

## **PRESS ARTICLE**

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**'A breath of fresh air... one of this year's freshest, most innovative comedies'**

By Dan Brown, The National Post

Our Hero is a breath of fresh air. This new CBC teen comedy, which debuted last Thursday, revolves around 17-year-old Kale Stiglic (Cara Pifko), a high school student who publishes a zine based on her own life. An energetic blend of live action and animation, it calls to mind both Malcolm in the Middle and Fox's old Parker Lewis Can't Lose show. If you believe in karma, think of it this way: Our Hero is the shining gem in the CBC's fall schedule, there to compensate for the less-than-funny P.R., the Corp's other new comedy offering.

Remember Seinfeld in the early days, when the show used to alternate between the events in Jerry's life and then him doing jokes inspired by those events in front of an audience? Well, Our Hero works in sort of the same way: Each episode ends with Kale publishing an issue of her cut-and-paste personal journal; the preceding 30 minutes explains the thinking that went into that particular issue.

Last week's premiere episode was all about the teenager's ongoing battle with her newspaper-columnist father, Joey (Robert Bockstael). It began with a great bit of slapstick as Kale tried to pull a too-tight dress up over her head while confined to a clothing-store dressing room.

"Oh liars, there's no way this is a medium," she grunted as she flailed blindly about. The store's staff eventually cuts her out of the dress with a pair of scissors, but when her father turns the incident into fodder for his column he has her being rescued by a squad of paramedics using garden shears and a propane torch. Even more embarrassing for Kale, the column appears in the paper the day before she starts school.

In response, Kale and her mother (television veteran Mimi Kuzyk) remind Joey that he pledged, in writing, not to use Kale's misadventures as raw material for his column. He, however, has the perfect defense.

"You'll see I didn't sign my name. I signed 'Darryl Sittler'," he says as he points at the piece of paper.

Not only in each member of the Our Hero cast an exceptional performer, but the show is also sharply written. To get back at her father, Kale publishes excerpts from love letters he wrote when he was younger and not as experienced a writer, love letters that include references to his own groin and his lady love's "golden muff." The problem is, the letters weren't to her mother.

When the revenge scheme blows up in her face, Kale turns to her mother, who has little sympathy: "You know, Kale, I'm going to tell you the same thing I told your brother when he was arrested for assaulting the school mascot. I am really happy that you're growing up and asserting yourself as an individual, but if you want to be an adult so badly, you have to bail yourself out of this one."

In an upcoming episode, Kale finally goes on a date with the school hunk, Perfectly Frank. Unfortunately, it turns out his nickname is misleading: He first takes her line dancing, then they go trespassing at a water-treatment plant.

"I come here a lot, you know. I like to listen to the sound of water being treated," he explains. What sets the show apart from other family-based sitcoms is the way creators John May and Suzanne Bolch have seamlessly integrated the animated segments into the action. Done by Toronto firm Cuppa Coffee Animation, these snippets have a homemade feel to them and, through them, the audience learns Kale's innermost thoughts. They're refreshing because if May and Bolch had done the usual, they would have just had Pifko directly address the camera. They also fit in perfectly with Kale's preferred mode of communication, the zine. (Although, this being the age of the Internet, viewers might wonder why she didn't start her own Web site instead.)

May and Bolch also have the little details down cold. Much of the premiere episode took place in the family basement, which, like many Canadian basements, was packed with bric-a-brac – unused skates and boxing gloves and such. This again reinforced the show's homemade, bricolage feel.

And in one scene last week, during a tense argument with Pifko, Kuzyk did a lovely little dance of seduction with a cigarette she had just pulled out of a pack on the kitchen table. She gazed at it longingly, rolled it between her fingers, then walked to the sink, tossed it in, and poured water on it. Anyone who's been addicted, anyone who's had a fight with a loved one, could relate.

Yes, there are quite a number of reasons to watch Our Hero.