

Tuesday, December 13, 2005

Other Networks Hoping to Get Arrested??

Holy crap. Here's some potentially great news from Variety: Fox still hasn't officially canceled "Arrested Development," but if it does, other networks are interested in the show. Both ABC and Showtime have had conversations with 20th Century Fox TV and indicated they're open to making a deal for new episodes of the critically beloved, Emmy-winning comedy from creator Mitch Hurwitz. No formal negotiations have taken place, and there are still numerous hurdles that might prevent such a move -- including the show's hefty pricetag. That said, those familiar with the talks described them as serious, with Showtime said to be in particularly hot pursuit of the ratings - challenged laffer, now on life support at Fox. Skein's third-season order was recently cut to 13 episodes.

Great news for all AD fans, except maybe those who don't get Showtime...

Showtime could be a good place for Arrested. Skein's subversive humor and heavily serialized storylines always made it a tough sell as a mass-appeal broadcast series. What's more, Showtime already has a potential companion for Arrested in Weeds, which just received a second-season pickup. That show is a suburban satire centered on a drug-dealing soccer mom played by Mary-Louise Parker. Network entertainment topper Robert Greenblatt has made an aggressive push to make Showtime a player in the comedy biz. He's greenlit several since his arrival -- including Fat Actress and Barbershop -- and Arrested could be the piece de resistance. If even half of the skein's Fox viewers -- last averaging around 4 million per episode -- watched on Showtime, Arrested would be an instant cable hit. ABC, meanwhile, is also looking to make its mark in comedy, having already established itself as the home of TV's most buzzworthy dramas (Lost, Desperate Housewives, Grey's Anatomy). Net has high hopes for upcoming laffers, such as Emily's Reason's Why Not, Crumbs and Sons and Daughters, as well as a sophomore contender, Jake in Progress. Since Fox has yet to officially cop to canceling Arrested, 20th can't formally make any deals with another net. There are other barriers to setting the show up elsewhere, however. Studio has already deficated millions in order to produce the show, which costs about \$1.6 million per half-hour to produce. It's believed 20th deficated about \$400,000 per episode. Even if ABC or Showtime stepped up with the same license fee Fox now forks over for the show, 20th execs will have to decide whether it's worth it to sink more money into a show that isn't a proven ratings winner. That's one reason the studio might push for at least a 22-episode (or greater) commitment from a net. Studio needs 36 episodes to get Arrested to the magic number of 88 episodes required for syndication. But even if it gets to syndication, there's no guarantee of a rich payday in the off-net market. On the other hand, Arrested is a winner in the DVD market, and more episodes mean more DVD sales. Skein could also take off if given mass exposure on a cabler such as Showtime -- particularly now that the feevee cabler is part of Leslie Moonves' CBS Corp. family. Moonves certainly knows something about making lemons out of lemonade. One of his first acts upon taking over CBS was picking up a show from NBC called JAG. Skein ran for nearly a decade on the Eye and spawned the successful spinoff NCIS. Studio, Showtime and ABC declined comment.

So there you have it. Arrested Development might not only get saved - it could make it into syndication. Which would indicate the existence of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

Posted by Scott Weinberg in TV at 23:59

I don't normally dislike Variety's industry lingo - I figure since they've been using it forever, who am I to suggest they change, but man oh man, when you keep repeating 'skein' over and over again, it really begins to sound dumb.

Smarten up, Variety. Standard editorial practice would suggest, lingo or not, you replace skein with show or production or project... give me dying ears a rest. Comment (1)

Anonymous on Dec 14 2005, 01:59