

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

The Portland Observer

Martin

(Saturdays 8:00-8:30 PM ET/PT)

fourplay



The cast of Martin is back for their third season premiere, on Thursday, Sept. 1 (8:00-8:30 PM ET/PT) on Fox. Pictured clockwise from top left: Carl Anthony Payne II as Cole, Tommy Mikal Ford as Tommy, Tisha Campbell as Gina, Martin Lawrence as Martin and Tichina Arnold as Pam.

Martin, a relationship comedy starring multitalented comedian/actor/director Martin Lawrence, returns for its fourth season when newlyweds Martin (Martin Lawrence) and Gina (Tisha Campbell) embark on their new life together as husband and wife, yet as much as they love one another, each has a different perspective on the road that lies ahead. Martin isn't about to let the institution of marriage take away his individuality or put a crimp in his lifestyle; Gina is perfectly content with settling down and moving into a new phase in her life. One thing is for certain -- Ozzie and Harriet they are not!

Lawrence plays Martin Payne, a wisecracking, macho man whose bark is far worse than his bite. Though he doesn't care to admit it, underneath his tough exterior is a sensitive guy who is all heart. Martin works for

Detroit's cable station 51 as host of his own politically incorrect talk show, "Word on the Street." As much as he loves serving up laughs and stirring up trouble, Martin's real passion is his beloved Gina, a marketing executive and career woman with a mind of her own. As the only one who can keep Martin in check, Gina is his perfect counterpart, providing the "yin" to Martin's "Yang."

Memories of their single days will not be forgotten with their close pals never far behind: Pam (Tichina Arnold) is Gina's quick-tongued, sassy best friend, forever verbally dueling with Martin; Tommy (Thomas Mikal Ford) and Cole (Carl Anthony Payne II) are Martin's ever-present buddies and comrades in the battle of the sexes.

Lawrence also plays a number of other characters on the series in-

cluding Sheneneh, his feisty, know-it-all neighbor across the hall; Otis, and overweight, no-nonsense security guard; Momma Payne, Martin's old-fashioned country mother; Roscoe, the young, bratty neighbor; and Jerome, a street-slick, neighborhood friend forever stuck in the '70s.

Martin has earned two NAACP Image Awards, having been selected in 1993 as Best New Television Series and in 1994 for Outstanding Comedy Series. Lawrence was also chosen as the recipient of the 1994 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Actor in a Comedy Series. The show has also garnered a People's Choice Award for Best New Comedy Series.

Samm-Art Williams and Martin Lawrence are the executive producers for HBO Independent Productions.



Bob James, Lee Ritenour, Nathan East, and Harvey Mason

Fourplay serves up a romantically intoxicating and soulfully sensual mix on Elixir, their third release on Warner Bros. Records. Bob James, Lee Ritenour, Nathan East and Harvey Mason take it to a new high, blending pop rock, jazz, funk, R&B and classical elements into a heady and magical potion-with special guests Phil Collins, Patti Austin and Peabo Bryson.

Fourplay's enduring and distinctive alliance grows richer with each album and Elixir adds one more chapter to an already impressive list of accomplishments. The first epony-

mous release spent an unprecedented 33 weeks at No. 1 on Billboard's Contemporary Jazz chart. Fourplay's Grammy-nominated second album, Between The Sheets, also captured the No. 1 spot on the Billboard, R&B, Gavin and MAC charts and followed the debut recording to gold certification.

Bob James asserts, "I think we've finally really settled into our style. In the beginning, we were exploring and trying to find out if we were a group."

This third album is the first time we went in really knowing what we

were all about and what was possible. We're solid and surviving with our own identity." Ritenour adds, "It's impossible to not sound like Fourplay. We each have our own style, but when we come together as Fourplay whatever the song is, no matter who wrote it, there is a tangible and unique direction." James concludes, "When we get together, there is something larger than the four of us. Our styles merge in a way that we don't even need to talk about it." He laughs and adds, "Although we do talk...a lot!"

And they have a lot to talk about.

The Preston Episodes

Saturdays 8:30-9:00 PM

The Preston Episodes is a half-hour comedy about David Preston (David Alan Grier), a newly divorced college professor who moves from his comfortable but predictable life in New Jersey to pursue his lifelong dream to become a writer in New York City.

A 37-year-old scholar and academic, Preston makes the drastic move to the big city and rents a tiny one-bedroom apartment that comes complete with a very eccentric, ne'er-do-well neighbor named Derek (Tommy Hickey), who is constantly on the lookout for schemes to raise rent money, usually getting David into trouble in the process.

Landing a writing job proves to be harder than anticipated, and Preston's overly optimistic vision of making journalistic history and winning the Pulitzer Prize is soon deflated when the only job he can land is with a People-like, puff-piece magazine called Stuff and only as an underpaid photo caption writer.

Determined to make his new job a stepping stone to greatness, Preston descends upon the magazine's somewhat cynical staff with his impossibly positive attitude. His editor, Larry Dunhill (Clive Revill), is a belligerent lover of printed nonsense who rebels against any attempt David makes to increase the integrity of the publication. David discovers a confidante, however hesitant, in Kelly Freeman (Judith Scott), a burned-out, one-time award-winning writer who left the world of real news to escape ulcers and anxiety attacks.

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