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'Reboot' Coolly Mocks Modern Sitcom Revivals With a Familiar Formula

written by Toan Le • 2 years ago



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Meta jokes and a delightful cast make Hulu's "Reboot" a worthwhile take on how Hollywood revives sitcoms.

The series revolves around Hulu's executives rebooting an old sitcom from the 2000s called "Step Right Up," a show about a man living with his wife, her son and her ex-husband under the supervision of a new, edgier show-runner, Hannah (Rachel Bloom).

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"Reboot" shows how Hollywood goes about sitcom revivals.
Photo courtesy of Hulu

All the main stars return for the fictional family; the cast includes Reed Sterling (Keegan-Michael Key), Bree Marie Jensen (Judy Greer), Clay Barber (Johnny Knoxville) and Zack Jackson (Calum Worthy). Things take a troublesome turn, however, when the old show-runner, Gordon (Paul Reiser), appears and reverts the sitcom to its traditional, friendly roots.

At its core, the series puts itself forward as a satire about Hollywood running out of original ideas, utilizing what's already established to regain viewership. It sheds light on why reboots (especially comedies) are so endearing and fun for Hollywood executives to sign off on — old glory never dies.

Casual witticism and funny commentary are played out intelligently through the dynamic intensity of generational gaps. Old characters are brought back to revive the original chemistry, even if some unresolved conflicts resurface.

All of this leads to a hilariously complex workplace where everyone tries, and sometimes fails, to maintain civility.

The show does add elements of dynamic relationships between co-stars and crew members to instill some modernized dramedy. Nothing is too heavy, so the comedy still stays on the light side of things.

The true treasure of the show is its observation of the evolution of comedy. Gordon and his old writers are uproariously dumbfounded by today's comedy landscape, especially about its progressive nature, which makes for some exemplary commentary. Even the interactions between the newer generation comedy writers speak volumes about how outdated traditional comedy is.

Most sitcoms in the 2000s were filled with corny jokes and slap-stick comedy. By addressing how comedy is now more grounded and dramatic, the show accomplishes the social commentary aspect while letting itself be as silly as it can — within the realm of reality of course. The combination between the old and the new does elevate the show from being just another woke half-hour comedy.

The cast undoubtedly has amazing chemistry with each other. From Key's dramatic Reed to Worthy's oblivious Zack, the ensemble outstandingly carries the show up to its high quality. All the actors have a background in network comedy, so the interactions between characters and situations become more appreciative and entertaining.

The scene stealer, however, goes to Greer's playful Bree. Her character shines whenever she is on the screen, leaving at least a couple of memorable moments in the series. Greer brings the absurd and lighthearted humor out of her character. Even when her character is being devious and destructive, Greer is a joy to watch.

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Judy Greer's character, Bree, shines whenever she is on the screen.
Photo courtesy of Hulu


The show still needs some improvement as the beginning has a slow pace with the story giving a predictable impression. Characters are still in the early phases of development, and most of their qualities are just repeated tropes that exist in every sitcom.

However, as the series progresses, plot lines become more proactive and humorous. Characters become more unpredictable as the main ensemble taps into the wildness of today's society, using humor as a means to point out the obvious. The show's comedy (and heart) also grows more elegantly with each episode, planting more seeds and love for a brighter future.

All credits do go to the creator of the show, Steven Levitan. With his works on "Modern Family" becoming so impactful over the last decade, "Reboot" is thriving for that same intensity, just maybe not at the beginning.

"Reboot" does make for some excellent showing of how Hollywood goes about sitcom revivals. The charismatic cast smartly extracts as much comedy as possible to elevate the given materials. Though the show does have its flaws and a slow pace in beginning, with time, it will become the next "Modern Family" for a new generation.

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