

ABC's "Lopez" showcases a Chicano family

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On March 27 ABC debuted "The George Lopez Show." The question that has been most prominent throughout the nation: Why in the name of Desi Arnaz should we care? Well, for starters, has ABC ever given us a sitcom that was anything less than superb? From Suzanne Somers to Bob Saget to Reginald VelJohnson, ABC sure knows how to choose its stars, which brings us to the other reason we must support this show. The print ads for the sitcom feature a scantily clad Lopez (think back to Jennifer Lopez's scandalous award ceremony dress) beneath the clever headline: G-Lo. Now if that doesn't make you chortle hysterically allowing your flabby gut to vibrate a la the sandworms of the "Tremors" trilogy, then you my friend, must have astonishing abs.

Speaking of absolutely incredible abs, who exactly is George Lopez and why does he deserve a show over the likes of New England furniture moguls Bernie and Phyl or the delightful duo of Eliot and Barry of Jordan's Furniture fame? Unlike this leathery-skinned quartet of the elderly, Lopez can not hock you a crappy armoire for an insipid price, but if you were fortunate enough to catch his morning radio show in LA prior to the end of his radio career in July, you would have experienced his unique blend of funny firsthand. His morning show was responsible for pushing a mediocre station into the top ten lists. Lopez, was also the first Latino to host a popular morning on an English-speaking station. His radio personality was an extension of his personality as a full-time stand-up



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George Lopez, star of "The George Lopez Show."

comedian. For 17 years, his hilarious blend of Chicano and familial humor performed for English-speaking audiences has been selling out comedy clubs across the nation. It is this unique brand of humor that is the basis for his new television sitcom.

With the momentum he built as a comedian and radio star, Lopez was able to make it onto the small screen for minor roles in "Resurrection Blvd." and "Brothers Garcia." This does not include his countless stand-up appearances on

morning shows and late night television. Recently he acted in the films "Real Women Have Curves," "Fidel," and "Bread and Roses." He even released a CD of his live act, "Right Now Right Now" to critical praise. It was his constant touring (most recently with the group from Galavision's Que Locos!) and TV appearances that caught the eye of television producer Bruce Helford ("Rosanne," "The Drew Carey Show") and actress Sandra Bullock. Bullock jumped on board because she wanted to

produce a child-focused sitcom, but decided to focus on Lopez out of respect for his work.

The show has thus far been exactly what Lopez wished for, a comedy where the characters' ethnicity is part of who they are, not the center of the show. The fact that they are Hispanic is almost taken for granted. His shtick flows well in the show and while it maintains a sense of culture, it does not isolate non-Latino viewers, which caused the failure of John Leguizamo's brilliant and critically lauded "House of Buggin'." This is what the suits are looking for. ABC co-chairman Lloyd Braun wishes to improve the network's record on diversity. ABC wants more shows to feature Latin and African-American work both in front of and behind the camera following the uproar from many ethnic groups requesting more representation in the entertainment industry.

Despite what suits aimed for, the show is just plain funny. Lopez is a blue-collar manager of an airline supply company and the father of the "American" family. So far the show almost plays out like a Chicano version of "Rosanne." Lopez deals with basic family problems — his maturing teen daughter and boys, his rambunctious son and his loving relationship with his stubborn and nose-y mother (played by Belita Moreno of "Perfect Strangers" fame — she was Lydia Markham). Fortunately, ABC has picked up 13 episodes, quite a bit for a mid-season replacement. The reviewed scores have come in for the midseason: Two husky men, a Chicano and a White have been given an enthusiastic thumbs up and a show featuring a puppet bunny is unworthy of anyone's thumb.