

## TV Review: ABC's Abysmal 'Man Up' Inspires Hatred of Mankind

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CHICAGO – What can be said about “Man Up” that wasn’t already said about “Last Man Standing”? Neither show has the slightest shred of insight into the mind of modern man. They appear to have been conceived by network executives who hate men with a fiery passion. How else to explain the thoroughly insulting, utterly asinine portraits of masculine arrested development?

Whereas “Standing” cast Tim Allen as an aggressively ignorant family man yearning for a less enlightened yet more testosterone-fueled era, “Man Up” assembles three pathetic schlubs who represent the man-children who Allen reviles. As bad as Allen’s show is, with its stale banter and laugh track that guffaws at every single line, “Man Up” has achieved the unthinkable: it’s even worse. In fact, it’s flat out torturous.



Television Rating: **1.0/5.0**

What in the world did writer/creator/co-star Christopher Moynihan think he was making? Did he see too many Judd Apatow comedies but fail to understand their appeal? Did he fail to realize that Apatowian protagonists were engaging precisely because they were relatable and intelligent despite their flaws? Did he see them as mere objects of ridicule? That must’ve been the case, considering the fact that no one in “Man Up” is the least bit likable, amusing or relatable. The men exist solely as grotesqueries inviting audience condescension while the women are portrayed as cruel ice queens. What an ugly excuse for a sitcom.



Teri Polo, Mather Zickel, Charlotte Labadie, Jake Johnson, Dan Fogler, Amanda Detmer, Henry Simmons and Christopher Moynihan star in ABC's Man Up.

*Photo credit: ABC*

Mather Zickel stars as Will Keen, the most man-ish of the show's three leading non-men. He's married to a beautiful woman, Theresa (Teri Polo), and has two great kids. Yet he still obsesses over namby pamby things like hazelnut creamer and can't stop himself from waking up

everyone in the house while playing video games with his grown buddies, portly slob Kenny (Dan Fogler) and neurotic singleton Craig (Moynihan). The opening sequence of their raucous video game may evoke memories of Seth Gordon's nonfiction masterpiece, "The King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters." There's an unforgettable moment in that film where "Donkey Kong" extraordinaire Steve Wiebe continues to finish a crucial level of his prized game while his young son wails off-camera, requesting his help in the bathroom. That one scene portrayed boyish fixations clashing with adult responsibility in a way that was uproariously funny, heartbreaking and more than a little chilling. Yet Gordon allowed Wiebe to emerge as a richly textured protagonist who the audience couldn't help but love regardless of his shortcomings. The men of "Man Up," on the other hand, are obnoxious one-note caricatures.



Man Up premieres Oct. 18 on ABC.

Photo credit: ABC

Take Kenny, for instance. He's yet another Jack Black-sized character played by Fogler who's armed with an annoying catchphrase. I'm starting to wonder if that's one of Fogler's contractual obligations. Even his best role (in the overlooked "Mars Needs Moms") was marred by a distracting catchphrase designed to seep into our collective pop culture lexicon. This show gives Fogler not one but two irritating verbal running gags. The first occurs when Kenny nearly drops an f-bomb and replaces the expletive with "fluff." You'll be amazed at how many times Moynihan attempts to milk this fluffing gag. Later on, Will tells him to think of his macho role model, and Kenny names Tobey Maguire. You can bet that these two unfunny lines will combine for a doubly unfunny line later in the show. Yet as insufferable as Kenny is, his ex-wife Bridgette (Amanda Detmer) is even worse. She takes perverse pleasure in parading her hunky new boyfriend around Kenny and expects him to take it because he's a man. Bridgette is such a hateful bitch that she would even bring a top-drawer sitcom to a grinding halt.

And then there's Craig, a sad little man who seems fated to mourn his past relationship until he mercifully expires. He's in such a dire need of closure that he crashes his ex's wedding just to prove to himself that their love is indeed gone. Unfortunately, he brings a guitar and attempts to serenade her back into his mopey arms. His impromptu number doesn't sit well with the groomsmen, who threaten to pummel the doofus on Will's lawn. When Will starts to dial 911, the camera closes in on his son's disappointed face, thus prompting the father to change his mind because it's...well, the manly thing to do. He and his friends decide to fight the guys even though: A. people will get hurt, B. they're setting a terrible example for Will's kids, and C. Craig was in the wrong anyway. The maddening stupidity of this scene is unaided by Kenny's expulsion of, "I'm Tobey Fluffin' Maguire!"

Together, "Last Man Standing" and "Man Up" represent not only the nadir of the modern sitcom but the wrongheadedness of old school masculinity. According to these shows, a real man is a thick-headed neanderthal who gives into peer pressure, or his own unrestrained id, in order to prove his power over others. He's the kind of guy who gets into adolescent fistfights well into his forties. Seriously ABC, grow up.

*'Man Up,' which airs on ABC, stars Mather Zickel, Dan Fogler, Christopher Moynihan, Teri Polo, Jake Johnson, Amanda Detmer and Henry Simmons. The show was created by Christopher Moynihan. It premieres on Tuesday, Oct. 18, 2011 at 7:30 PM CST.*



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