



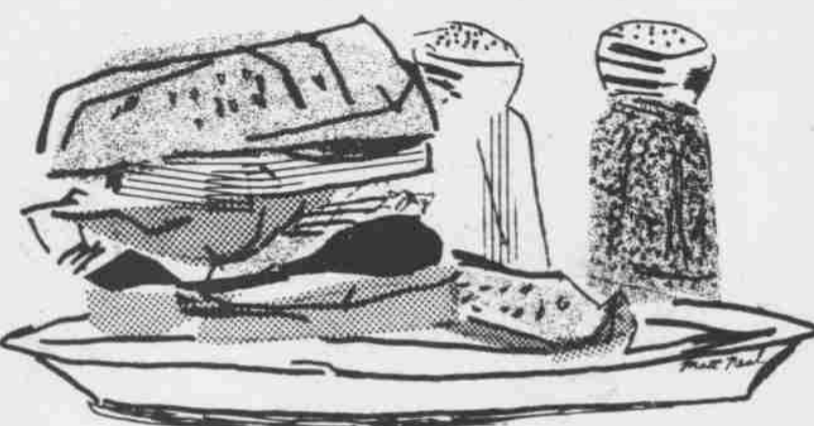
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PLAYMAKERS

REPERTORY COMPANY

NIELSEN RATINGS

1. (5) **America's Funniest Home Videos**, ABC
22.3 rating, 20.5 million homes
2. (3) **Cheers**, NBC
21.9, 20.2 million homes
2. (X) **America's Funniest Home Videos Special**, ABC
21.9, 20.2 million homes
4. (2) **The Cosby Show**, NBC
21.8, 20.1 million homes
5. (X) **Twin Peaks Special**, ABC
21.7, 20.0 million homes
6. (X) **NCAA Basketball Championship: Duke vs. UNLV**, CBS
20.0, 18.4 million homes
7. (4) **A Different World**, NBC
19.7, 18.1 million homes
8. (12) **Unsolved Mysteries**, NBC
18.6, 17.1 million homes
9. (1) **Roseanne**, ABC
18.4, 17.0 million homes
10. (X) **Carol & Company Special**, NBC
17.5, 16.1 million homes
11. (6) **Golden Girls**, NBC
17.2, 15.8 million homes
12. (15) **Grand**, NBC
17.0, 15.7 million homes
13. (15) **L.A. Law**, NBC
16.7, 15.4 million homes
14. (7) **60 Minutes**, CBS
16.1, 14.8 million homes
15. (20) **Matlock**, NBC
16.0, 14.7 million homes
16. (30) **Doogie Howser, M.D.**, ABC
15.5, 14.3 million homes
16. (8) **Wonder Years**, ABC
15.5, 14.3 million homes
18. (19) **Coach**, ABC
15.4, 14.2 million homes
19. (29) **Monday Night Movie**, NBC
14.7, 13.5 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.


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4/16 (Mon) FIREHOSE
4/17 (Tues) The Walkabouts
4/18 (Wed) The Mighty Diamonds (Reggae)
(18 and over admitted)

'Second Season' on ABC off to a smart start with 'Justice'

BILLY STOCKARD
T.V.

Finally, a new show that has something to offer. **E**qual Justice debuted March 27 on ABC as part of that network's acclaimed "Second Season." If this show is any indication, ABC could legitimately challenge NBC's reign at the top of the ratings heap. This spring's crop of midseason replacement series has brought more than its share of disappointments, but new shows like *Equal Justice* and *Twin Peaks* may raise ABC to an even more competitive status.

What makes *Equal Justice* special is the show's balance of strong, well-cast characters in realistic situations. Like its predecessor, *L.A. Law*, this offering emphasizes that the law is not always a pleasant business, particularly when "justice," that obscure term, is so hard to obtain. This new law show, which takes place in an as-yet-unnamed East-coast city, doesn't have much fluff or glamour. The characters don't appear as wealthy as their *L.A. Law* counterparts, nor is the locale nearly as upscale. As Thomas Carter, the show's producer, tells *TV Guide*, "We intend to show the underbelly of the law — the practical functioning of the day-to-day practice of law in a gritty, urban environment."

The show may portray its characters in real courtroom situations, but it's not afraid to throw in a little humor. JoAnn Harris (Sarah Jessica Parker) is a young prosecutor who can't resist a little gambling on the city street. When she ends up losing her expensive watch, JoAnn has to buy a new one — a watch that beeps in court and during meetings, much to her embarrassment. To top it all off, JoAnn winds up having to prosecute, in a robbery case, the same swindler who took her first watch. It's a small world, even in the big city.

To thicken the plot, one of the men accused in the robbery is defended by another cast member — young Peter Bauer (Jon Tenney), who

believes that his client has been set up. Peter soon discovers that the police have coerced his client, Lydell, into confessing, even though Lydell wasn't involved in the robbery his friends had committed. Although a possible alibi brings a ray of hope for Lydell, Peter loses the case when a witness decides not to show up to testify. Lydell is sent to prison and Peter is forced to accept the unfairness of a system that convicts an innocent man. Peter discovers, along with the viewer, that the legal system is not always fair. By letting Peter's case slip away, the audience is reminded that the law is no fairy tale. And justice isn't always equal.

Another character worth mentioning is that of Mike James (Joe Morton), the black male lead, who works as hard at charming the attractive Delia Wayne (Vanessa Bell Calloway) as he does at prosecuting. Mike is yet another example of the progressive side of *Equal Justice*. Even though other popular shows like *L.A. Law* and *Knots Landing* feature black characters, few have cast them in such prominent roles as that of Mike James.

Another likeable personality is Linda Bauer (Jane Kaczmarek), the attorney in charge of sex crimes, who wants to reunite her brother Peter with their estranged father. Her warm-heartedness mixes well in a show that features characters that are fairly close in age, but worlds apart in experience and values.

So how does *Equal Justice* stack up compared to *L.A. Law*? While the plot may not match up, the general consensus among legal circles indicates that *Equal Justice* is more fair to the legal profession. The struggles of people like JoAnn and Mike are more accurate than many would like to admit.

Despite a little slow movement at times, *Equal Justice* makes a serious effort at capturing and holding the mature viewing audience, even without the gloss of the Hollywood-ish *L.A. Law*. The show replaces another reality-based program, *China Beach*, which moves to Monday nights in May. *Equal Justice* is the first in a string of new ABC shows that are airing in the coming weeks. The second half of this year's TV season may just tilt in ABC's favor, particularly when the network has recruited the efforts of such entertainers as Oprah Winfrey, Lloyd Bridges, and director David Lynch. If there's any justice, *Equal Justice* will develop a strong following. But, as the show itself proves, life isn't always fair, even to a good TV series.



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