

Two ABC sitcoms crash and burn

Even the worst new sitcom can be instructive in its own sad way. And "The Knights of Prosperity" (9 p.m., ABC, TV-14) and "In Case of Emergency" (9:30 p.m., ABC, TV-14) are among the worst.



Kevin McDonough

For reasons unknown, "Emergency" has an odd resemblance to "Class," the soon-to-expire CBS sitcom. Both comedies involve a contrived reunion of old classmates. And both kick off with a major player on the verge of suicide. Cue the laugh track.

Harry (Jonathan Silverman) is a sad and rather neurotic divorced man (not unlike Jon Cryer's Alan on "Two and a Half Men"). He's reduced to going to a massage-parlor prostitute, where he discovers that his "date" is Kelly (Kelly Hu), a promising genius from high school.

Meanwhile, Jason (David Arquette) has a pistol in his head because he's afraid to face prison for his Enron-like firm's misdeeds. Classmate Sherman (Greg Germann) has become a Dr. Phil-like diet guru. But his dream world crashes in a slapstick series of events that I found unfunny.

These classmates come together because sad-sack Harry is the only person left in their lives they can call in case of emergency if stranded at the hospital or police lockup. The similarly dreadful sitcom "Til Death" makes a similar if grim point that marriage is really about having somebody to drive you to the hospital.

According to recent lore, "The Knights of Prosperity" was originally titled "Let's Rob Jeff Goldblum" and then retitled "Let's Rob Mick Jagger." These two amusing titles summed up the show's premise rather concisely. But it was changed to "Knights," a title neither funny nor meaningful.

"Knights" stars Donal Logue as Eugene, a bored janitor who finds his life going nowhere. He catches an entertaining puff piece on Jagger's posh New York apartment and has a moment of clarity.

His life would be better if he robbed Jagger and used the money to fund his dream to open a bar in Queens. He recruits a team of knuckleheads to help him realize his dream.

"Knights" borrows heavily from "My Name Is Earl." Like Earl, Eugene has a TV-inspired epiphany. But while "Earl" presents an absurd and quixotic quest for redemption, "Knights" is more like a parody of "Ocean's Eleven" put on by parodies of the Three Stooges.

Jagger appears in brief scenes, camping it up as a gazillionaire unaware of the envy his lavish lifestyle evokes in the little people.

"Knights" is nowhere near as dreadful and sad as "Emergency," but both shows exude contempt for regular guys. Both shows seem to say that if you are not a winner or a player, you are a loser.

And if you a loser, you will turn to suicide, prostitution or crime to escape your average life.

Tonight's other highlights

- "Wired Science" (8 p.m., WFTU, WTIU) looks at meteor hunters and virus harvests.
- Matt's dad returns from Iraq on "Friday Night Lights" (8 p.m., NBC, TV-14).
- Opposites clash on the new season of "Beauty and the Geek" (8 p.m., CW).

Cult choice

Tom Berenger, Willem Dafoe and Charlie Sheen star in director Oliver Stone's 1986 Vietnam war drama "Platoon" (8 p.m., AMC).

Series notes

Pugilism on "According to Jim" (8 p.m., ABC, TV-PG) ... A dog's life on "Two and a Half Men" (8:30 p.m., CBS, TV-14) ... A couple of killers on "Criminal Minds" (9 p.m., CBS, TV-14) ... Howie Mandel hosts "Deal or No Deal" (9 p.m., NBC) ... Killer logos on "CSI: NY" (10 p.m., CBS, TV-14).

Late night

Matt Lauer and Artie Lange appear on "Late Show with David Letterman" (11:35 p.m., CBS) ... Jay Leno hosts Justin Timberlake, Masi Oka and Matisyahu on "The Tonight Show" (11:35 p.m., NBC) ... Courtney Cox Arquette, Andy Dick and the Twilight Singers appear on "Jimmy Kimmel Live" (12:05 a.m., ABC).
Craig Ferguson hosts Kate Walsh, Clark Gregg and Skyler Stone on "The Late, Late Show" (12:37 a.m., CBS).

Kevin McDonough is a TV columnist for United Features Syndicate.

