

## TV Review: Strong Cast Deserves Better Than Generic ‘Men at Work’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 24, 2012 - 9:32am

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CHICAGO – There are some talented people starring in TBS’s new sitcom “Men at Work,” another attempt to grow the budding cable network’s brand as a home for comedy. Following “Conan,” Tyler Perry’s sitcoms, highly rated repeats of “The Big Bang Theory,” and the announcement that “Cougar Town” will move to the net from ABC, TBS is finally starting to attempt to live up to its slogan of “*Very Funny*.” Sadly, “Men at Work” doesn’t meet that description. How about “Kinda Funny But Mostly Stupid”?



TV Rating: **2.5/5.0**

The true shame is that there are a number of clearly talented, funny guys involved with “Men at Work”...but they’re given the kind of cliched, boring jokes that most sitcom viewers grew tired of in 1992. Yes, it’s another show about a group of boisterous, outgoing guys who think the word “balls” is hilarious and like to say “bang” a lot when talking about the opposite sex. “Men at Work” is a program that doesn’t just think most men are still stuck in adolescence but that most women like that kind of boorish behavior. The writing is a 13-year-old boy’s impression of what it’s like to be a grown-up. While a few of the jokes are goofily funny (largely due to the performer’s skills), a vast majority are ridiculously juvenile. Find the word “poop” funny? TBS has a show for you.



Men at Work

Photo credit: TBS

Luckily for TBS, “Men at Work” stars four talented actors in its central roles (and the AWESOME J.K. Simmons in what seems like it will be a recurring guest one). The writing is thin enough that if the casting director had done a lesser job then this could have been one of the worst shows of the year. In fact, it’s kind of remarkable how a talented ensemble can elevate a comedy...even if this show proves that they still need better writers to really get over the hump.



Men at Work  
Photo credit: TBS

The four gentlemen in “Men at Work” play a group of friends who all happen to work at the same magazine (the scene-stealing Simmons plays the owner of the publication and the father of one of the boy’s wives). Danny Masterson (“That ’70s Show”), James Lesure (“Las Vegas”), Michael Cassidy (“The O.C.”), and Adam Busch (“Buffy the Vampire Slayer”) all bring a different, engaging energy to the piece. They are FAR AND AWAY the only reason to watch the show and casting four actors with such different comic rhythms was the smartest move by the show’s creators. I only wish they were given something so much smarter to do with their skills.

Masterson is the lead, a young writer named Milo. The premiere opens with him being dumped (in a cameo by the beautiful Amy Smart) and, so, of course, the focus of the pilot is going to be Milo’s buddies trying to get him some rebound sex. Said buddies include ladies’ man Gibbs (Lesure), a photographer at the magazine who is such a player that he can’t even drop something off at a friend’s house without banging the cleaning lady. The other two guys are Tyler (Cassidy), the features editor and a suave metrosexual, and Neal (Busch), the guy who’s too awkward to speak dirty to his horny, gorgeous wife.

These guys don’t exist in the real world. Sure, there is a long line of funny sitcoms with no connection to reality (the ’80s thrived on them) but the problem with “Men at Work” is that it feels like it’s trying to say something about the battle of the sexes when it has as much to do with it as Katherine Heigl’s movies have to do with actual romance. When the title characters are allowed to riff off each other, their comic timing can make the ridiculousness of it all much easier to forget but then the writers throw in some misogynistic joke or force one of them to do something incredibly stupid because, you know, that’s what “guys do.” The title seems appropriate not because these are four buddies who are at the same company but because it really must be hard as an actor to work this material into something interesting.

*“Men at Work” stars Danny Masterson, James Lesure, Michael Cassidy, and Adam Busch. It premieres on TBS with back-to-back episodes on Thursday, May 24, 2012 at 9pm CST.*



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