

## MICKEY MOUSE PROTEST

The Walt Disney Company—a paragon of “family values” in entertainment—is, ironically, under attack by Morality in Media and the 200,000-member Catholic League. At the center of this controversy is *Priest*, a new film from the Disney-owned company Miramax.

Scheduled to be released nationwide on April 19, *Priest* tells the tale of five fictional clergymen, two of whom are sexually active. One of the “actives” is also gay (a character described by

## Media briefs

Variety’s Greg Evans as “a young priest coming to grips with his homosexuality”).

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, wants Disney to pull the film from distribution entirely, and he has threatened a nationwide boycott and stockholder protest. “We can take their Snow White imagery, which is already tarnished, and blacken them up a little bit,” Donohue said at a recent press conference. “If Disney gets no resistance from the Catholic League and from Catholics around the country [over] this film, God knows what we can expect in the future.”

According to Morality in Media’s president, Robert Peters, “this movie attacks the Catholic Church’s teachings as the cause of the [characters’] failings and attempts to undermine the church’s moral authority at a time when the world needs all the moral help it can possibly get. It is not surprising that this movie came from Miramax,” Peters added. “That company has produced films featuring cannibalism, animal worship, explicit sex, occultism—you name it.”

Miramax spokesperson Mark Gill has publicly defended the film. According to Gill, the characters in *Priest* are “not satanic figures, but real people in a real world.”

You can voice your opinion by contacting Michael Eisner, CEO, The Walt Disney Co., 500 S. Buena Vista, Burbank, CA 91521, (818) 560-1000.

## QUEERS ON THE GUEST LIST

One of network television’s more inviting programs is the new Fox series *Party of Five*. This drama includes the recurring character Roth, a gay teacher (played by actor Mitchell Anderson).

*Party of Five*’s March 15 episode examined Roth’s efforts to adopt a child. Though he encounters the expected resistance, Roth is ulti-

mately successful and brings home a new baby daughter, Tess. A highlight of the episode is an impassioned speech given by Bailey, a teenage boy and one of the show’s leading characters. Bailey eloquently stands up for Roth in an encounter with the skeptical social worker who is handling the adoption.

*Party of Five* occupies an important time slot following Fox’s popular youth drama *Beverly Hills 90210*. The character of Roth—as a teacher and now a parent—can significantly challenge long-standing stereotypes, targeting an important segment of the viewing audience with affirming messages about lesbians and gay men.

Unfortunately, however, the party may soon be over. The series is at risk for cancellation, and supportive letters are crucial.

Write to Amy Lippman and Christopher Keyser, Executive Producers, Party of Five, c/o Fox Broadcasting, PO Box 900, Beverly Hills, CA 90213, (310) 277-2211, e-mail: foxnet@delphi.com; and Chase Carey, President, Fox Broadcasting, at the same address.

## NOT A GOOD BET

The cable network Black Entertainment Television recently re-broadcast an episode of its *Comic View* series, in which a viciously homophobic comedian delivers a nonstop attack on lesbians and gay men. During her routine, Sheryl Underwood rails against equal rights for lesbians and gay men and shouts that homosexuality must never be included in any civil rights movement.

Underwood concludes her stand-up routine with a “humorous” comparison between gay sex and a well-known deodorant commercial. “I’ve got one thing to say to the homosexual,” she yells, “the penis may be strong enough for a man, but it’s made for a woman!”

At this bigoted slur, the audience burst into a standing ovation. Moreover, a panel of judges gave her the program’s award for Best Comedian. (*Comic View* is a “talent” contest for stand-up comedians.)

Lynne Harris Taylor, *Comic View*’s supervising producer, sees nothing wrong with the whole affair. In response to complaints, Taylor has told viewers, “It is unfortunate that you are offended by the remarks pertaining to homosexuals. Comedy does not discriminate. Our comics often make fun of different types of people: black, white, Asian, Hispanic, handicapped, homosexual, deaf, blind, etc., and it is all done in fun. During a time when stress plays a major part in all our lives, laughter and the ability to laugh at ourselves is a priceless commodity.”

Nothing about Underwood’s routine could be construed as an attempt to “laugh at ourselves.” She offers a homophobic sermon intended to promote ignorance and divisiveness.

Underwood’s brand of “comedy” only perpetuates the invisibility of people of color in the lesbian and gay community, who have to struggle against racism as well as homophobia. Her hateful ranting is, in fact, one of the very reasons that lesbians and gay men find themselves living in

such “stressful times.”

Send feedback to Lynne Harris Taylor, Supervising Producer, *Comic View*, Black Entertainment Television, 2801 West Olive Ave., Burbank, CA 91505, (818) 566-9948 or (213) 849-2728, fax: (818) 566-1655; and Curtis Gadson, Vice-President, West Coast Operations, BET, at the same address.

## INQUIRING MINDS

### WANT TO KNOW

For all its sensationalist sleaze, *The National Enquirer* has a certain reputation for accuracy when it comes to gossipy entertainment news. In January, the popular tabloid reported that scriptwriters for *Roseanne* had put together an episode titled “D.J.’s Coming Out,” in which the Conner’s teenage son tells his parents that he is gay. *The Enquirer* quoted an “insider” who claimed the plot could unfold over several episodes, with the coming out story line ready to air this May (a critical “ratings sweeps” period, when the popularity of TV shows are surveyed nationally).

In the rumored scenario, D.J. (played by Michael Fishman) develops what *The Enquirer* described as “an unusually close friendship with a new boy at school.” The script reportedly will deal with the peer harassment D.J. experiences, his father’s “macho” efforts to teach him self-defense, and the young teen’s eventual revelation that “I was fighting myself—fighting my feelings.”

*The Enquirer*’s source also reported that—while *Roseanne* producers are bracing for a homophobic backlash from the network (ABC)—the plot development is fully backed by Roseanne herself, who hopes “that D.J.’s coming out could help kids who are going through the same thing.”

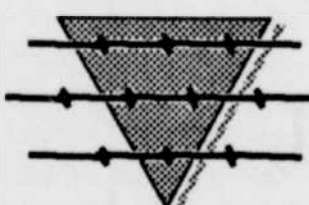
It remains to be seen if these rumors have any basis in fact. Rest assured, however, that the widely read *Enquirer* has already provoked letters from “concerned” homophobes, who prefer that gay boys kill themselves rather than come out.

Already overpopulated with heterosexual teens, prime-time television would surely benefit from “D.J.’s Coming Out.” Send encouraging feedback to Roseanne, Co-Executive Producer, Roseanne, c/o ABC Entertainment, 2040 Avenue of the Stars, Los Angeles, CA 90067, (310) 557-7777, fax: (310) 557-7170.

Compiled by Al Kiewasser of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, San Francisco Bay Area Chapter.



Priest star Linus Roache



## BE NOT AFRAID

A Memorial Prayer Service for the Gay and Lesbian Victims of the Nazi Concentration Camps

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