

## TV Review: ABC's 'The Neighbors' is Worst New Show of the Season

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 26, 2012 - 9:55am

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CHICAGO – And the award for the worst new show of the season goes to...drum roll please...while "Guys with Kids," "Partners," and "The Mob Doctor" put up a Hell of a fight, "The Neighbors" wins in a landslide. This dated, cliched, unfunny, grating, horrendous program is so bad that it makes one assume that blackmail must have been involved in its scheduling because one can't believe that anyone looked at this and thought it should be funded enough to get on the air for creative reasons.



Television Rating: **0.5/5.0**

We've all thought that our neighbors may be from another planet. There are houses on my street right now that I wouldn't enter on a dare. Playing off the idea that we don't know the dark secrets that the suburbs hide have been the basis for great fiction in the past including a diverse array of product from "Blue Velvet" to "Desperate Housewives."

"The Neighbors" uses this foundation for the broadest kind of general humor about how suburbanites are so weird that even aliens might reconsider instellar travel is it means malls, minivans, golf carts, and other Earthbound oddities. Small problem - it's not funny. Not one laugh in two episodes.



The Neighbors  
Photo credit: ABC

Marty Weaver (Lenny Venito) moves to one of those personality-less cookie-cutter communities with his wife Debbie (Jami Gertz) and their three kids in Hidden Hills, New Jersey. It's not long before the Weavers discover that their neighbors are a little odd. How do they come to this conclusion? 20 of them show up on their doorstep with cherry pies. They're aliens and they've been deluded into thinking this is what Earthling neighbors do. And here's the entire creative foundation of the show — aliens trying to blend with a typical suburban family as the

straight man. It's like someone unearthed a box of discarded "Coneheads" sketch scripts and thought it would make a good sitcom.



The Neighbors  
Photo credit: ABC

The writing here is just so broadly horrendous and predictable. Aliens are British because, you know, British accents are scary. The aliens take human names based on pro athletes. A rotund, Asian-looking man is named Kareem Abdul-Jabbar. The son in the main alien neighbor family is named Dick Butkus. His brother is named Reggie Jackson. And is if this recurring joke weren't mediocre enough, it is repeated roughly 28 times per episode.

There's just nothing going on here. There's no edge to the humor — aliens think driving in a minivan is terrifying, Debbie is concerned they're going to kidnap her children — and the performances are generally pretty horrendous. Venito makes out the best and he seems likable enough to carry a sitcom but he can't handle the heavy lifting required for this one. On the other hand, the entire alien cast is nothing but grating, particularly leads Simon Templeman (as Larry Bird, HA HA!) and Toks Olagundoye (as Jackie Joyner-Kersey...hysterical, I know). I don't think the actors are necessarily to blame but the writing and direction make them into characters one just doesn't want to spend time with after a long day at work.

And that's what really makes "The Neighbors" stand out in ABC's two-hour comedy block on hump night. Three of the four shows are built around families that viewers enjoy visiting for 22 minutes once a week. Whether it's the increasingly charming Hecks ("The Middle"), the fish-out-of-water combo of George and Tessa on the underrated "Suburgatory," or the extended clan of "Modern Family." These shows connect with identifiable and, more importantly, likable characters — exactly what doesn't happen on "The Neighbors." It's like the one player on a pro sports team who just isn't delivering. Hopefully, it will be sent back to the minors soon.

*"The Neighbors" stars Jami Gertz, Lenny Venito, Simon Templeman, Toks Olagundoye, Clara Mamet, Tim Jo, Ian Patrick, Dick Butkus, Max Charles, and Isabella Cramp. It premieres on Wednesday, September 26, 2012 at 8:30pm CST (before moving to 7:30pm CST, its regular timeslot, next week).*



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