WEDNESDAY EVENING

JANUARY 3, 2007

	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30
WTTV	Friends (CC)	Every-Raymond	Beauty and the Geek (N) (CC)				Friends (CC)	Will & Grace	Sex and the City	Will & Grace
WRTV	The Insider (N)	Extra (N) (CC)	According-Jim	According-Jim	Knights-Prosperity	In Case-Emer	Primetime (10:03) (N) (CC)		News (CC)	Nightline (11:35)
WISH	Inside Edition	Entertainment	King of Queens	Two-Half Men	Criminal Minds (CC)		CSI: NY "Hung Out to Dry" (CC)		News (CC)	Late Show
WTHR	Wheel-Fortune	Jeopardy! (N)	Friday Night Lights "Nevermind"		Deal or No Deal (N) (CC)		Medium "Mother's Little Helper"		News (CC)	Tonight Show
WFIY	Business Rpt.	Farmers' TV	Wired Science (N) (CC)		The Hidden Art of Hollywood		American Masters (N) (CC)			Time Goes By
WNDY	That '70s Show	That '70s Show	Watch Over Me Love is in the air.		Watch Over Me (N) (CC)		News	Access H'wood	Bernie Mac	South Park
WTIU	The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer		Wired Science (N) (CC)		American Masters (N) (CC)			Encore! With	Tavis Smiley	BBC World
WHMB	The 700 Club (CC)		College Basketball Purdue at Minnesota.				Life Today (CC)	Mount Zion	J. Mack Gospel	Paid Program
WCLJ	Billy Graham Classic Crusades		Behind Scenes	Grant Jeffrey	Secrets of Bible	Van Impe Pres				
WXIN	The Simpsons	Pregame (CC)	College Football Allstate Sugar Bowl -- LSU vs. Notre Dame. (8:15)							
WIPX	Growing Pains	Growing Pains	Mama's Family	Mama's Family	Diagnosis Murder (CC)		Charlie's Angels		Time Life Music	Paid Program
WDTI	David Reagan	John Hagee	Rod Parsley	Joni Lamb	Celebration		Jimmy, Karen	Wisdom Keys	This Is Your Day	Believer's Voice
A&E	CSI: Miami "Deviant" (CC)		CSI: Miami "Collision" (CC)		CSI: Miami "Bunk" (CC)		CSI: Miami "Forced Entry" (CC)		CSI: Miami (CC)	
AMC	The Last Samurai (4:45) '03 ***		Platoon (R) '86) **** Tom Berenger, Willem Dafoe, Charlie Sheen.				War.	Casualties of War (R) '89) *** Michael J. Fox. War.		
AP	The Most Extreme "Gross Outs"		Blue Planet: Seas of Life (CC)		African River Goddess (CC)		Animal Precinct "Team Rescue"		Blue Planet: Seas of Life (CC)	
BET	106 & Park	Movie Special	Bring That Year Back (CC)		American Gangster "Smith Bros."		Comicview (CC)		Jamie Foxx	Jamie Foxx
BRAVO	Top Chef Thanksgiving dinner.		Top Chef (R)		Top Chef "Holiday Spirit" (CC)		Top Chef "Seven" (N) (CC)		Top Chef "Seven" (11:15) (CC)	
CNBC	On the Money		1 vs. 100 (CC)		Mad Money		The Big Idea With Donny Deutsch		1 vs. 100 (CC)	
CMT	Dukes of Hazzard		Hee Haw Mel Tillis; Glen Campbell.		Hee Haw Conway Twitty.		Hee Haw		Mama's Family	Mama's Family
CNN	The Situation Room		Paula Zahn Now (CC)		Larry King Live (CC)		Anderson Cooper 360 (CC)			
COM	Scrubs (CC)	Scrubs (CC)	Daily Show	Colbert Report	Mind of Mencia	South Park	South Park	Mind of Mencia	Daily Show	Colbert Report
DISC	MythBusters Mind control. (CC)		Mega Builders "Roller Coaster"		MythBusters "Exploding Pants"		Stunt Junkies	Stunt Junkies	Futureweapons	
EI	EI News (N)	The Daily 10 (N)	Girl Next Door	Girl Next Door	Dr. 90210 Penile implant.		High 90210	Girl Next Door	EI News	The Daily 10
