

Television

CBS show designs better breed of Southern women

By **BILLY STOCKARD**
Staff Writer

In the past, television was not kind to Southerners. In shows like "The Dukes of Hazzard," Southerners were portrayed as ignorant, illiterate and uncivilized. The men were either too gentlemanly or too ignorant. Also, the women were forced to fit the sexy Daisy Duke or the Southern belle Scarlett O'Hara stereotype ... until now.

The CBS comedy "Designing Women" has changed television comedy for the better. "Designing Women" wants to do more than make us laugh. It wants to change our attitudes.

Based in an Atlanta decorating agency called Sugarbaker's, which is run by four women, "Designing Women" challenges the stereotype of Southern stupidity. Although the women do speak with heavy Georgia accents, they are funny, compassionate, socially aware and successful. For once, people south of the Mason-Dixon Line are being appreciated by national television. "Designing Women" has tackled tough issues like AIDS, racism, the rights of women and workers, political mudslinging and the elderly. But the key to the program's success is its ability to throw these ideas in the viewers' faces with light-hearted style.

The characters are some of the most original to come on the tube in a long time. They are all fresh, enjoyable and modern; each lady shows her own special kind of talent. Their charm is "belle" enough to appeal to the South, yet even a person in Rochester or Minneapolis can appreciate the wit of the writing and the range of the characters. But it's more than script that makes a show; it's the cast, too.

Julia Sugarbaker (Dixie Carter) is the head honcho of Sugarbaker's, the interior design firm which bears her name. She is the wise one who will tell no lies to her friends or enemies. Julia is compassionate yet strong, loyal yet

unpredictable, and has a temper that can flare up like a grease fire. She blasts ignorance and arrogance with long-winded speeches that cut her opponents down lower than Geraldo Rivera's ethics. Those who cross Julia soon find out what a voice of reason she is. One of her prime targets is often her own sister, Suzanne.

Suzanne Sugarbaker (Delta Burke) is a typical Southern belle. Suzanne's heroine is Scarlett O'Hara, and her hobby is marrying old, rich men who die and leave her their money. Julia's extremely self-centered sister is virtually unaware of the world around her; she has been known to aim her Mercedes at picketers outside Sugarbaker's and to keep a pet pig named Noel. Her favorite topic of conversation is her record of beauty pageant awards, a subject that Julia belittles with snappy, sarcastic frequency. Suzanne is the most ridiculous, laughable and materialistic of these women; she is also the one who fits the traditional southern mold. We laugh at Suzanne's outrageousness, but what's good about the show is that we're laughing at the silly notions we take for granted.

Charlene Frazier (Jean Smart) is a sweet, slightly airheaded, loving secretary at Julia's firm. She is dedicated to Elvis, cares about everybody and loves to tell stories about her childhood. Charlene may appear stupid, but she is surprisingly insightful and perceptive. She most recently became the only married "designing woman" in a ceremony full of mishaps. And at her wedding, she tossed her bouquet to Mary Jo.

Mary Jo Shiveley (Annie Potts) is another Sugarbaker employee; her distinction is that of being a divorced mother of two. Mary Jo, put simply, is cute. She is motherly and patient, even with Suzanne. Mary Jo is, like Julia, a voice of reason, yet she has a softness that her employer rarely shows. She is often frazzled by the people she has to work with, but when this

character gets mad, it's like watching a puppy barking with all its might. Mary Jo is the ideal wife and mother, yet she doesn't seem to get all the good things she deserves.

All four ladies think the world of Anthony (Meshach Taylor), a black ex-con who often refers to his "unfortunate incarceration." Anthony has found happiness by working for Julia and has a real head on his shoulders, as do all of the characters (except maybe Suzanne). His presence is also a testimony of racial relations, and his starting over after prison is somewhat inspirational to others like him.

Each person has his or her special place in making "Designing Women" a memorable show. The lines are so brilliantly funny because they make us laugh at ourselves and at the images we've created and accepted. Check out "Designing Women," airing right after "Murphy Brown" Monday nights on CBS. Not only is it a nice study break, it's a nice life break.

Baseball movie in own league

By **ANDREW LAWLER**
Staff Writer

"Major League" is an extremely entertaining, often hilarious movie about baseball. Tom Berenger, Charlie Sheen and Corbin Bernsen star in this comedy about a hapless Cleveland Indians team. The team is in a 34-year slump, and fans think little better of the Indians than we do of UNC parking.

The old owner dies, leaving the team to his ex-showgirl wife. She wants to move the team from Cleveland to Miami (who can blame her?). However, the only way she can accomplish that is by making the team so bad that attendance falls below 800,000 for the season.

With this in mind, she hires a team of has-been and wanna-be misfits, veterans believed to be past their prime and untested rookies. They'll be so bad this year, she reasons, that no one will come to see them. Then she can move the team, fire them all and get a 'real' team.

