

TV Review: NBC Sitcom 'Whitney' Feels Awkwardly Familiar

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 22, 2011 - 11:39am

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CHICAGO – Steve Carell once said in an interview, if you don't know a Michael Scott, you are Michael Scott. I am both terrified and delighted to report that I do not know a single person like Whitney, the title character of NBC's new attempt at a Thursday-night hit, "Whitney."



TV Rating: **3.5/5.0**

The "Chelsea Lately" alum Whitney Cummings is the writer, executive producer and eponymous star of the new NBC sitcom "Whitney," airing on Thursday nights after "The Office" and before "Prime Suspect." It is a strange and strangely familiar sitcom about a woman in her late 20s, her long-time boyfriend, her motley crew of friends, and her goofy and issue-filled approach to life. The aforementioned friends: Type-A Lily (Zoe Lister Jones), who advises Whitney to maintain her relationship through both Kegels and Color Me Mine; Lily's whipped boyfriend Neal ("30 Rock"'s Maulik Pancholy); her nerdily sleazy cop friend Mark (Dan O'Brien); and abrasive divorcee Sarah (Jennifer Birmingham). Her nerdy-but-attractive and loyal boyfriend Alex is played by Chris D'Elia.



Whitney

Photo credit: NBC

Before going any further, I feel I must make a disclaimer here: very few of the high jinks to which Whitney succumbs in this episode are situations I have actually faced myself in real life. However, might I seriously consider going to a wedding in a hoodie? Sure. Prematurely

eating cupcakes intended to be the wedding cake? Absolutely. Setting up a romantic evening but taking the nurse fantasy so literally that I make my boyfriend fill out an insurance form? Sounds plausible.

Therein lies the charm of “Whitney” — though the show often takes the situations to sitcom-level absurdity, there’s a klutzy, thoughtless and even graceless aspect to Whitney with which we can all at least somewhat relate. The show is by no means perfect. At times, comedienne Whitney, perhaps out of nerves over carrying a series for the first time, seems shaky in landing her jokes. Occasionally, a self-consciousness flashes on her face, a forced note to her delivery that lets the light of uncertainty shine through the cracks. But those moments are few and far between. And though the cast is not fully fleshed-out and needs a lot more personality, her boyfriend Alex is the perfect counterpart to her awkwardness. Steady, slightly geeky, and devoted to her even at the height of her weirdness, he’s a believable match for her absurd character.

“Whitney” need some work. But there is so much at the core of this character that feels honestly human, that it’s worth sticking around if for nothing else than to see what Whitney will do next.

“Whitney” premieres Thursday, Sept. 22 at 8:30pm. CST on NBC. It stars Whitney Cummings, Chris D’Elia, Maulik Pancholy, Jennifer Birmingham, Zoe Lister Jones and Jane Kaczmarek. Series writer and executive producer is Whitney Cummings.



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