ESPN	College Gameday (CC)		College Basketball Pennsylvania at North Carolina. (CC)				Ali's 65 (N)		Ali's Dozen	
ESPN2	College Basketball Kansas State at Xavier. (CC)				College Basketball Gonzaga at Virginia. (CC)				Quite Frankly With Smith	
FAM	Smallville "Mortal" (CC)		Stepmom (PG-13) '98) ** Julia Roberts, Susan Sarandon, Ed Harris. Drama. (CC)				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 John Corbett.		Challenge Sugar sculptures.		Good Eats	Ham on Street	Good Eats	Tasty Travels
FOXMOV	Class Action (6) (R) '91) ***		Hitler's SS: Portrait in Evil '85) ** John Shea, Bill Nighy, Tony Randall. Drama.				Film School		The Other Side of Midnight (77) **	
FOXSM	Totally Football	FSN Live	Destination Wild/Totally Football		Poker Superstars Invitational		Best Damn Hooters Dreamgirl		FSN Live	Final Score
FX	Spider-Man 2 (5) (PG-13) '04) ****		XXX (PG-13) '02) ** Vin Diesel. Action. A spy tries to stop an anarchist with weapons.		XXX (PG-13) '02) ** Vin Diesel, Asia Argento. Action.					
HALL	Walker, Texas Ranger (CC)		Walker, Texas Ranger (CC)		Jane Doe: Vanishing Act '05) Lea Thompson, Joe Penny. Adventure. (CC)		Perry Mason Mystery			
HGTV	If Walls Could	House Hunters	Designed to Sell/Buy Me		Design-Dime	Design-Dime	House Hunters	House Worth?	Junk Brothers	Hidden Potential
HIST	Modern Marvels "Shovels" (CC)		The Boneyard (CC)				Modern Marvels "Logging Tech"		Modern Marvels "Bricks" (CC)	
LIFE	Still Standing	Still Standing	Reba "Switch" Reba (CC)		The Promise '99) Isabella Hofmann, Neil Maffin. Drama. (CC)		Will & Grace		Will & Grace	
MSNBC	Hardball (CC)		Countdown With Keith Olbermann		Scarborough Country		Gospel of Judas			
MTV	Boiling Points	Boiling Points	The Real World	The Real World	The Real World	The Real World	The Real World	The Real World	True Life "I'm On Vacation"	
NICK	OddParents	Jimmy Neutron	SpongeBob	SpongeBob	Full House (CC)	Full House (CC)	Roseanne (CC)	Roseanne (CC)	Fresh Prince	Fresh Prince
OXY	A Perfect Murder (R) '98) ** Michael Douglas, Viggo Mortensen. Mystery.				A Perfect Murder (R) '98) ** Michael Douglas, Viggo Mortensen. Mystery.					
SCIFI	Dagon (R) '01) ** Ezra Godden. Raquel Merono. Horror. (CC)		Route 666 (R) '01) * Lou Diamond Phillips, Steven Williams. Horror. (CC)		House of the Dead 2 (R) '05) * (CC)					
SPIKE	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation	The Gauntlet (R) '77) ** Clint Eastwood, Sondra Locke, Pat Hingle. Drama.						CSI: Crime Scene	
TBS	Every-Raymond/Every-Raymond	Every-Raymond/Every-Raymond	Every-Raymond/Every-Raymond		Every-Raymond/Every-Raymond		Sex and the City	Sex and the City	My Boys	Cocktail '88) **
TCM	Irene (6) (NR) '40) ** Anna Neagle.		Gunfight at the O.K. Corral (NR) '57) *** Burt Lancaster. Western.		Hour of the Gun (10:15) (NR) '67) *** James Garner. Western.					
TLC	Amazing Medical Stories (CC)		Supersize She (CC)		Untold Stories of the E.R. (CC)		Extraordinary Pregnancies		Supersize She (CC)	
TNT	Without a Trace "4.0" (CC)		Without a Trace (CC)		Without a Trace "Rage" (CC)		Without a Trace "Trials" (CC)		Las Vegas "Mothwoman" (CC)	
TOON	Foster's Home	Foster's Home	Pokemon-Battle	Gym Partner	Camp Lazlo	Squirrel Boy	Xiaolin Show.	Futurama (CC)	Futurama (CC)	Family Guy
