

TV Review: NBC’s Struggles Continue with ‘Sean Saves the World,’ ‘Welcome to the Family’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 3, 2013 - 2:43pm

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CHICAGO – People often ask me why low-rated NBC shows like “Community” keep getting renewed (or how “Whitney” and “Up All Night” got a second season) and I often turn to a sports analogy — they have no one in the minor leagues to replace them. And yet last year’s team did so poorly that they cleaned a lot of house and brought in the big guns to try and rebuild the team — Michael J. Fox, Sean Hayes, and Mike O’Malley come to Thursdays. Most people like the Fox show (although more of you should watch it). The same is unlikely to be said about the Hayes and O’Malley vehicles, both premiering tonight and both striking out.



Welcome to the Family
Photo credit: CBS

“Welcome to the Family”



Television Rating: **2.0/5.0**

If you thought “Michael J. Fox Show” played with sitcom cliches, welcome to this mess, a clear answer to some executive’s “where’s our Modern Family” question to his staff. Despite a talented cast, the writing just doesn’t work here (and that’s the theme of 2013 — strong actors, weak writing). It feels like all the great comedy and drama writers have fled to cable to the point where we’re starting to really feel it in our new

sitcom offerings. This never would have made the cut ten years ago, in the prime of NBC's Must-See TV.

There's a white family and a Hispanic family! The show will write itself! The former is headed by gruff Dan Yoder (Mike O'Malley) and outspoken Caroline (Mary McCormack, SO much better that what she's given here). They have made it through high school with a daughter (Ella Rae Peck) who barely squeaked over the graduation line. Molly is a sweet, friendly girl but not the best student and her parents are looking forward to a little time off from parenthood. They're not just about to be empty nesters, they're pushing their bird off the branch.

Or are they? Molly has a boyfriend named Junior (Joseph Haro), son of Miguel (Ricardo A. Chavira) and Lisette (Justina Machado). Junior is the educational opposite of Molly, graduating with honors and going to Stanford. But he loves his secret girlfriend. So much so that she's pregnant.

Kind of like a "Meet the Fockers" gone sitcom, "Welcome to the Family" is about different personality types clashing on the in-law level. Dan and Miguel start an antagonistic relationship before they even know their kids are dating. And none of it feels real. This is the kind of exaggerated, cliched humor more common to CBS, laugh-track sitcoms despite the best efforts of a talented cast. They're just wasted here like so many drivers of the star vehicles this season. Want another example?



Sean Saves the World
Photo credit: NBC

"Sean Saves the World"



Television Rating: **2.0/5.0**

Sean Hayes was spectacular on "Will & Grace," winning multiple awards, most of them deservedly. But just as no one wanted a spin-off of that show, "Sean Saves the World" feels like a case of an actor who works best in small doses being delivered in large ones. I like Hayes. He has great timing. But he's not a great lead, and his show is stolen by supporting performers like Linda Lavin and even Thomas Lennon, although even they struggle with another show that, you guessed it, has weak writing.

It's a shame because Victor Fresco has delivered before with great shows like "Better Off Ted" and "Andy Richter Controls the Universe." However, this story of a divorced dad named Sean (Hayes) who has to deal with drama at work (with Lennon) and at home with mom (Lavin) and his teenage daughter (Samantha Isler). Sean wants to be the best dad ever, the best worker ever, the best sitcom character ever. He's over-eager to please.

"Sean Saves the World" is a weird show in that it's not aggressively bad. You won't be rolling your eyes. It's more just remarkably forgettable. There's a couple smiles here and there but no real laughs and the characters just aren't memorable enough to last long enough for you to program the show in your DVR. It's a stumble upon show, the kind of thing you may watch if it accidentally records or pops up first when you start Hulu but never seek out. In other words, it's not going to save NBC.

"Welcome to the Family" stars Mike O'Malley, Mary McCormack, Ella Rae Peck, Joseph Haro, Ricardo A. Chavira, and Justina Machado. It premieres on NBC on Thursday, October 3, 2013 at 7:30pm CST.

"Sean Saves the World" stars Sean Hayes, Linda Lavin, Samantha Isler, and Thomas Lennon. It premieres on NBC on Thursday, October 3, 2013 at 8pm CST.



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