

## TV Review: Talented Cast Gives Promise to CBS Sitcom 'Mad Love'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 14, 2011 - 10:24am

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CHICAGO – After years of suffering through abysmal failures (“Rules of Engagement,” “Worst Week,” “Gary Unmarried”) and mediocre offerings (“Mike & Molly,” “The New Adventures of Old Christine”), it seems like CBS may have finally found a new relationship comedy worth a look on Monday nights in the very-promising “Mad Love,” debuting, of course, on Valentine’s Eve, Feb. 14, 2011.



TV Rating: **3.5/5.0**

Critics often criticize programs for being too derivative of better comedies, but there’s also a bit of comfort factor when the comparison is meant positively. Just as the successful parts of NBC’s Thursday night lineup tap a similar comedic vein (the senses of humor of Joel McHale, Steve Carell, and Tina Fey are not that dissimilar), it’s nice when an evening of programming provides just enough variety to avoid getting stale while also not representing a rollercoaster in quality.

So, when I say that “Mad Love” is the kind of program that the characters on “How I Met Your Mother” would watch, it’s not meant as an insult. With its NYC backdrop, pop culture sensibilities, and tales of pretty young people in neurotic love, “Mad Love” could practically have been a spin-off of one of CBS’ most successful programs of the last several years. And it’s likely to find a similarly loyal audience if it can maintain the promise of its premiere.



Mad Love

Photo credit: CBS

Jason Biggs of “American Pie” fame stars as Ben Parr, a commitment-phobic yuppie New Yorker who meets the girl of his dreams in the series premiere and falls madly in love. While a sitcom that starts with its lead characters in a relationship instead of developing it Sam & Diane or Ross & Rachel style could be something of a problem, it’s easy to see why Ben falls head over heels as fireworks go off above the Big Apple for the girl in question is Kate Swanson, played by the lovely Sarah Chalke (“Scrubs,” “How I Met Your Mother”), an actress who makes it easy to believe in love at first sight.

Of course, Ben and Kate come with best friends, a pair of cynical sitcom types who could have easily been grating, obnoxious cliches if they weren’t played by two of the best when it comes to this kind of material — Tyler Labine (“Reaper”) and Judy Greer (“Miss Guided”). Labine’s Larry Munsch is the larger-than-life counterpoint to Biggs’ subdued leading man while Greer’s Connie Grabowski is the cynical partner to Chalke’s wide-eyed optimism.



Mad Love  
Photo credit: CBS

Half the battle when it comes to a successful sitcom is in the casting and "Mad Love" is batting at least .750 from day one. I've never been sold on Biggs having much talent and his post-"Pie" filmography reads like the festival that will play in Hell for sinful critics. It's hard to be critical on the young man after one episode and this is the kind of character that seems like he could work for Biggs but his involvement does not raise any positives right out of the gate, although that could just be because he's burned me so many times before.

Luckily, the rest of the cast makes up for Biggs' involvement in every way. Labine was so great on "Reaper" and he hasn't lost a beat here, bringing an edge to the piece that it would have lacked without him. As for the ladies, Chalke and Greer make an ideal comedy pair. They couldn't be much different in terms of comic sensibilities but they both have what really matters — perfect timing.

It's immensely difficult to judge a sitcom after one episode. The writing on the premiere of "Mad Love" could definitely use some work. This is not the kind of material that can instantly hold up to the best on TV in the genre and I wonder how many times we're going to be willing to watch Ben & Kate break up and get back together again before that becomes tiring, but the strength of the cast should allow a little time for the program to find its footing. Writing can be tweaked and refined but if a sitcom is miscast, it is merely a matter of time before the axe falls. "Mad Love" doesn't have to worry about having the wrong cast. Now let's just hope that this relationship lives up to its potential.

*"Mad Love" stars Jason Biggs, Sarah Chalke, Tyler Labine, and Judy Greer. It was created by Matt Tarses. It premieres on CBS on February 14th, 2011 at 7:30pm CST.*



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