TVL	Andy Griffith	Andy Griffith	M*A*S*H (CC)	M*A*S*H (CC)	M*A*S*H (CC)	M*A*S*H (CC)	Memories of M*A*S*H (CC)		M*A*S*H (CC)	
USA	Law & Order: Criminal Intent (CC)	Law & Order: Criminal Intent (CC)	Law & Order: Special Victims Unit	Law & Order: Special Victims Unit	Law & Order: Special Victims Unit	Law & Order: Special Victims Unit	Law & Order: Criminal Intent (CC)		Law & Order: Criminal Intent (CC)	
VH1	America's Next Top Model (CC)		America's Next Top Model (CC)		America's Next Top Model (CC)		America's Next Top Model (CC)		America's Next Top Model (CC)	
WE	Dharma & Greg	Hope & Faith (CC)	Hope & Faith		Dirty Dancing "Artem; Cha Cha"		Dirty Dancing (N) (CC)		Bridezillas (CC)	
WGN	America's Funniest Home Videos	Home Improve.	Home Improve.		Becker (CC)	Becker (CC)	WGN News at Nine (CC)		Sex and the City	Scrubs (CC)
DISN	Phil of the Future (CC)	That's So Raven (CC)	Zenon: Girl of the 21st Century '99) Kirsten Storms, Gregory Smith. Science Fiction. A girl raised on a space station gets to Earth. (CC)		Life With Derek	Phil of the Future (CC)	The Suite Life	That's So Raven (CC)		
ENC	Chances Are (6:05) (PG) '89) ** Cybill Shepherd. Fantasy. (CC)		Christmas With the Kranks (PG) '04) ** Tim Allen. Tomstone (9:45) (R) '93) *** Kurt Russell, Val Kilmer, Michael Biehn. Western. Doc A couple scramble to assemble a holiday celebration. Holiday joins Wyatt Earp for OK Corral showdown. (CC)							
HBO	Major Payne (6) (PG-13) '95) ** Musical Comedy. Two men scheme to swindle investors in a Broadway flop. (CC)		The Producers (7:45) (PG-13) '05) ** Nathan Lane, Matthew Broderick, Uta Thurman. Musical Comedy. Two men scheme to swindle investors in a Broadway flop. (CC)		Inside the NFL (N) (CC)		Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace (PG) '99) ** (CC)			
SHOW	Maverick (6:55) (PG) '94) *** Mel Gibson, James Garner. Western. A conniving cardsharp heads for a high-stakes poker game. (CC)		Boyz n the Hood (9:05) (R) '91) *** Larry Fishburne, Ice Cube. Drama. Three boys become men in a tough L.A. neighborhood. (CC)				Boxing Samuel Peter vs. James Toney. (CC)			
MAX	John Carpenter's Vampires '98) Conspiracy Theory (7:45) (R) '97) ** Mel Gibson, Julia Roberts, Patrick Stewart. Suspense. A paranoid cabbie's rantings make him a CIA target. (CC)		Rumor Has It ... (PG-13) '05) ** Jennifer Aniston, Kevin Costner, Shirley MacLaine. Comedy. (CC)		Bedtime Stories (11:40) (CC)					
TMC	Donnie Darko (6:30) (R) '01) ** Jake Gyllenhaal. A prophetic rabbit tells a teen that the world will end.		Dirty Merchant (NR) '99) ** Danny Masterson. A former mail clerk has to solve the murder of a rock star.		Me and You and Everyone We Know (R) '05) ** John Hawkes, Miranda July. Comedy-Drama. (CC)		The Crow (R) '94) *** (CC)			
STARZ	Six Days, Seven Nights (7:15) (PG-13) '98) ** Harrison Ford. A pilot and a high-strung editor are marooned on an island. (CC)		Derailed (R) '05) ** Clive Owen, Jennifer Aniston, Vincent Cassel. Suspense. Adulterous lovers face a violent blackmailer. (CC)		The Matador (10:50) (R) '05) ** Pierce Brosnan, Hope Davis. (CC)					

