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| |  | | --- | |  |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | [Christine Corcos](http://docs.google.com/bios.htm#corcos)      *Gary the Rat* is amusing, and gets its digs in not only at lawyers, but at psychiatrists and many other professionals. The animation is less than stellar but what sells this show is the writing, which is subtle and well, different. As Gary himself would say, "I know about being different." | |  | | --- | | **TOM PAXTON WAS RIGHT**  **FALL SEASON PROMISES MANY, MANY LAWYERS**  by Christine A. Corcos  Oh, a suffering world cries for mercy.  As far as the eye can see,  Lawyers around every bend in the road.  Lawyers in every tree.  Lawyers in restaurants.  Lawyers in clubs.  Lawyers behind every door.  Behind windows and potted plants,  Shade trees and shrubs.  Lawyers on pogo sticks.  Lawyers in politics.  In ten years we're gonna have one million lawyers.  How much can a poor nation stand.  Tom Paxton, In Ten Years We're Gonna Have One Million Lawyers, From One Million Lawyers and Other Disasters, Flying Fish Records.  Tom Paxton never wrote truer words, and I realize that every time I see the announcements for the new shows on U. S. television networks. The Fall 2003 season is absolutely in line with previous years. As the leaves fall and footballs fly, get ready for these exciting (?) innovative (!?) new programs, in which both attorneys and cops (including FBI agents) become rehabilitated, either through their own efforts, or through the desire of a nation under siege to find heroes among us.  From ABC comes a show about "a recovering alcoholic" who leaves big time law practice for a store front office in a strip mall. *Better Days* (originally called *The Flannerys*) stars Jeffrey Nordling as the Irish American who turns his life around, having seen the shallowness and amorality of corporate law. This show was probably inspired by the success of CBS' *The Guardian*, also about a lawyer who is redeemed, and farther back, by the big screen *Regarding Henry*, with Harrison Ford as the lawyer who has to lose his memory to regain his soul. NB: Don't confuse this show with the failed pilot of the same name (also from ABC) starring Jim Belushi as a laid off auto worker.  Also from ABC: The DA, starring Steven Weber as the attorney of the title who solves the murder of an associate. Oh, goody: a dead lawyer! *The Street Lawyer*, starring Hal Holbrook, and based on the John Grisham novel, also makes its debut on ABC. ABC also plans to offer us law-related shows such as *10-8* (rookie cop drama/comedy), *Alaska* (state trooper solves crimes), *Karen Sisco* (based on a character from the Jennifer Lopez movie *Out of Sight*), *Lines of Duty* (FBI rookie goes up against a mob boss); *The Partners* (female cops go undercover), *Threat Matrix* (about the fight against terrorism), in all of which lawyers are likely to make at least token appearances. There's also something called *Then Came Jones*, set in a brothel at the turn of the 20th century; the legal profession will undoubtedly show up somewhere in that series as well.  CBS has on offer *Century City*, a futuristic law show with Eric Schaeffer and Viola Davis. This promising show will investigate how the legal system might change by 2053. Check out the [TV Tome page](http://www.tvtome.com/tvtome/servlet/ShowMainServlet/showid-16990/). CBS is also proposing a *JAG* spinoff with Mark Harmon and the perennially popular (and underrated) David McCallum (remember *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*)? Law-related shows include *Criminology 101*, about two students who put what they learn in class to good use in crime-solving, *Expert Witness* (about forensic pathologists: Calling Dr. Quincy!), *The Law and Henry Lee*, starring Danny Glover as a P.I. in San Francisco, *Street Boss*, another cop show, *The Unsolved*, about a woman detective who handles cold cases, and *Violent Crime*, about Boston policewomen handling just what the title suggests.  Fox plans to air *The Circuit*, premised on an examination of court cases seen through the eyes of the jury. Like *Century City*, this series at least suggests originality. Fox's law-related shows include *The Break*, about a cop who moves to Hawaii with his son, the futuristic *NYPD 2069*, about a cop who was frozen and is now defrosted.  Lifetime has bought three series featuring law enforcement: *Follow the Leeds* (the "leads", get it???!), starring Elizabeth Densmore as a private investigator, and *Wild Card*, about insurance investigators, and starring Joely Fisher (I hate to think that her last name is "Wild" but it probably is); and *1-800-Missing*, about a psychic who helps an FBI agent solve crimes.  NBC will schedule *EDNY*, about New York district attorneys, with William Baldwin, Rob Lowe in *The Lyon's Den*, a law firm drama (his name doesn't seem to be Lyon or Lyons so I'm at a loss to understand the title, but see [TV Tome's page](http://www.tvtome.com/tvtome/servlet/ShowMainServlet/showid-16747/), and *Miss Match*, with Alicia Silverstone (*Clueless*) as a lawyer who tries to find people their true loves (Mis-match, get it?????!!!). Its law-related series include *Casino Eye*, about casino security and starring James Caan, *Future Tense* (another punningly titled program) set in the "near future" and featuring high tech, *Gated World*, with Phil Hendrie as a former cop who takes a job as head of security at a gated community, *Homeland Security*, with Tom Skerritt and others as fighters against terrorism, Rupert Everett in *Mr. Ambassador* (maybe we'll see some international law?), *The Real Deal*, about a governor and his staff, and Whoopi Goldberg in an as-yet untitled show about a former singer who indulges in crime.  