

coverstory

BY JAY BOBBIN

**'Welcome to Flatch'** introduces a new Fox comedy's setting



The comedy "Welcome to Flatch" premieres Thursday on Fox.

If you're looking for a big taste of small-town life, "Welcome to Flatch."

Premiering Thursday, March 17, the Fox sitcom from veteran producers Jenny Bicks ("Sex and the City") and Paul Feig ("Freaks and Geeks") is based on the British series "This Country," taking a documentary approach as – appropriately – a documentary crew showcases the residents of the Midwestern town of Flatch. It's a quirky group, but still with a particular charm.

Cousins Kelly and "Shrub" (played by single-named newcomer Holmes and Sam Straley) provide the crew's entry point to Flatch, whose citizens also include: the local minister (Seann William Scott) and his newspaper-editor ex-girlfriend (Aya Cash, formerly of "You're the Worst"); and the historical-society chief (Taylor Ortega). Justin Linville and Krystal Smith also play "Flatchians," as Bicks refers to them.

"I think what it allows us to do," Bicks says, "and what it did in the original, is to get inside the characters' heads. It gets to be much more on the fly, so everything feels more immediate. When you have actors – as we do – who are great on the fly, you can catch things super-quickly. The comedy flows much more clearly, and that was really exciting for me."

For Feig, "Flatch" is a throwback to his own upbringing in a Detroit suburb. "I just knew I had to get out of there," he reflects, "not because I didn't like it, but because I wanted to do what I'm doing now and try to represent the Midwest. That's what I did with 'Freaks and Geeks,' and what I have been trying to do with everything that I do about underdogs. I really like to try to show the places and the people that don't normally get shown in movies and TV. That's why this show is so exciting to me."

Those who want a big dose of "Flatch" early are in luck: The same day the show makes its linear debut on Fox, the first seven episodes will be released on the network's digital platforms (Fox Now, On Demand, etc.). Cast member Cash believes the series' pace makes it digestible enough to accommodate such binge viewing of it.

"One thing that may not seem obvious about the documentary form," she reasons, "is simply how quickly it goes. I feel like there's a real pitch to be made about how you can still come up with really quality content in a really fast amount of time. It was fun to be on something where you (were finished in time so you) could have dinner some nights. I mean, I was alone in my hotel room, because it was (the time of) COVID. But it was dinner time."

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