

# It's Called Acting

## Bark o' the Banshee

By Pat Robinson

There was a particular night last winter when I awarded a night of comedy on the National Broadcasting Company's line-up the designation "gay night" ...

... As usual, the fare started with the hit show *Friends*. This hit sitcom has been on a long time, and way back in the first show, one of the main male characters - Ross, played by David Schwimmer - nursed a broken heart and shattered life and/or ego because suddenly his "ex-wife" left him for her lesbian love.

Of course, these charming white roommates of one version or another all get past this little glitch in life and that was kinda that for *Friends*. There had been little brushes with portrayals of the gay community since that, but always so trendy New Yorkerish - "Some of my best..." - and you can fill in the rest. It is funny though, so we do watch it, and watched on that particular evening, too.

Next came the new offering from one of those talented hunks who was on the 90's sitcom *Wings*. Steven Weber has come back to NBC on his new vehicle aptly called *The Weber Show*. I guess he has arrived (the one-name thing is a big tip-off).

I had missed a previous episode that had identified the lovely brunette he was talking to.

Apparently, Kate (guest star Paula Marshall) was available to be friends, hang out, and do stuff with, but had very clearly identified herself as a lesbian. Jack (Weber) was still a tad intrigued by the idea that this lovely smart woman wasn't smitten just being in his presence.

As a gentleman, Jack accepted this declared boundary, and he and Kate made plans for an evening out at a local eatery. From the bar they both eyed a beautiful blonde woman. They ordered drinks and continued their sidelong glances at the object of their desire seated a few feet out of ear shot.

The ensuing conversation between Jack and Kate was positively hysterical, an all too accurate reflection of a real life circumstance I have actually been in at the local tavern when I was a single lesbian. It

was great to see this on national TV and in "prime time." We roared with each additional punch line and agreed to continue to watch this show.

It goes without saying that *Will & Grace* is our favorite, hands down. We don't care whether any of the actors are gay, that's why it's called *act<sup>g</sup>ing*. Executive Producers/Creators Kaufman and Crane have proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that we can laugh at ourselves, and enjoy it.

I think *Just Shoot Me* is exactly what a sitcom is supposed to be: silly, unrealistic, filled with an oddball collection of characters who are either loveable or at least pathetic enough for the audience you really feel sorry for and like anyway. Laura San Giacomo is great and great looking, and George Segal is so acceptable as the dad/boss that we like him, too. I wonder about David Spade, but I am told that is a common response to him.

The last doctor show I really liked was *Marcus Welby, M.D.* I am not a fan of watching the hurt and dying, so I was never a fan of *ER*, but I became one that particular night. The soft kiss of a woman grazed the lips of Dr. Kerry Weaver (Laura Innes), and I was an instant fan. Well, for a while anyway.

I began to miss episodes here and there, and randomly caught *The Weber Show* and *Will & Grace* whenever I could.

Finally, we both had a free Thursday...

Hey! What the heck is Kate doing? I ran for the paper and checked the listings. Had I screwed up? Was this Thursday? Was I seeing things? The lesbian was kissing a man, and not just some random man, but the main character, the star of the show, Jack!

There was no mistake, only a lie. Here had been this tremendous opportunity for a real example of diversity working. What the heck happened to make the person responsible

for this change in Kate to decide that the message was "It's okay to lie if we get what we want"?

I think I've caught on, despite missing a few chapters. Kate turned out to be a straight woman pretending to be a lesbian for a book deal, and now she stares adoringly up at Jack. I know some straight women who might do other wild and whacky things, but none who would go out in public declaring themselves as lesbians for a book deal.

Kate was a lot sexier and funnier when she was playing a more honest character. So was Jack. Too bad, I was really starting to like that show. But I no longer believe it. It's more of the usual same old, same old.


*The Weber Show* could have been a weekly delivery of men and women, gay and straight getting along and not getting along. Having fun with all those rough spots could have been wonderfully historic entertainment with validity.

Well, maybe like me, other viewers will see this change as not funny.

The real Scott Thompson was on *Late Night with Conan O'Brien* plugging his recurring role as the very gay Elliot (Joanie's newest helper/chef/partner at The Barkery), on *Providence*. I haven't heard this much bleeping of a guest on a late night talk show in years. Suffice it to say that my laughter woke my other half, and wondered what this nutty very out and proud gay man was saying. Conan was playing along with the antics and a very good time was had by all; the studio audience roared and my TV bleeped and bleeped. Scott Thompson was a real blast, I hope host Conan O'Brien invites him back.

Now that the three feet of snow on the front lawn has melted and become Lake RoMo, giving us waterfront property, there might be less time for TV, even when the plot lines and characters are right up our alley.

Of course, that same spot in the driveway is a breeding ground for the designated NH state bug: black flies!



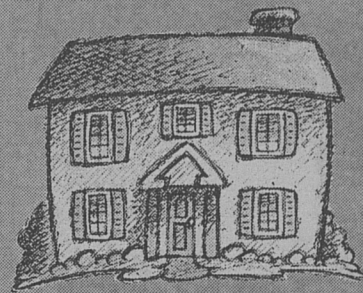
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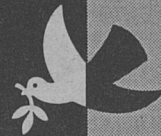
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