know Monk will find the real killer, we also know that his true motivation is not justice, but the pursuit of perfection. He's running out of flawless shirts.

The new cartoon adventure series "Ben 10" (9 p.m., Cartoon Network) gets a prime time airing before moving to its regular Saturday, 10 a.m. timeslot.

While out for a walk in the woods, Ben discovers a high-tech watch dispatched from an alien space pod. The device attaches itself to Ben's wrists and gives him the power to turn into 10 different super-powered creatures.

Needless to say, this provides him with immediate attention and respect. It also attracts attention from evil intergalactic bad guys who continually put Ben's new powers to the test.

A fun cartoon with plenty of action, humor and absurd situations, "Ben" does a good job of evoking the daydream fantasies of the average preadolescent male.

John Stossel hosts "Stupid in America: How We Are Cheating Our Kids," a special edition of "20/20" (10 p.m., ABC). Stossel argues that American schools are failing because they are run by local monopolies and that education would improve if students and parents were offered more choices.

He cites the Belgian educational system, in which school funding is attached to students and not to local districts. This forces schools to compete for students and compels failing schools to shut down.

Stossel cites charter schools in Oakland, Calif., and Milwaukee, Wis., as success stories. His case for the success of such schools and the abject failure of public education is presented in largely anecdotal terms. We hear no statistics about the success or failure rates of charter schools as a whole.

Not content to champion choice, Stossel uses the most loaded language and imagery to demonize public schools and other nonprivatized institutions, likening them to the Soviet Union.

Union members are presented as radical, unwashed and unqualified.



Kevin McDonough

And given the millions of teachers in America, Stossel spends an inordinate amount of time on a handful of teachers accused of sex offenses.

Given a mere hour to make a case for a whole new approach to education, Stossel spends too much time smearing an entire profession. Now that's "Stupid."

Tonight's other highlights

- The legacy of an executed man on "Ghost Whisperer" (8 p.m., CBS, TV-PG).
Family planning on "Bernie Mac" (8 p.m., Fox, TV-14, D, L).
A problem pug goes on the couch of "The Dog Whisperer" (8 p.m., National Geographic).
Difficult adjustments on "Trading Spouses" (9 p.m., Fox, TV-14).
A former athlete claims he was framed on "In Justice" (9 p.m., ABC, TV-14).

Cult choice

Dick Van Dyke, Janet Leigh and Ann-Margret star in the 1963 adaptation of the Broadway musical "Bye Bye Birdie" (8 p.m., TCM).

Series notes

On "Most Outrageous Moments" (NBC), old clips (8 p.m.), older clips (8:30 p.m.) ... The results are read on "Dancing with the Stars" (8 p.m., ABC, TV-PG) ... Wrestling on "Friday Night SmackDown" (8 p.m., UPN).

Well-kept secrets on "What I Like About You" (8 p.m., WB, TV-PG, D) ... Reese's rash decision on "Malcolm in the Middle" (8:30 p.m., Fox, TV-PG).

Late night

Tom Cavanagh and Jake Johannsen appear on "Late Show With David Letterman" (11:35 p.m., CBS) ... Jay Leno hosts Jake Gyllenhaal and Steve Irwin on "The Tonight Show" (11:35 p.m., NBC) ... Evangeline Lilly and Jonathan Rhys-Meyers appear on "Jimmy Kimmel Live" (12:05 a.m., ABC).

Queen Latifah chats on "Late Night With Conan O'Brien" (12:35 a.m., NBC) ... Craig Ferguson hosts Steven Wright and Anthony Hamilton on "The Late, Late Show" (12:37 a.m., CBS).

Kevin McDonough is a TV columnist for United Features Syndicate.

FRIDAY EVENING

JANUARY 13, 2006

Table with 11 columns (Time slots: 7 PM, 7:30, 8 PM, 8:30, 9 PM, 9:30, 10 PM, 10:30, 11 PM, 11:30) and rows of TV channels and programs.

ACCENT ON PEOPLE

The Associated Press

Jersey girl returns to roots for film premiere

Queen Latifah hosted a hometown premiere of her latest movie "Last Holiday" on Wednesday, inviting hundreds of guests to a city movie theater.



