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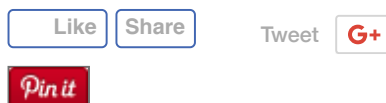


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## THE TV SET

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By *Erica Abeel* ([Http://Www.Filmjournal.Com/Taxonomy/Term/93](http://www.filmjournal.com/Taxonomy/Term/93)) Apr 5, 2007



### Reviews

Maybe it's a testimony to our low expectations regarding TV, but Jake Kasdan's parody of a wannabe series, from pilot to pickup, lacks bite. The premise of *The TV Set*: Once the network execs have their way, a writer's original concept for a show gets dumbed-down for the lowest common denominator. Duh. Kasdan clearly knows the ego-shredding terrain, having directed two pilots for the tube (including the short-lived, highly acclaimed series "Freaks and Geeks"). But while his exposé finds flashes of humor in the pain, David Duchovny as the writer delivers a turn so listless and bland, you want to goose him with a cattle prod.

Duchovny's Mike Klein has just sold his pilot script "The Wexler Chronicles," a story inspired by his struggle to cope with his brother's suicide. But his baby takes a hit from go when the group-thinkers--chief among them Lenny (Sigourney Weaver)--want to cast Zach, an overacting pretty boy (Fran Kranz), instead of Mike's first choice. (That the rejected guy is a bearded schlump--read Jewish--flags America's white-bread biases, but less amusingly than when *Home for Purim* became *Home for Thanksgiving* in Christopher Guest's *For Your Consideration*.)

Caught between the trash imperative and integrity is Richard McAllister (Ioan Gruffudd), who's been hired from the BBC to "class up" the network. Richard must navigate between an instinct to support Mike's vision and his obligation to produce shows worthy of Lenny's fall schedule, which include such beauts as "Skewed" and "Slut Wars." Classy indeed, Gruffudd looks and sounds like a Brit who's wandered onto the wrong set. Also pressuring the bedeviled Mike is a wife (Justine Bateman) pregnant with their second child, who urges compromise so he can bring home the moolah. Eventually, two versions of the script coexist: what Lenny calls Mike's "bummer" version,

and another with the suicide deleted. "Suicide is depressing to like 82% of people," explains Lenny, who uses her 14-year-old daughter to gauge viewer tastes.

Weaver infuses the familiar figure of network harridan with terrific comic verve. What's funny is the innocence of her vulgarity, the confidence of her moronic pronouncements. Blonde Judy Greer as Mike's manager has nailed the corporate chirpy style. And Kranz as the pilot's star exudes just the right Ashton Kutcher-like cluelessness. But Duchovny, more than the suicidal brother, is the downer in this film. Its insider take may play to Industry types, but John Q. Public will yawn.

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