

NIELSEN RATINGS

1. (X) **Miss America Pageant**, NBC
17.8 rating, 16.6 million homes
2. (7) **Golden Girls**, NBC
15.9, 14.8 million homes
3. (1) **Cheers**, NBC
15.4, 14.3 million homes
4. (X) **Fanelli Boys**, NBC
15.0, 14.0 million homes
5. (9) **America's Funniest Home Videos**, NBC
14.8, 13.8 million homes
6. (8) **60 Minutes**, CBS
14.7, 13.7 million homes
7. (20) **Designing Women**, CBS
14.2, 13.2 million homes
7. (2) **Roseanne**, ABC
14.2, 13.2 million homes
9. (4) **A Different World**, NBC
13.8, 12.8 million homes
10. (3) **The Cosby Show**, NBC
13.7, 12.8 million homes
10. (12) **Unsolved Mysteries**, NBC
13.7, 12.8 million homes
12. (28) **Full House**, ABC
13.1, 12.2 million homes
12. (25) **Murphy Brown**, CBS
13.1, 12.2 million homes
14. (16) **Murder, She Wrote**, CBS
12.7, 11.8 million homes
14. (31) **Jesse**, CBS
12.7, 11.8 million homes
16. (X) **Working It Out**, NBC
12.4, 11.5 million homes
16. (20) **Matlock**, NBC
12.4, 11.5 million homes
16. (13) **Wings**, NBC
12.4, 11.5 million homes
16. (18) **Coach**, ABC
12.4, 11.5 million homes
20. (14) **Who's the Boss?**, ABC
12.1, 11.3 million homes

*Listings include the week's ranking, with full season-to-date ranking in parentheses, rating for the week, and total homes. An "X" in parentheses denotes one-time-only presentation. A rating measures the percentage of the nation's 90.4 million TV homes.

It's good except for Ed, and he's OK

Parenthood

Ed Begley, Jr. and William Windom

Saturdays 8pm
NBC (WPTF Channel 28)

●●● 1/2

How's this for an original concept? Take the characters created in one of last year's movie successes, along with two of the movie's child stars, and make it a TV show. NBC obviously wants to bank on *Parenthood's* cinematic triumph. Can the comedy/drama make it as a weekly series? Surprisingly, the answer may be yes.

The show has been lucky enough to retain Ron Howard as its executive producer, a definite asset. Howard's vision has been one of the driving forces behind such popular films as *Splash*, *Cocoon* and *Parenthood*. It's hard to miss him here. Having grown up in the entertainment industry, Howard may have a special insight when it comes to getting the most out of his actors, particularly the children.

Oddly enough, the ending of the movie has been virtually forgotten. While three of the female leads had newborn babies by the end of the movie, there is no mention of these children in the series. Also forgotten is Larry, played by Tom Hulce (*Amadeus*), along with his illegiti-

BILLY STOCKARD

T.V.

mate son Cool. These elements are left out either for plot purposes or for budget reasons. Still, it's possible for them to return in some future episode.

Inconsistencies aside, the television actors have taken over the roles and actually done quite well. Most surprising is Ed Begley, Jr. (*St. Elsewhere*, *She-Devil*), who has given a new face to the role of Gil, originally played by Steve Martin. Martin can't be an easy act to follow, but Begley, in his own geeky way, has managed to become a strong male lead.

Gil's down-to-earth wife, Karen, is played by Jane Atkinson, who makes a good effort at picking up where the well-cast Mary Steenburgen left off. These two try to balance life between their sensitive son Kevin (Max Elliott Slade) and hellraising Justin (Zachary LaVoy). LaVoy, incidentally, is one of two original castmembers starring in the series. What's missing in this family? Humor. Sorry, Ed Begley, but Steve Martin is a joy to watch on screen, and you just doesn't have the same comedic flair. Thus, the humor must come from other sources.

Enter Gil's parents, Frank (William Windom) and Marilyn (Sheila McRae), along with Marilyn's mom, fondly known as "little grandma," (Mary Jackson from *The Waltons*). There's conflict here between Frank and his mother-in-law, so some inter-

esting situations are bound to occur, especially since grandma has a hearing problem. According to Frank, "That woman would not hear a hydrogen bomb if it went off in her brassiere."

William Windom is an excellent choice for Jason Robards' role as the cynical father-figure of the whole family. Mary Jackson gives great-grandma both spunk and wisdom when she says, "We start out as children and we end up as children. All we can hope is that people are nice to us." She just may have summed up the show's entire message. Ron Howard and crew carry on the movie's efforts to show that the generation gap can be spanned.

Also present are Gil's sister Susan (Susan Norman) and her perfectionist husband Nathan (Ken Ober), originally played by Harley Kozak and Rick Moranis. Ober's Nathan is more pompous than Moranis', as he trains his daughter Patty (played by original cast member Ivyann Schwan) in algebra and Japanese while other kids are playing Nintendo games. Nathan's obsession with Patty's education makes him resent the easy-going, natural relationship between Gil and his kids. Nathan's exasperation surfaces when he sees Gil's kids drinking soft drinks at a party.

NATHAN: "You let your kids drink soda?"

GIL: "Yes, but only when we're out of beer."

Finally, there's Gil's other sister, Helen (Mary Edith Burrell) played by Dianne Wiest in the movie, a role for

which Wiest received an Oscar nomination. Her offbeat family includes a daughter and son-in-law who take pictures of each other in the nude and a son who reads dirty magazines. The show seems to have forgotten that Helen got married and had a baby at the end of the movie, just as it has forgotten that daughter Julie (Martha Plimpton in the movie) also had a baby. So much for continuity. Apparently, there's more humor in Helen's choices of dates than in Helen's married life.

Because so much of the movie's plot was resolved at the end, writers Lowell and Babaloo probably had to leave certain elements out for a continuing series. But the show maintains the balance of characters that made the movie a pleasure to see. While great-grandma looks at a photo album, picking out who's dead and who deserves to be, Julie and her husband Todd are necking at the dining room table. While Gil is saving Kevin from an embarrassing situation at school, Helen needs her dad to save her from a date who's too drunk to drive. The characters, despite their conflicts, remember that they are family, after all.

Fortunately for longevity's sake, these are not flat characters, either. Overall, this has been a smooth transition from the big screen. As long as Hollywood produces quality movies, TV networks will snatch what concepts have worked and apply them to the small screen. After all, who wants to come up with something original?



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