QUEEN LATIFAH

As she walked along a red carpet laid in the middle of a parking lot Latifah said she was happy to be back in Newark, N.J.

"It just means I don't have to go far to get home from the premiere," said Latifah, who has homes in New Jersey and Los Angeles. "My whole family is here, so it's wonderful. I can celebrate with Jersey for a change."

Mayor Sharpe James gushed about the Newark premiere. "She's our queen," he said. "This young lady is so multitalented."

SAN DIEGO

Vampire author moving to find simpler life

Less than a year after buying a luxury home in San Diego, author Anne Rice is selling the

dwelling and moving to the desert for a warmer climate and simpler life, her real estate agent said.



RICE

"She had been used to the heat of New Orleans for so many years, and she found La Jolla cold," said Bonnie Adams of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, referring to the San Diego neighborhood.

Rice, 64, is the best-selling author of 27 books, including "Interview With the Vampire" and "Christ the Lord: Out of Egypt."

MORGANTOWN, W.Va.

Country-music singer visits miner's family

Hank Williams Jr. visited the survivor of the West Virginia coal mine disaster Wednesday and recalled his own long recovery after tumbling off a mountain in the 1970s.

Williams visited with Randal McCloy Jr. and his family at Ruby Memorial Hospital.

McCloy's wife, Anna, told reporters last week that her husband liked Williams' music.

"I had a big mountain fall in the '70s, and they said I wouldn't live," Williams said. "It really, really affected me and I said, 'I've just got to go there.'"

Actress' goal? Adding a woman's point of view CALENDAR

By TERRY MORROW

SCRIPPS HOWARD NEWS SERVICE

Even a year ago, Heather Graham never really looked at weekly television as an option.

However, "I got really inspired by some of the really good television on right now," says the 35-year-old actress, whose film credits include "Boogie Nights" and "Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me."

"Emily's Reasons Why Not" (9 p.m. Mondays, ABC) has Graham playing a single career woman trying to navigate office politics and her harried love life. It's based on the book of the same name.

"I always loved 'Sex and the City,' 'Scrubs' and 'Arrested Development.' I think there are TV shows out there that are better than a lot of movies," she says. "I go to a lot of movies now that have nothing going for them. I see a lot happening in television right now. It's a good time to get into it."

Though "Emily" marks her first turn as the star of a weekly series, Graham did get her feet wet last year when she had a recurring role on "Scrubs" as a sweet but know-it-all doctor.

As Emily, she plays a woman who's less self-assured and wiser to the ways of the world. She's constantly quarreling with a co-worker while pining away for the office hunk, who is reluctant to sleep with her.

Like Emily, "I definitely think in some ways I'm seeking and



SCRIPPS HOWARD PHOTO

Khary Payton, Heather Graham and Nadia Dajani, from left, star in "Emily's Reasons Why Not." Graham says the show's female perspective attracted her.

looking," Graham says of her life.

She sees "Emily" as being about "self-empowerment" and "trying to find a way of (going) beyond relationships, beyond what's happening in your life, and feeling good about yourself."

She's hoping the show will be more than about Emily's love life.

"They are not going to do just 'date of the week' (stories). I think they will do a lot of friendship drama," she says, citing an upcoming story in which a new girl comes between Emily and her best friend (Nadia Dajani). She

says that when she read the script she thought immediately of Dajani to play the role; they've been close for 16 years.

She's also hoping "Emily" can be a series to which single women can relate.

"There are no series right now that are stories about women and stuff," she says. "Most of the entertainment business is ... male-driven. I like things from a female perspective."

Country Breakfast advertisement for Rocklane Christian Church, Franklin Rd & Rocklane Rd, Saturday, Jan. 14th, 2006, 7:00 am to 9:30 am.

CINEMARK advertisement for Greenwood Park 14, listing movies like Grandpa's Boy, The Ringer, and Cheaper by the Dozen 2.

AMC advertisement for The Greenhouse Inn, listing movies like The Ringer, Cheaper by the Dozen 2, and Fun with Dick & Jane.

CANARY CREEK CINEMAS advertisement listing movies like Hoodwinked, Last Holiday, and The Ringer.

Advertisement for Five Buck Movies, ShowPlace 16, and Matinee Movie Magic for Moms and Dads.