Law is peripheral to some other shows that frankly, look like clones. In each, an individual or family actually has to go to work when the head of the family gets arrested and convicted of some dastardly deed. Check out Jenny McCarthy's proposed series from ABC, (no title yet), and *Arrested Development* (from Fox). Kevin Hart also has an ABC series ready, in which his family loses its money, but it's not clear how that happens. The notion of rich people getting their comeuppance seems quite popular in a period in which we are enjoying stories about Ken Lay's wife opening a resale shop. Psychic powers are still in vogue; check out *True Calling* (Starring Eliza Dushku on Fox) in which a woman discovers she can go back in time and prevent tragedy (shades of *Early Edition*), *Wonder Falls* (also Fox) in which a woman has visions, and Lifetime's *1-800-Missing*. Of course, whether one can truly interfere with the course of events, and whether free will exists, are deep philosophical questions that I am not certain these shows will investigate thoughtfully. For a helpful essay on the philosophical problems associated with time travel (if you go back in time and kill your grandfather will you exist?) see [geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com/naran500/features/time_travel.html) or the time travel essay in the [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/t/timetravel.htm).  UPN offers *The Edge*, about even more FBI agents and DEA agents on the U. S. -Mexican border, Vegas Dick, about a former crook recruited to work for a casino, and *Weapon X*, about a National Security Agency operative who develops superpowers.  USA Network has ordered further development of three shows, a Tom Berenger vehicle called *Peacemakers*, about law enforcement in the Old West, *Thought Crimes*, which sounds like a *Minority Report*-inspired series, and something called *Touching Evil*, apparently based on a British television series, and starring Peter Wingfield as a detective who develops psychic powers (even better than *1-800-Missing*!)  Finally, WB has *Chasing Alice*, in which a Scotland Yard detective comes to New York to look for her missing sister, *Fearless*, in which a girl is recruited to join the FBI, *MacGyver,* an updating of the Richard Dean Anderson series, in which MacGyver's nephew continues his uncle's work, *Other People's Business*, about aimless L.A. types who decide to become private detectives, and *Tarzan*, in which Tarzan comes to New York and meets policewoman Jane.  But we don't have to wait for one new comedy, *Gary the Rat*, starring the voice of Kelsey Grammer. It debuted June 26, 2003 and features a Harvard Law School educated Wall Street lawyer who is so underhanded that he actually turns into a rat. It's not clear how, but it may be through a lightning strike. At any rate, his managing partner seems to take Gary's new verminous condition in stride, except for gratuitous remarks about his tail and generally furry appearance. Of course, the partner, Jackson Harrison, needs all the help he can get. He's only head of the firm because of the tragic death of everybody else in a highly improbable bus accident. Indeed, in Gary's world everything is slightly askew; his nemeses include a dim-witted exterminator whose cat keeps trying to keep him from harm and the consequences of his own stupidity, a pizza delivery guy who insists on making nasty remarks about the clientele and still expects a tip, and his mother, whom we never see, but who calls Gary regularly to complain about her treatment at the nursing home in which she's confined. Gary is less than sympathetic, usually assuring her that the straps that the nursing staff use to restrain her are for her own good, and that he'll see her when he's not busy. Gary's self-centered, uncaring attitude is what makes him a good lawyer, says the show, and it's also what makes him an excellent rat. He does have his good points-he helps the boss's secretary ward off the unwanted attentions of another lawyer, and gets revenge on the fellow as well. *Gary the Rat* is amusing, and gets its digs in not only at lawyers, but at psychiatrists and many other professionals. The animation is less than stellar (not as good as that for *Stripperella*, for example), but what sells this show is the writing, which is subtle and well, different. As Gary himself would say, "I know about being different."  As I look over this unpromising roster, having seen NONE of these shows, here's my psychic prediction: some of these shows will air once or not at all. I don't hold out much hope that most of them will go past two or three episodes. The most original-sounding among them, *Century City* and *The Circuit*, probably have no chance at all. Most likely to succeed? The ones with psychics in them, which will last a season or two, because they make the viewing public feel good. The ensemble dramas, like *Better Days*, will stand or fall on whether we like the characters. Most of the others, like *The Street Lawyer*, in spite of its stellar lead, will be out on the street in an episode or two.  For more about the upcoming fall season see the [Pazsaz Entertainment Network](http://www.pazsaz.com/) , [TVTome](http://docs.google.com/www.tvtome.com) , and the websites of the various networks: [ABC](http://abcnews.go.com/) ; [CBS](http://www.cbs.com/) ; [Fox](http://www.fox.com/home.htm) ; [Lifetime](http://www.lifetimetv.com/) ; [USA](http://www.usanetwork.com/USA.blue.html) ; [Warner Brothers](http://www2.warnerbros.com/web/main/index.jsp) ; [UPN](http://www.upn.com/) and [NBC](http://www.nbc.com/).  For more about *Gary the Rat* see [thenewtnn.com](http://www.thenewtnn.com/shows/animation/gary_the_rat/index.jhtml).  I like these pages in spite of TNN's slogan, The First Network for Men. Seems to me a LOT of them are for men, and have been since the beginning).  Posted August 19, 2003 |   **Would you like to comment on this article? 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