

## TV Review: Larry David’s ‘Clear History’ Appeals Fans of ‘Curb Your Enthusiasm’

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CHICAGO – There hasn’t been a new episode of Larry David’s brilliant comedy, “Curb Your Enthusiasm,” in almost two years and the creator of the HBO program has yet to commit to ever doing a ninth season, saying recently to TV Guide to ask him again in six months. I think “Curb” probably will return in late 2014. That’s my guess. However, if you need a little of David’s misanthropic mayhem, check out “Clear History,” an HBO original film premiering tomorrow night, August 10, 2013.



Directed by comedy vet Greg Mottola (“Superbad,” “Adventureland”) and featuring an all-star cast atypical for “Curb,” “Clear History” may seem at first to not be directly related to the sitcom but it’s not too long before one realizes that the sense of humor is virtually identical. When David’s character complains about replying to birthday emails because then it becomes a job or argues with a waitress about how cleaning her tables with the same dirty rag actually defeats the purpose, it’s impossible not to hear “Larry” from “Curb.” At the same time, “Clear History” has a plot; it has the structure of a theatrical comedy. And that’s kind of a problem. When David is allowed to riff, especially with “Curb” vet J.B. Smoove, who competes with Jeff Garlin historically for David’s best comedic foil, the movie produces laughs. When it has to get back to plot and character, it stumbles, almost as if David himself doesn’t care and just wants to get back to the funny.



Clear History

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Photo credit: HBO

Nathan Flomm (David) makes such a legendary business mistake that it becomes an urban legend. Imagine if the marketing guy for Apple hated the name iPod so much that he quit, giving back his 10% share in the company before it went on sale. Such is the premise of “Clear History” in that Flomm hates the name chosen by his boss Will (Jon Hamm) for their company’s new car (The Howard) so much that he quits. Of course, the hybrid becomes a bestseller, changing the auto industry forever. Nathan becomes the butt of late-night jokes and runs away, changing his look, his name, and clearing his history.



Of course, ten years later, Nathan and Will cross paths again. The latter is building a mansion in Nathan’s new home and doesn’t even recognize his former friend and business partner. Nathan sees his chance for revenge. He will help in the construction of the mansion, working with town loony Stumpo (Michael Keaton) on a plan to blow it up. When Nathan meets Will’s new wife Rhonda (Kate Hudson), the plan changes. Philip Baker Hall, Bill Hader, Danny McBride, Eva Mendes, Amy Ryan, and Smoove fill out the all-star cast.

Clearly, David convinced some talented people to join him on this one-off lark in between “Curb” seasons but it’s never in doubt as to whom this show belongs. Larry David is in nearly every scene and a majority of the supporting cast merely pops up for a scene or two with the irascible grump. Hamm and Hudson get the most screen time but are also most forced into the lackluster revenge plot. The off-plot scenes, bits with Smoove, Keaton & Hader, and Mendes work better than when the film pushes its increasingly dull narrative. “Clear History” has a pacing problem in that David’s sense of humor works best in 30-minute installments. 100 minutes of it makes for a film that feels much longer than its running time.

Having said that, I’d be lying if I didn’t admit to a few good solid laughs while watching “Clear History.” They’re too few and far between and I’d take a new season of “Curb” over this movie any time but there’s enough connection with the funny bone to warrant a look on a Saturday night. Remember that this faint recommendation is coming from a fan of David’s comedy and so, I suppose, I’ll take what I can get. If you’re not a fan, you may want to erase this one from your DVR.

*“Clear History” stars Larry David, Jon Hamm, Kate Hudson, Michael Keaton, Bill Hader, Philip Baker Hall, Danny McBride, Eva Mendes, Amy Ryan, and J.B. Smoove. It was directed by Greg Mottola. It airs on HBO on Saturday, August 10, 2013 at 8pm CST.*



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