ACCENT ON PEOPLE

The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS Spears falls asleep in club after countdown

Britney Spears finally appears to be acting like a new mom.

The pop princess, who recently made headlines for a rash of less-than-motherly hard partying, fell asleep in a Las Vegas nightclub early Monday shortly after leading the New Year's Eve countdown, her manager said.

"By about one o'clock, she was just done, so we took her out," said Spears' manager, Larry Rudolph. "She was not drunk. She was just tired and falling asleep."

Rudolph denied reports circulating on gossip Web sites that Spears, 25, collapsed shortly after midnight and was carried out by bodyguards.

The star was hired to host the festivities at Caesars Palace PURE nightclub.

Rudolph said Spears walked out of the club and did not seek medical attention.

"There is nothing out of the ordinary here," he said.

Spears was traveling with her two sons, 3-month-old Jayden James and 1-year-old Sean Preston.

She filed for divorce in November from her husband of two years, Kevin Federline.

In a statement on her Web site posted late last month, Spears noted that in recent nights out, one in which she flashed her apparent lack of underwear to the paparazzi, she may have taken her "newfound freedom a little too far."

LONDON

Model denies reports of marriage to rocker

A spokesman for Kate Moss denied reports the supermodel and rocker Pete Doherty had tied the knot during a candlelit Buddhist ceremony in Thailand on New Year's Day. Stuart Higgins said Moss, 32, was vacationing in Thailand but hadn't married Doherty, frontman for Babyshambles.

"There has not been any kind of marriage ceremony in Thailand. She is on holiday," Higgins said.

British newspapers reported that Moss and Doherty had held the ceremony in the Thai resort of Phuket. Neither the Sun nor the Daily Mirror provided sources for the information. The Mirror quoted an unnamed friend of Moss as saying the ceremony was an expression of the couple's mutual devotion.

Higgins called the reports entirely false.

LONDON

George Michael accused of driving violation

George Michael is scheduled to appear in court Jan. 11 on charges of being unfit to drive, police said.

The 43-year-old singer was arrested Oct. 2 after police responded to complaints that a car was blocking an intersection in north London. Police said Michael was found passed out inside the car.

Michael received a caution for possession of marijuana and was released on bail on charges of being unfit to drive, police said.

By CELEAN JACOBSON

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa

Oprah Winfrey opened a school Tuesday for disadvantaged girls, fulfilling a promise she made to former President Nelson Mandela six years ago and giving more than 150 students a chance for a better future.

"I wanted to give this opportunity to girls who had a light so bright that not even poverty could dim that light," Winfrey said at a news conference.

Mandela was among the guests at the opening of the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls in the small town of Henley-on-Klip, south of Johannesburg.

"This is a lady that has, despite her own disadvantaged background, become one of the benefactors of the disadvantaged throughout the world," Mandela said in a statement.

Singers Tina Turner, Mary J. Blige and Mariah Carey, actors Sidney Poitier and Chris Tucker and director Spike Lee also were in attendance. Each guest was asked to bring a personally inscribed book for the library.

Winfrey has said that she decided to build her own school because she wanted to feel closer to the people she was trying to help.

The \$40 million academy aims to give 152 girls from deprived backgrounds a quality education in a country where schools are



AP PHOTO

Oprah Winfrey and students cut the ribbon Tuesday at the official opening of her Leadership Academy for Girls in Henley-on-Klip, South Africa. Winfrey opened the school for poor but talented South African girls.

struggling to overcome the legacy of apartheid.

By educating girls, Winfrey said she hoped she could help "change the face of a nation."

"Girls who are educated are less likely to get HIV/AIDS, and in this country which has such a pandemic, we have to begin to change the pandemic," she said.

Many of the girls come from families affected by the disease, which has infected 5.4 million of the 48 million population and hit women disproportionately hard.

Winfrey referred repeatedly to her own impoverished childhood and said she was grateful that

she at least had a good education, declaring this to be "the most vital aspect of my life."

"I was a poor girl who grew up with my grandmother, like so many of these girls, with no water and electricity," said the talk show host, dressed in a pink ball gown and jacket.

She vowed to make the academy the "best school in the world" and promised that she would continue to support the girls so they could attend any university in the world.

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ROCKY BALBOA (PG) 12:30 2:45 5:00 7:15 9:30
WE ARE MARSHALL (PG) 12:30 2:45 5:00 7:15 9:30
ERAGON (PG) 12:30 2:45 5:00 7:15 9:30
CHARLOTTE'S WEB (G) 12:30 2:45 5:00 7:15 9:30
PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS (PG-13) 12:30 2:45 5:00 7:15 9:30
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BLACK CHRISTMAS (R) 1:40am 2:30 5:10 7:40
DREAMGIRLS (PG-13) 10:00am 1:00 4:00 7:15 10:30
THE GOOD SHEPHERD (R) 11:00am 2:40 6:20 9:00 9