Amazingly, the team begins to come together and win some games. The owner retaliates by making them travel by bus to road games, cutting off the hot water and leaving the broken machines unfixed. The team finally learns of her plans and realizes it can do but one thing. "Win the whole f---ing thing!"

The performances in this film are quite good, led off by Academy award-nominee Tom Berenger as veteran catcher Jake Taylor. Tay-

General College

By **ANDREW LAWLER**
Staff Writer

Among the excitement last week on General College ... Jason and Courtney found sanctuary as Rex and Didi in Mark's grandmother's inn. Mary Catherine discovered Sarah bound and gagged in Joseph's apartment. Damon pressured Violet to accept his offer but was spurned by Shenelce and Amy.

Mary Catherine urged Sarah to go to the police but Sarah refused, stating she wants to put it all behind her. Sure.

Nurse-of-all-trades Rabinowicz informed Kyle that an operation may help him walk again. Overjoyed Kyle busses Meg. The kiss turned passionate

Back in South Carolina, our favorite fugitives hear from Mark at dinner that the police are still searching for them.

Later, Jason and Courtney begin to get it on after Jason lip synchs "ABC" (don't try this at home, folks — he's a trained professional) but are interrupted by Mark, who barges in to tell them he'll be back in a couple of days. The mood broken, the frustrated fugitives go to their respective bed and couch.

Liz takes Anne home from a concert after Anne complains

of a migraine. Anne's migraines began shortly after Trevor was shot.

Trip and Priscilla get back together because Priscilla wants to know Trip's secret about Alex.

Alex flees Lenoir, not because of the food, but because Liz had halled her as 'Raven Kelly.' Sloan Van Zant (a Zoe wanna-be) asks Liz what's up. Liz tells her that Alex looks exactly like a curly red-haired girl she knew at L'Ecole Grande in Switzerland. Does anyone remember Alex's multiple personality problems?

Brendan and Simone end their sordid affair. Simone tells Brendan about her past and how she plans to find her children from long ago.

Ken is overjoyed to learn that Damon has offered Violet a job as waitress at the Double D. Little does he know she'll be seeing more beds than tables. Vi agrees to turn tricks for Damon if he promises to tell no one, but Gabriella overhears.

Carmen tells Michael that Kyle wanted to break up with her. Michael is a bit disturbed by this claim.

Will Kyle walk again? Will Jason and Courtney ever get time alone? What's up with Alex and just who is Raven Kelly? Can Violet keep Ken in the dark? Stay tuned for next week's episode of General College.

lor, previously starring in a tequila-filled haze in the Mexican League, realizes that, because of his age and knees, this is his last chance to play pro baseball. He is determined to make the most of it. In the process he becomes a kind of team leader.

Berenger is terrific as Taylor. He is no stranger to either comedy ("The Big Chill") or drama ("Platoon" and "Betrayal") and treads the fine line between them very well. He manages to imbue the baseball veteran both with humor and a touching vulnerability. Particularly effective is a scene where Berenger, apparently alone in the stadium, fantasizes about hitting a game winning home run, bringing a kind of innocence to this drinking, wenching character.

Charlie Sheen plays Rick 'Wild Thing' Vaughn, late of the California Penal League. He is quite good as the punkish pitcher with little control, whose only chance is pro baseball. Sheen provides a good contrast to the other straighter team members.

Sheen has definitely matured as an actor since his earlier films ("Platoon," "Wall Street") and is much more focused as an actor. His unbelievable facial expressions and youthful angst are replaced with a brooding (but not sullen) presence of some power. Sheen proves that although his work lately has been in dramatic roles, he has not lost his comic touch (seen in "Ferris Bueller").

The film possesses many excel-

lent supporting performances as well. Rene Russo is excellent as Berenger's ex-love. Corbin Bernsen is effective as well as the money-mad shortstop who doesn't want to get dirty, although the performance is quite similar to his "L.A. Law" character. Excellent performances are also turned in by the manager, the voodoo haunted player, and by the actor playing Willie May Hays.

The film is excellent because of its reality. The dialogue sounds like it came right from the dugout or bar or wherever. Furthermore, unlike the recent baseball flick "Bull Durham," the characters seem eminently real. They could be people we know, and because of this the characters and story are much more sympathetic and interesting.

The direction is quite good as well. The director, who also wrote the script, creates believable, humorous and often inspiring baseball scenes. His gift for real dialogue carries over into his ability to create realistic situations. He manages to carry off a scene in which Charlie Sheen enters the Stadium with (apparently) the entire crowd singing "Wild Thing." This is one of the best scenes in a very good movie.

As much as I depise the term, this is a 'feel good' movie. However, it studiously avoids the cliches so common to 'feel good' movies. When we leave, we find we share the players' justifiable joy and pride in their accomplishment.



Fresh Pasta

LASAGNE VERDI
LINGUINE VENEZIA
CANESTRELLI CON FETTUCINE

*Grilled Seafood and
Vegetarian Specialties*

WEST FRANKLIN STREET
THE COURTYARD - CHAPEL HILL
929-0297

Pyewacket Restaurant & Bar