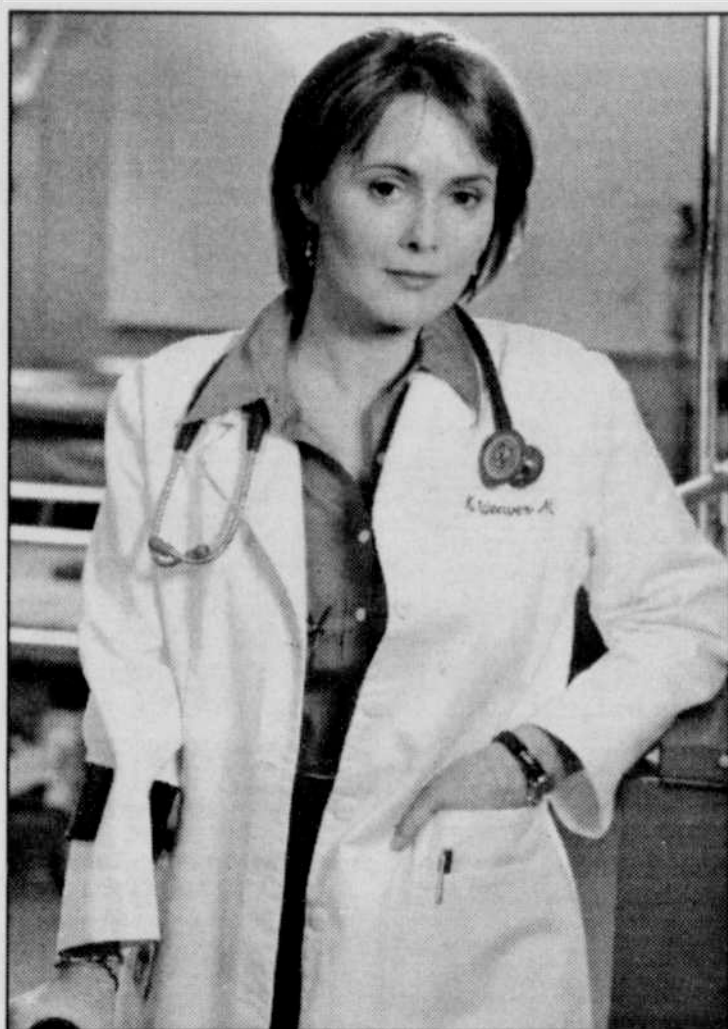




ER's Dr. Weaver finally comes out of the linen closet

the closet at the end of last season, and the eighth season will continue the plotline. Plus, Peter Benton (Eriq La Salle) has another AIDS scare, echoing one he had several seasons ago. Beyond that, NBC press reps are mum about further developments for Weaver or Benton.

• **The Ellen Show** (9:30 p.m. Friday, CBS)

Largely because of the backlash against the final "too gay" season of *Ellen*, producer/star DeGeneres has returned to the land of sitcoms with a "gay lite" series. This time around, she plays a failed dot-com executive

who returns to her childhood hometown of Clark to live with her mother (Cloris Leachman) and sister (Emily Rutherford). Taking a job as a school guidance counselor, she routinely is hit on by homely gym teacher Bunny (Diane Delano). No one seems to mind when Ellen tells them she's gay, although a few dimwits don't quite grasp the concept.

DeGeneres says the show's purpose differs from the end of *Ellen*, in which her character was exploring the coming-out process. "This show is going to be a funny show, and she happens to be gay, and we deal with it as much as we deal with the fact that she's a woman. Clark is this fantasy town that I wish existed.... Nobody has a problem [with her being gay]. Nobody is shocked by it. It just is what it is, and they accept her for who she is."

• **Dark Angel** (8 p.m. Friday, Fox)

Back for a second season—although new episodes have been hampered by baseball pre-emptions—this futuristic series features a leather-clad, genetically enhanced superheroine who fights to expose evil in Seattle. Her best friend, Original Cindy (Valarie Rae Miller), is an out-and-proud African American dyke who lip-locked an ex-girlfriend last season.

Other shows with some gay content include:

• **100 Centre Street** (9 p.m. Monday, A&E): With lesbian judge Attallah "Queenie" Sims (LaTanya Richardson).

• **All My Children** (3 p.m. weekdays,

ABC): With Bianca Montgomery (Eden Riegel), the 16-year-old lesbian daughter of über-diva Erica Kane (Susan Lucci). The series is the only soap opera in history to have featured three gay storylines in its run. (Gay men popped up for short runs in 1983 and 1995.) Although Riegel didn't get the Daytime Emmy this year, she was nominated!

• **Christopher Lowell** (noon and 3 p.m. weekdays, Discovery): With a homo home decorator who flames so much he almost scorches the wallpaper.

• **E! News Daily** (7 a.m. and 1 and 6:30 p.m. weekdays, E!): With gay anchor Steve Kmetko, who loves to slip in sly innuendoes.

• **Hollywood Squares** (7:30 p.m. weekdays, NBC): With gay comedian/writer Bruce Vilanch camping it up. Many of his questions contain obvious gay references.

• **Son of the Beach** (10 p.m. Tuesdays, FX): With the mayor's son who lusts after lifeguards.

In the future:

• ABC has produced a telefilm for *The Wonderful World of Disney* that has a decidedly queeny background. Gay writer Gregory Maguire's *Confessions of an Ugly Stepsister*, starring Stockard Channing and Jonathan Pryce, will tell the Cinderella

story from the point of view of one of the stepsisters.

• WB has a midseason series now filming 12 episodes in Canada. *Glory Days*, created and produced by gay writer Kevin Williamson (*Dawson's Creek*), features a 20-something novelist who explores the buried secrets of the town where he was raised. Word is that his best friend, the local sheriff (Jay R. Ferguson), is repressing his gay side....but not very well.

• Fox has a mid-season sitcom on tap called *Emma Brody*, in which the next-door neighbor is a drag queen.

• An upcoming NBC telefilm tells the Matthew Shepard story. **J**

ANDY MANGELS is a long-time Portland entertainment writer whose television gets more of a workout than he does. His fourth book, *Section 31: Rogue*, featured gay characters, and more Star Trek books are on the way! Visit him at www.andymangels.com.

Jack McPhee continues to heat things up on *Dawson's Creek*

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