

TV Review: 'Better With You' Could Not Be Much Worse

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 22, 2010 - 9:28am

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CHICAGO – The programming executive that thought “Better With You” would fit well between the reasonably-good “The Middle” and the spectacular “Modern Family” clearly has no idea how television comedy has changed in the last few years. To call “Better With You” — with its laugh track, cheesy music, and horrible punchlines — old-fashioned is an insult to nostalgic comedies. It’s just bad.



Television Rating: **1.0/5.0**

The paper-thin concept of “Better With You” is that the show tracks three different couples at different stages of their relationship — a tired premise before a frame was even shot. There’s the newly-dating, the not-so-newly-dating and the older couple. The idea is that each pair will provide their own punchlines just by virtue of their situations. Cue the lazy writing.

From a “Friends” producer (Shana Goldberg-Meehan) desperately trying to recreate the spark of that show, “Better With You” stars JoAnna Garcia and Jake Lacy as the new couple, Jennifer Finnigan and Josh Cooke as the middle couple, and Kurt Fuller and Debra Jo Rupp as the old couple. The twentysomething Mia and Casey are madly in love. The thirtysomething Maddie and Ben are mad and in love. Vicky and Joel are lovingly mad. Yawn.



Better with You stars Jake Lacy as Casey, Kurt Fuller as Joel, JoAnna Garcia as Mia, Debra Jo Rupp as Vicky, Jennifer Finnigan as Maddie and Josh Cooke as Ben.
Photo credit: Bob D'Amico/ABC

“Better With You” is a cavalcade of unbelievable people saying unbelievable things in pursuit of unbelievably-clichéd sitcom plots like a woman thinking her sister might get married too soon and being not-so-secretly upset that she’s not married herself. We could go over the jokes that don’t work (like an annoying man-crush by Ben or a balding Joel saying “how much hair does one person need?”) despite the laugh tracks insistence that they do but the fact is that these people are not funny, not interesting, and not fun to spend time with on a Wednesday night. The producers of “The Middle” and “Modern Family” should stage a protest merely due to their night-of-the-week association.

To be completely fair, JoAnna Garcia is talented and sweet and if there’s any reason to watch the show at all, it’s her. Even Rupp and Cooke, who both have proven strong comic timing, fall flat with the quality of jokes that have been written for them.

Last year, ABC daringly chose to fill an entire evening with new programs. With four comedies in a row on Wednesday nights, I don’t think anyone thought that three would be renewed for a second year with one winning the Emmy for Outstanding Comedy Series. Instead of using “Modern Family” as the model, “Better With You” feels more like the last era of ABC, one in which “According to Jim” was renewed long past the breaking point. Now that they’ve had success in comedy, ABC should be looking forward instead of this tired “Friends” rip-off. Maybe then they’d find something better.

“Better With You” stars JoAnna Garcia, Jennifer Finnigan, Josh Cooke, Jake Lacy, Kurt Fuller, and Debra Jo Rupp. It was created by Shana Goldberg-Meehan. It premieres on Wednesday, September 22nd, 2010 at 7:30PM CST.



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