

Hits, misses included in new TV lineups

NEW YORK (CNS) — The following are reviews of the new fall prime-time lineups on ABC, CBS and NBC (all times Eastern):

ABC

"Desperate Housewives," Sundays, 9-10 p.m.

Comedy-drama about Mary Alice (Brenda Strong), a suburban housewife with a seemingly perfect life who commits suicide, and now provides running commentary from beyond the grave on the lives of her shallow friends, who include former businesswoman Lynette (Felicity Huffman), saddled with triplets; Gabrielle (Eva Longoria), an ex-model with a chauvinist husband; Bree (Marcia Cross), the obnoxious perfect wife; Susan (Teri Hatch-

TVReview

er), abandoned by her husband, who now sets her sights on the guy next door; and Edie (Nicollette Sheridan), a buxom blonde with the same idea. The dialogue is distressingly trashy, some of the situations morally offensive and the sardonic narration a steal from "Sex and the City" without that series' wit. Still, the basic situation is intriguing.

"Grey's Anatomy," Mondays (premiering midseason after football)

Medical drama about a crop of interns fresh out of med school, including Meredith Grey (Ellen Pompeo), trying to make it through a survival-of-the-fittest surgical resi-

dency program at a prestigious Seattle hospital. In addition to dealing with the highly competitive pressures of the life-and-death atmosphere, the recruits must also cope with demanding doctors, difficult patients, sleep deprivation and even the occasional romance. The show feels like a combination of "ER" and "Scrubs," though the writing is a notch or two below both NBC series. The pilot episode — which contains some crude sexual references as well as an implied sexual encounter — follows the lead of "ER," grafting medical realism onto what is essentially a soap opera.

"Rodney," Tuesdays, 9:30-10 p.m.

Sitcom set in Tulsa, Okla., about a blue-collar loser with a wife and two kids determined to follow his dream of becoming a stand-up comedian. Real-life comic Rodney Carrington plays the likable but often wrong-headed husband; Jennifer Aspen's the usual long-suffering but supportive wife. The characters are all stereotypes, and the dialogue and situations strain for laughs. Unnecessary crudeness in the dialogue and the set-ups make this "family" comedy a questionable prospect for family viewing.

"Blind Justice," Tuesdays (premiering midseason)

Crime drama set in New York City about a hard-nosed police detective (Ron Eldard) blinded in a shootout, who overcomes his handicap and disengagement from fellow cops and is reinstated to active duty. The show scores points for its authentic New York locations, but will its sightless-hero twist blind viewers to its otherwise standard-issue police formula? The pilot contains a violent shootout and recurring crime-scene gore.

"Lost," Wednesdays, 8-9 p.m.

Adventure drama about a group of airline passengers who survive a crash landing on a deserted Pacific island after their plane tears apart mid-flight. As hope of rescue fades, the survivors must band together,

overcoming fears and frictions in order to stay alive. But like those stranded, the island also holds secrets, including a terrifying beast stalking its jungles. The concept — think "Cast Away" meets "Jurassic Park" with a Bermuda Triangle twist — is interesting. The pilot episode has an old-fashioned, cliffhanger serial feel, but it also contains recurring intense images of a mid-flight disaster, a disturbing opening sequence as survivors wander amid the crash carnage as well as a gory scene involving the mysterious predator.

"Wife Swap," Wednesdays, 10-11 p.m.

Reality show in which the mothers of two families change places for two weeks. During the first week, the women must live by the rules of their surrogate households, only to have the run of the roost and call the shots the following week. Despite its racy and chauvinistic title, the show — at least in its pilot episode — encourages mutual respect between spouses and heightened appreciation for the vital role wives and mothers play in the life of a family.

"Life as We Know It," Thursdays, 9-10 p.m.

Coming-of-age drama about a trio of hyper-hormonal high school friends: self-assured jock Dino (Sean Farris), self-conscious school photographer Jonathan (Chris Lowell) and sarcastic straight-A student Ben (Jon Foster) and the trials and tribulations they experience while dealing with that emotional pressure-cooker known as puberty. Told through the prism of its three lustful leads, the sexually charged story line is full of envelope-pushing dialogue and situations involving, among other things, teen sex, underage drinking and a student-teacher tryst. Aside from its moral red flags, the writing and acting are flat and the overall tenor melodramatic.

"Complete Savages," Fridays, 8:30-9 p.m.

Domestic sitcom about a widower fireman, Nick Savage (Keith Carradine), single-handedly raising a brood of five teenage boys. Mel Gibson, who as a father of seven knows a thing or two about the headaches and hazards involved in raising large families, serves as one of the show's producers and directed the pilot episode. Still, despite its family-friendly tone, the show provides few five-alarm laughs.

As of this writing, preview tapes for the following new shows were not available for review:



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Answers from page B17 (No. 44)

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